

Entire Sanctification

By

Adam Clarke

The word “sanctify” has two meanings. 1. It signifies to consecrate, to separate from earth and common use, and to devote or dedicate to God and his service. 2. It signifies to make holy or pure.

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: for the beatific vision is given to them only who are purified from all unrighteousness: for it is written, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Nothing is purified by death;—nothing in the grave; nothing in heaven. The living stones of the temple, like those of that at Jerusalem, are hewn, squared, and cut here, in the church militant, to prepare them to enter into the composition of the church triumphant.

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 image and likeness of God which he has lost. 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 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 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 he, Jesus, came to destroy 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 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 that observation of a learned civilian is at once both correct and illustrative, namely, “We count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereto they were instituted.” And to be perfect often signifies “to be blameless, clear, irreproachable;” and according to the above definition of Hooker, 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 that is enmity to God; “That is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” And had I no other proof that man is fallen from God, his opposition to Christian holiness would be to me sufficient.

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 shall 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 of “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 are either speculative Antinomians, or pleaders for Baal.

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 must mean “that holiness without which none shall see the Lord.” Call it by what name we please, 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 believer, under the name of Christian perfection. Had I a better name, one more energetic, 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 then are there so many, even among sincere and godly ministers and people, who are so much opposed to the term, and so much alarmed at the profession? I answer, Because they think no 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 not wholly destroyed till death takes place, and the soul and the body are separated? Nowhere. In the popish baseless doctrine of purgatory, this doctrine, not with more rational consequences, is held: this doctrine allows that, so inveterate is sin, 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 had 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 deathbed purgatory; and how positively do they hold out death as the 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 all the indwelling sin of all believers is to be destroyed by death, (and a fearful mass this will make,) then death, that removes it, must be the highest benefactor of mankind. The truth is, he is neither the cause nor the means of its destruction. It is the blood of Jesus alone that cleanseth 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; and the root whence all moral obliquity flows. 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. Neither the devil nor his work will ever show themselves. 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 men to hug the monster, and to contemplate their chains with complacency!

It has been objected to this perfection, this perfect work of God 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 undervalued 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? How is it that he becomes precious to us? 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 had 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 the 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 undervalue 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.

“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 acts so has ever 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. In the splendour of God's holiness they feel themselves absorbed. 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. In a spirit and in a way which none but themselves can fully comprehend and feel, they can say or sing,—

“I loathe myself when God I see,
And into nothing fall:
Content that Christ exalted be;
And God is all in all.”

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 Christ had saved them from all sin, and whose profession was maintained 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 have I 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; namely, 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 these righteous I 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 this 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 by the blood that which He has not cleansed, as they spend in decrying this doctrine, what a glorious state of the church should we soon witness! Instead of compounding with iniquity, and 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 held his hand? When they find that their agonizing faith and prayer receive no farther 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 to him through Christ Jesus.

But it is farther objected, that even St. Paul himself denies this doctrine of perfection, disclaiming it in reference to himself: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after," Philippians 3:12. This place is mistaken: the apostle is not speaking of his restoration to the image of God; but to completing his ministerial course, and receiving the crown of martyrdom; as I have fully shown on my notes on this place, and to which I must beg to refer the reader. 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 out, and possess the good land—it deserves to be seriously answered. To such I would say, There may be several, even in the circle of your own religious acquaintance, whose evil tempers and unholy affections God has destroyed; and having filled them with his own holiness, they are enabled to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves. But such make no public professions: their conduct, their spirit, the whole tenor of their life, is their testimony. Again: there may be none such among your religious acquaintance, because they do not know their privilege, or they 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, and under such a ministry 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 the genuine believers brought into the liberty of the children of God.

As to some having professed to have received this salvation, and afterward become scandalous in their lives (though in all my long ministerial labours, and extensive religious acquaintance, I never found but one example), 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. An objection of this kind against the doctrine of Christian perfection will apply as forcibly against the whole revelation of God as it can do against one of the doctrines; because that revelation brings the account of the defection of angels and of the fall of man. 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 not one could be found in all the churches of Christ whose heart was purified from all unrighteousness, and who 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 works 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 establishes 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.

In all cases of this nature, we must forever cease from man, implicitly credit God's testimony, and look to him in and through whom all the promises of God are yea and amen.

To be filled with God is a great thing; to be filled with the fulness of God is still greater; to be filled with all the fulness of God is greatest of all. This utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding, by leading at once to consider the immensity of God, the infinitude of His attributes, and the absolute perfection of each! But there must be a sense in which even this wonderful petition was understood by the apostle, and may be comprehended by us. Most people, in quoting these words, endeavour to correct or explain the apostle by adding the word “communicable”. But this is as idle as it is useless and impertinent. Reason surely tells us that St. Paul would not pray that they should be

filled with what could not be communicated. The apostle certainly meant what he said, and would be understood in his own meaning; and we may soon see what this meaning is.

By the “fulness of God,” we are to understand all the gifts and graces which he has promised to bestow on man in order to his full salvation here, and his being fully prepared for the enjoyment of glory hereafter. To be filled with all the fulness of God is to have the heart emptied of and cleansed from all sin and defilement, and filled with humility, meekness, gentleness, goodness, justice, holiness, mercy, and truth, and love to God and man. And that this implies a thorough emptying of the soul of everything that is not of God, and leads not to him, is evident from this, that what God fills, neither sin nor Satan can fill, nor in any wise occupy; for, if a vessel be filled with one fluid or substance, not a drop or particle of any other kind can enter it, without displacing the same quantum of the original matter as that which is afterward introduced. God cannot be said to fill the whole soul while any place, part, passion, or faculty is filled, or less or more occupied, by sin or Satan: and as neither sin nor Satan can be where God fills and occupies the whole, so the terms of the prayer state that Satan shall neither have any dominion over that soul nor being in it. A fulness of humility precludes all pride; of meekness, precludes anger; of gentleness, all ferocity; of goodness, all evil; of justice, all injustice; of holiness, all sin; of mercy, all unkindness and revenge; of truth, all falsity and dissimulation; and where God is loved with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, there is no room for enmity or hatred to him, or to any thing connected with him; so, where a man loves his neighbour as himself, no ill shall be worked to that neighbour; but, on the contrary, every kind affection will exist toward him; and every kind action, so far as power and circumstances can permit, will be done to him.

Thus the being filled with God's fulness will produce constant, pious, and affectionate obedience to him, and unvarying benevolence towards one's neighbour; that is, any man, any and every human being. Such a man is saved from all sin; the law is fulfilled in him; and he ever possesses and acts under the influence of that love to God and man which is the fulfilling of the law. It is impossible, with any Scriptural or rational consistency, to understand these words in any lower sense; but how much more they imply, (and more they do imply,) who can tell?

Many preachers, and multitudes of professing people, are studious to find out how many imperfections and infidelities, and how much inward sinfulness, are consistent with a safe state in religion; but how few, very few, are bringing out the fair gospel standard to try the height of the members of the church; whether they be fit for the heavenly army; whether their stature be such as qualifies them for the rank of the church militant! “the measure of the stature of the fulness” is seldom seen; the measure of the stature of littleness, dwarfishness, and emptiness, is often exhibited.

Some say “The body of sin in believers is, indeed, an enfeebled, conquered, and deposed tyrant, and the stroke of death finishes its destruction.” So, then, the death of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit were only sufficient to depose and enfeeble the tyrant sin; but our death must come in to effect his total destruction! Thus our death is, at least

partially, our Saviour, and thus that which was an effect of sin, (“for sin entered into the world, and death by sin,”) becomes the means of finally destroying it: that is, the effect of a cause can become so powerful as to react upon that cause and produce its annihilation! The divinity and philosophy of this sentiment are equally absurd. It is the blood of Christ alone that cleanses from all unrighteousness; and the sanctification of a believer is no more dependent on death than his justification. If it be said that “believers do not cease from sin till they die,” I have only to say they are such believers as do not make a proper use of their faith: and what can be said more of the whole herd of transgressors and infidels? They cease to sin when they cease to breathe. If the Christian religion bring no other privileges than this to its upright followers, well may we ask, “Wherein doth the wise man differ from the fool, for they have both one end!” But the whole gospel teaches a contrary doctrine.

It is strange there should be found a person believing the whole gospel system and yet living in sin! “Salvation from sin” is the long continued sound, as it is the spirit and design, of the gospel. Our Christian name, our baptismal covenant, our profession of faith in Christ, and avowed belief in his word, all call us to this: can it be said that we have any louder calls than they? Our self-interest, as it respects the happiness of a godly life, and the glories of eternal blessedness; the pains and wretchedness of a life of sin, leading to the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched; second, most powerfully, the above calls. Reader, lay these things to heart, and answer this question to God: “How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation?” And then, as thy conscience shall answer, let thy mind and thy hand begin to act.

As there is no end to the merits of Christ incarnated and crucified; no bounds to the mercy and love of God; no let or hindrance to the almighty energy and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; no limits to the improvability of the human soul; so there can be no bounds to the saving influence which God will dispense to the heart of every genuine believer. We may ask and receive, and our joy shall be full! Well may we bless and praise God, “who has called us into such a state of salvation;” a state in which we may be thus saved; and, by the grace of that state, continue in the same to the end of our lives!

As sin is the cause of the ruin of mankind, the gospel system, which exhibits its cure, is fitly called “good news, or glad tidings;” and it is good news, because it proclaims Him who saves his people from their sins; and it would indeed be dishonourable to that grace, and the infinite merit of Him who procured it, to suppose, much more to assert, that sin had made wounds which grace would not heal. Of such a triumph Satan shall ever be deprived.

“He that committeth sin is of the devil.” Hear this, ye who plead for Baal, and cannot bear the thought of that doctrine that states believers are to be saved from all sin in this life! He who committeth sin is a child of the devil, and shows that he has still the nature of the devil in him; “for the devil sinneth from the beginning:” he was the father of sin,—brought sin into the world, and maintains sin in the world by living in the hearts of his own children, and thus leading them to transgression; and persuading others that they cannot be saved from their sins in this life, that he may secure a continual residence in their heart. He also

knows that if he has a place throughout life, he will probably have it at death; and, if so, throughout eternity.

“That is,” say some, “he does not sin habitually as he formerly did.” This is bringing the influence and privileges of the heavenly birth very low indeed. We have the most indubitable evidence that many of the heathen philosophers had acquired, by mental discipline and cultivation, an entire ascendancy over all their wonted vicious habits. Perhaps my reader will recollect the story of the physiognomist, who, coming into the place where Socrates was delivering a lecture, his pupils, wishing to put the principles of the man's science to proof, desired him to examine the face of their master, and say what his moral character was. After a full contemplation of the philosopher's visage, he pronounced him the “most gluttonous, drunken, brutal, and libidinous old man that he ever met.” As the character of Socrates was the reverse of all this, his disciples began to insult the physiognomist. Socrates interfered, and said, “The principles of his science may be very correct; for such I was, but I have conquered it by my philosophy.” O ye Christian divines! ye real or pretended gospel ministers! will ye allow the influence of the grace of Christ a sway not even so extensive as that of the philosophy of a heathen who never heard of the true God?

Many tell us that “no man can be saved from sin in this life.” Will these persons permit us to ask, How much sin may we be saved from in this life? Something must be ascertained on this subject: 1. That the soul may have some determinate object in view. 2. That it may not lose its time, or employ its faith and energy, in praying for what is impossible to be attained. Now, as Christ was manifested to take away our sins, to destroy the works of the devil; and as his blood cleanseth from all sin and unrighteousness, is it not evident that God means that believers in Christ shall be saved from all sin? For if his blood cleanses from all sin, if he destroys the works of the devil, (and sin is the work of the devil,) and if he who is born of God does not commit sin, then he must be cleansed from all sin; and while he continues in that state, he lives without sinning against God, for the seed of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born, or begotten of God.

How strangely warped and blinded by prejudice and system must men be who, in the face of such evidence as this, will still dare to maintain that no man can be saved from his sin in this life; but must daily commit sin in thought, word, and deed, as the Westminster divines have asserted! that is, every man is laid under the fatal necessity of sinning as many ways against God as the devil does through his natural wickedness and malice; for even the devil himself can have no other way of sinning against God, except by thought, word, and deed. And yet, according to these and others of the same creed, “even the most regenerate sin against God as long as they live.” It is a miserable salvo to say “they do not sin so much as they used to do; and they do not sin habitually, only occasionally.” Alas for this system! Could not the grace that saved them partially save them perfectly? Could not that power of God that saved them from habitual sin save them from occasional or accidental sin? Shall we suppose that sin, how potent soever it may be, is as potent as the Spirit and grace of Christ? And may we not ask, If it was for God's glory and their good that they were

partially saved, would it not have been more for God's glory and their good if they had been perfectly saved? But the letter and spirit of God's word, and the design and end of Christ's coming, is to save his people from their sins.

The perfection of the gospel system is not that it makes allowances for sin, but that it makes an atonement for it; not that it tolerates sin, but that it destroys it.

However inveterate the disease of sin may be, the grace of the Lord Jesus can fully cure it.

God sets no bounds to the communications of his grace and Spirit to them that are faithful. And as there are no bounds to the graces, so there should be none to the exercise of those graces. No man can ever feel that he loves God too much, or that he loves man too much for God's sake.

Be so purified and refined in your souls, by the indwelling Spirit, that even the light of God shining into your hearts shall not be able to discover a fault that the love of God has not purged away.

“Be thou perfect, and thou shalt be perfection,” that is, altogether perfect: be just such as the holy God would have thee to be, as the Almighty God can make thee, and live as the sufficient God shall support thee; for He alone who makes the soul holy can preserve it in holiness. Our blessed Lord appears to have these words pointedly in view, “Ye shall be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect,” Matthew 5:48. But what does this imply? Why, to be saved from all the power, the guilt, and the contamination of sin. This is only the negative part of salvation, but it has also a positive part; to be made perfect—to be perfect as our Father who is in heaven is perfect, to be filled with the fulness of God, to have Christ dwelling continually in the heart by faith, and to be rooted and grounded in love. This is the state in which man was created; for he was made in the image and likeness of God. This is the state from which man fell; for he broke the command of God. And this is the state into which every human soul must be raised who would dwell with God in glory; for Christ was incarnated and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. What a glorious privilege! And who can doubt the possibility of its attainment who believes in the omnipotent love of God, the infinite merit of the blood of the atonement, and the all-pervading and all-purifying energy of the Holy Ghost? How many miserable souls employ that time to dispute and cavil against the possibility of being saved from their sins, which they should devote to praying and believing that they might be saved out of the hands of their enemies! But some may say, “You overstrain the meaning of the term; it signifies only, Be sincere; for, a perfect obedience is impossible, God accepts of sincere obedience.” If by sincerity the objection means “good desires, and generally good purposes, with an impure heart and spotted life,” then I assert that no such thing is implied in the text, nor in the original word. But if the word sincerity be taken in its proper and literal sense, I have no objection to it. Sincere is compounded of sine cera, “without wax;” and, applied to moral subjects, is a metaphor taken from clarified honey, from which every atom of the comb or wax is separated. Then let it be proclaimed from heaven, “Walk before me, and be sincere! Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump unto God; and thus ye shall

be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” This is sincerity. Reader, remember that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Ten thousand quibbles on insulated texts can never lessen, much less destroy, the merit and efficacy of the great atonement.

God never gives a precept but he offers sufficient grace to enable thee to perform it. Believe as he would have thee, and act as he shall strengthen thee, and thou wilt believe all things savingly, and do all things well.

God is holy; and this is the eternal reason why all his people should be holy—should be purified from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. No faith in any particular creed, no religious observance, no acts of benevolence and charity, no mortification, attrition, or contrition can be a substitute for this. We must be made partakers of the divine nature. We must be saved from our sins—from the corruption that is in the world, and be holy within and righteous without, or never see God. For this very purpose Jesus Christ lived, died, and revived, that he might purify us unto himself; that through faith in his blood our sins might be blotted out, and our souls restored to the image of God. Reader, art thou hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Then, blessed art thou, for thou shalt be filled.

God is ever ready, by the power of his Spirit, to carry us forward to every degree of life, light, and love, necessary to prepare us for an eternal weight of glory. There can be little difficulty in attaining the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls from all sin, if God carry us forward to it; and this he will do, if we submit to be saved in his own way, and on his own terms. Many make a violent outcry against the doctrine of perfection; that is, against the heart being cleansed from all sin in this life, and filled with love to God and man; because they judge it to be impossible! Is it too much to say of these, that they know neither the Scripture nor the power of God? Surely, the Scripture promises the thing, and the power of God can carry us on to the possession of it.

The object of all God's promises and dispensations was to bring fallen man back to the image of God, which he had lost. This, indeed, is the sum and substance of the religion of Christ. We have partaken of an earthly, sensual, and devilish nature; the design of God, by Christ, is to remove this, and to make us partakers of the divine nature, and save us from all the corruption, in principle and fact, which is in the world.

It is said that Enoch not only “walked with God,” setting him always before his eyes—beginning, continuing, and ending every work to His glory—but also that “he pleased God,” and had “the testimony that he did please God.” Hence we learn that it was then possible to live so as not to offend God: consequently so as not to commit sin against him, and to have the continual evidence or testimony that all that a man did and purposed was pleasing in the sight of Him who searches the heart, and by whom devices are weighed: and if it was possible then, it is surely, through the same source, possible now; for God, and Christ, and faith are still the same.

The petition “Thy will be done in earth, as is in heaven,” certainly points out a deliverance from all sin; for nothing that is unholy can consist with the divine will; and, if this be

fulfilled in man, surely sin shall be banished from his soul. Again: the holy angels never mingle iniquity with their loving obedience; and, as our Lord teaches us to pray that we do his will here as they do in heaven, can it be thought he would put a petition into our mouths the fulfilment of which was impossible?

The reader is probably amazed at the paucity of large stars in the whole firmament of heaven. Will he permit me to carry his mind a little farther, and either stand astonished at, or deplore with me the fact that, out of the millions of Christians in the vicinity and splendour of the eternal Sun of Righteousness, how very few are found of the first order! How very few can stand examination by the test laid down in 1 Corinthians 13! How very few love God with all their heart, soul mind, and strength, and their neighbours as themselves! How few mature Christians are found in the church! How few are, in all things, living for eternity! How little light, how little heat, and how little influence and activity, are to be found among them that bear the name of Christ! How few stars of the first magnitude will the Son of God have to deck the crown of His glory! Few are striving to excel in righteousness; and it seems to be a principal concern with many, to find out how little grace they may have, and yet escape hell; how little conformity to the will of God they may have, and yet get to heaven. In the fear of God I register this testimony, that I have perceived it to be the labour of many to lower the standard of Christianity, and to soften down, or explain away, those promises of God that Himself has linked with duties; and because they know they cannot be saved by their good works, they are contented to have no good works at all; and thus the necessity of Christian obedience, and Christian holiness, makes no prominent part of some modern creeds. Let all those who retain the apostolic doctrine, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin in this life, press every believer to go on to perfection, and expect to be saved, while here below, into the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus. To all such my soul says, Labour to show yourselves approved unto God; workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; and may the pleasure of the Lord prosper in your hands! Amen.

Many employ that time in brooding and mourning over their impure hearts, which should be spent in prayer and faith before God, that their impurities might be washed away. In what a state of nonage are many members of the Christian church!

I am afraid that what some persons call their infirmities may rather be called their strengths; the prevailing and frequently ruling power of pride, anger, ill will, &c.; for how few think evil tempers to be sins! The gentle term “infirmity” softens down the iniquity; and as St. Paul, so great and so holy a man, say they, had his infirmities, how can they expect to be without theirs? These should know that they are in a dangerous error; that St. Paul means nothing of the kind; for he speaks of his sufferings, and of these alone. One word more: would not the grace and power of Christ appear more conspicuous in slaying the lion than in keeping him chained? in destroying sin, root and branch, and filling the soul with his own holiness, with love to God and man, with the mind, all the holy, heavenly tempers that were in himself, than in leaving these impure and unholy tempers

ever to live, and often to reign, in the heart? The doctrine is discreditable to the gospel, and wholly antichristian.

“If they sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not,” 1 Kings 8:46. On this verse we may observe that the second clause, as it is here translated, renders the supposition in the first clause entirely nugatory; for if there be no man that sinneth not, it is useless to say, “If they sin;” but this contradiction is taken away by reference to the original, which should be translated, “If they shall sin against thee;” or, “Should they sin against thee; for there is no man that may not sin;” that is, There is no man impeccable; none infallible; none that is not liable to transgress. This is the true meaning of the phrase in various parts of the Bible, and so our translators have understood the original; for, even in the thirty-first verse of this chapter, they have translated *yecheta*, “If a man trespass;” which certainly implies he might or might not do it; and in this way they have translated the same word, “If a soul sin” in Leviticus 5:1; 6:2; 1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Chronicles 6:22; and in several other places. The truth is, the Hebrew has no mood to express words in the permissive or optative way; but to express this sense, it uses the future tense of the conjugation *kal*. This text has been a wonderful stronghold for all who believe that there is no redemption from sin in this life; that no man can live without committing sin; and that we cannot be entirely freed from it till we die. 1. The text speaks no such doctrine; it only speaks of the possibility of every man sinning; and this must be true of a state of probation. 2. There is not another text in the divine records that is more to the purpose than this. 3. The doctrine is flatly in opposition to the design of the gospel; for Jesus came to save his people from their sin, and to destroy the work of the devil. 4. It is a dangerous and destructive doctrine, and should be blotted out of every Christian's creed. There are too many who are seeking to excuse their crimes by all means in their power; and we need not embody their excuses in a creed, to complete their deception, by stating that their sins are unavoidable.

The soul was made for God, and can never be united to him, nor be happy, till saved from sin. He who is saved from his sin, and united to God, possesses the utmost felicity that the human soul can enjoy, either in this or the coming world.

Where a soul is saved from all sin, it is capable of being fully employed in the work of the Lord: it is then, and not till then, fully fitted for the Master's use.

All who are taught of Christ are not only saved, but their understandings are much improved. True religion, civilization, mental improvement, common sense, and orderly behaviour, go hand in hand.

When the light of Christ dwells fully in the heart, it extends its influence to every thought, word, and action; and directs its possessor how he is to act in all places and circumstances.

Our souls can never be truly happy till our wills be entirely subjected to, and become one with, the will of God.

While there is an empty, longing heart, there is a continual overflowing fountain of salvation. If we find, in any place, or at any time, that the oil ceases to flow, it is because

there are no empty vessels there; no souls hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We find fault with the dispensations of God's mercy, and ask, "Why were the former days better than these?" Were we as much in earnest for our salvation as our forefathers were for theirs, we should have equal supplies, and as much reason to sing aloud of divine mercy.

"Be ye holy," saith the Lord, "for I am holy." He who can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness is one who loves holiness; who hates sin; who longs to be saved from it, and takes encouragement at the recollection of God's holiness, as he seeth in this the holy nature which he is to share; and the perfection which he is here to attain. But most who call themselves Christians hate the doctrine of holiness, never hear it inculcated without pain; and the principal part of their studies and those of their pastors, is to find out with how little holiness they can rationally expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven. O fatal and soul-destroying delusion! How long will a holy God suffer such abominable doctrines to pollute his church, and destroy the souls of men.

Increase in the image and favour of God. Every grace and divine influence which ye have received is a seed, a heavenly seed, which, if it be watered with the dew of heaven from above, will endlessly increase and multiply itself. He who continues to believe, love, and obey, will grow in grace, and continually increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, his Sacrifice, Sanctifier, Counsellor, Preserver, and final Saviour. The life of a Christian is growth: he is at first born of God, and is a little child: becomes a young man and a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant; and had he not grown, he would never have been a man. Those who content themselves with the grace they received when converted to God, are, at best, in continual state of infancy; but we find, in the order of nature, that the infant that does not grow, and grow daily too, is sickly, and soon dies: so, in the order of grace, those who do not grow up into Jesus Christ are sickly and will soon die—die to all sense and influence of heavenly things. There are many who boast of the grace of their conversion; persons who were never more than babes, and have long since lost even that grace, because they did not grow in it. Let him that readeth understand.

In order to get a clean heart, a man must know and feel its depravity, acknowledge and deplore it before God, in order to be fully sanctified. Few are pardoned, because they do not feel and confess their sins; and few are sanctified and cleansed from all sin, because they do not feel and confess their own sore and the plague of their hearts. As the blood of Jesus Christ, the merit of his passion and death, applied by faith, purges the conscience from all dead works, so the same cleanses the heart from all unrighteousness. As all unrighteousness is sin, so he that is cleansed from all unrighteousness is cleansed from all sin. To attempt to evade this, and plead for the continuance of sin in the heart through life, is ungrateful, wicked, and blasphemous; for, as he who says he has not sinned, makes God a liar, who has declared the contrary through every part of His revelation, so he that says the blood of Christ either cannot or will not cleanse us from all sin in this life, gives also the lie to his Maker, who has declared the contrary, and thus shows that the word, the doctrine of God, is not in him. Reader, it is the birthright of every child of God to be

cleansed from all sin, to keep himself unspotted from the world, and so to live as never more to offend his Maker. All things are possible to him that believeth, because all things are possible to the infinitely meritorious blood and energetic Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Every man whose heart is full of the love of God, is full of humility; for there is no man so humble as he whose heart is cleansed from all sin. It has been said that indwelling sin humbles us; never was there a greater falsity: pride is the very essence of sin; he who has sin has pride; and pride, too, in proportion to his sin: this is a mere popish doctrine; and, strange to tell, the doctrine on which their doctrine of merit is founded! They say, God leaves concupiscence in the heart of every Christian, that, in striving with and overcoming it from time to time, he may have an accumulation of meritorious acts. Certain Protestants say, "It is a true sign of a very gracious state when man feels and deplores his inbred corruption." How near do these come to the Papists, whose doctrine they profess to detest and abhor! The truth is, it is no sign of grace whatever; it only argues, as they use it, that the man has got light to show him his corruptions, but he has not yet got grace to destroy them. He is convinced that he should have the mind of Christ, but he feels that he has the mind of Satan; he deplores it; and, if his bad doctrine do not prevent him, he will not rest till he feels the blood of Christ cleansing him from all sin.

Can any man expect to be saved from his inward sin in the other world? None, except such as hold the popish, anti-scriptural doctrine of purgatory. "But this deliverance is expected at death." Where is the promise that it shall then be given? There is not one such in the whole Bible! And to believe for a thing essential to our glorification, without any promise to support that faith in reference to the point on which it is exercised, is a desperation that argues as well the absence of true faith as it does of right reason. Multitudes of such persons are continually deploring their want of faith, even where they have the clearest and most explicit promises; and yet, strange to tell, risk their salvation at the hour of death on a deliverance that is nowhere promised in the sacred oracles! "But who has got this blessing?" Everyone who has come to God in the right way for it. "Where is such a one?" Seek the blessing as you should do, and you will soon be able to answer the question. "But it is too great a blessing to be expected." Nothing is too great for a believer to expect, which God has promised, and Christ has purchased with his blood. "If I had such a blessing, I should not be able to retain it." All things are possible to him that believeth. Besides, like all other gifts of God, it comes with a principle of preservation with it; "and upon all thy glory there shall be a defence." "Still, such an unfaithful person as I cannot expect it." Perhaps the infidelity you deplore came through the want of this blessing; and as to worthlessness, no soul under heaven deserves the least of God's mercies. It is not for thy worthiness that He has given thee anything, but for the sake of his Son. You can say, "When I felt myself a sinner, sinking into perdition, I did then flee to the atoning blood, and found pardon: but this sanctification is a far greater work." No; speaking after the manner of men, justification is far greater than sanctification. When thou wert a sinner, ungodly, an enemy in thy mind, by wicked works, a child of the devil, an heir of hell, God pardoned thee on thy casting thy soul on the merit of the great sacrificial offering: thy sentence was reversed, thy state was changed, thou wert put among the children, and

God's Spirit witnessed with thine that thou wert His child. What a change! and what a blessing! What then is this complete sanctification? It is the cleansing of the blood that has not been cleansed; it is washing the soul of a true believer from the remains of sin; it is the making one, who is already a child of God, more holy, that he may be more happy, more useful in the world, and bring more glory to his heavenly Father. Great as this work is, how little, humanly speaking, is it when compared with what God has already done for thee? But suppose it were ten thousand times greater, is anything too hard for God? Are not all things possible to him that believes? And does not the blood of Christ cleanse from all unrighteousness? Arise, then, and be baptized with a greater effusion of the Holy Ghost, and wash away thy sin, calling on the name of the Lord.

Art thou weary of that carnal mind which is enmity to God? Canst thou be happy while thou art unholy? Dost thou know anything of God's love to thee? Dost thou not know that he has given his Son to die for thee? Dost thou love him in return for his love? Hast thou even a little love to him? And canst thou love him a little, without desiring to love him more? Dost thou not feel that thy happiness grows in proportion to thy love and subjection to him? Dost thou not wish to be happy? And dost thou not know that holiness and happiness are as inseparable as sin and misery? Canst thou have too much happiness or too much holiness? Canst thou be made holy and happy too soon? Art thou not weary of a sinful heart? Are not thy bad tempers, pride, anger, peevishness, fretfulness, covetousness, and the various unholy passion that too often agitate thy soul, a source of misery and woe to thee? And canst thou be unwilling to have them destroyed? Arise, then, and shake thyself from the dust, and call upon thy God! His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; his hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Behold, now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! It was necessary that Jesus Christ should die for thee, that thou mightest be saved; but he gave up his life for thee eighteen hundred years ago! and himself invites thee to come, for all things are now ready. Such is the nature of God that he cannot be more willing to save thee in any future time than he is now. He wills that thou shouldst love him now with all thy heart; but he knows that thou canst not thus love him till the enmity of the carnal mind is removed; and this he is willing this moment to destroy. The power of the Lord is therefore present to heal. Turn from every sin; give up every idol; cut off every right hand; pluck out every right eye. Be willing to part with thy enemies that thou mayest receive thy chief friend. Thy day is far spent, the night is at hand, the graves are ready for thee, and here thou hast no abiding city. A month, a week, a day, an hour, yea, even a moment, may send thee into eternity. And if thou die in thy sins, where God is thou shalt never come. Do not expect redemption in death: it can do nothing for thee even under the best consideration: it is thy last enemy. Remember then that nothing but the blood of Jesus can cleanse thee from all unrighteousness. Lay hold, therefore, on the hope that is set before thee. The gate may appear strait; but strive, and thou shalt pass through! "Come unto me," says Jesus. Hear His voice, believe at all risks, and struggle into God. Amen and Amen!

In no part of the Scriptures are we directed to seek holiness *gradatim*. We are to come to God as well for an instantaneous and complete purification from all sin, as for an

instantaneous pardon. Neither the *seriatim* pardon, nor the *gradatim* purification, exists in the Bible. It is when the soul is purified from all sin that it can properly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ:—as the field may be expected to produce a good crop, and all the seed vegetate, when the thorns, thistles, briars, and noxious weeds of every kind are grubbed out of it.

From every view of the subject, it appears that the blessing of a clean heart, and the happiness consequent on it, may be obtained in this life; because here, not in the future world, are we to be saved. Whenever, therefore, such blessings are offered, they may be received; but all the graces and blessings of the gospel are offered at all times; and when they are offered, they may be received. Every sinner is exhorted to turn from the evil of his way, to repent of sin, and supplicate the throne of grace for pardon. In the same moment in which he is commanded to turn, in that moment he may and should return. He does not receive the exhortation to repentance today that he may become a penitent at some future time. Every penitent is exhorted to believe on the Lord Jesus, that he may receive remission of sins:—he does not, he cannot, understand that the blessing thus promised is not to be received today, but at some future time. In like manner, to every believer the new heart and the right spirit are offered in the present moment; that they may in that moment, be received. For as the work of cleansing and renewing the heart is the work of God, his almighty power can perform it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And as it is this moment our duty to love God with all our heart, and we cannot do this till he cleanse our hearts, consequently he is ready to do it this moment, because he wills that we should in this moment love him. Therefore we may justly say, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” He who in the beginning caused light in a moment to shine out of darkness, can in a moment shine into our hearts, and give us to see the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This moment, therefore, we may be emptied of sin, filled with holiness, and become truly happy.

Such cleansed people never forget the horrible pit and miry clay out of which they have been brought. And can they then be proud? No! they loathe themselves in their own sight. They can never forgive themselves for having sinned against so good a God and so loving a Saviour. And can they undervalue Him by whose blood they were bought, and by whose blood they were cleansed? No! That is impossible: they now see Jesus as they ought to see him; they see him in his splendour, because they feel him in his victory and triumph over sin. To them that thus believe he is precious; and he was never so precious as now. As to their not needing him when thus saved from their sins, we may as well say, as soon may the creation not need the sustaining hand of God, because the works are finished! Learn this, that as it requires the same power to sustain creation as to produce it; so it requires the same Jesus who cleansed to keep clean. They feel that it is only through his continued indwelling that they are kept holy, and happy, and useful. Were he to leave them, the original darkness and kingdom of death would soon be restored.