

The King's Highway.

And an Highway shall there be, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness:

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

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BEULAH CAMP GROUND

Situated on the St. John River, 20 miles above the City of St. John, N. B.—One of the most beautiful Camp Grounds in America

Christian Perfection As Taught by John Wesley.

“THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIANS PERFECTI-
TION,” PUBLISHED IN 1759.

At the conference in the 1759, perceiving some danger that a diversity of sentiments should insensibly steal in among us, we again largely considered this doctrine; and soon after I published “Thoughts on Christian Perfection,” prefaced with the following advertisement:—

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

“As these thoughts were at first thrown together, by way of question and answer, I let them continue in the same that I have entertained for above twenty years.

“What is Christian perfection?”

“The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.

“Do you that affirm, that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?”

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

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

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

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

“What was the judgement of all

our brethren, who met at Bristol in August, 1758, on this head?”

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

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

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

“Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon Him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with, Himself. Hence His words are equally true of all men, in whatsoever state of grace they are:

‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me: without (or separate from) me you can do nothing.’

THOSE ENTIRELY SANCTIFIED NEED THE ATONEMENT.

“In every state we need Christ in the following respects, (1) Whatever grace we receive, it is a free gift from Him. (2) We receive it as His purchase, merely in consideration of the price He paid. (3) We have this grace, not only from Christ but in Him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree, which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but, as was said said before like that of a branch which, united to the vine, bears fruit; but, severed from it, is dried up and withered. (4) All our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on His intercession for us, which is one branch of His priestly office, wherefore, therefore we have always equal need. (5) The best of men still need Christ in His priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings, (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgement and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not properly sins, we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul, ‘He that loveth, hath fulfilled the law; for love is the fulfilling of the law,’ Rom xiii 10. Now, mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body, are no way contrary to love; nor therefore, in the Scripture sense, sin.

INVOLUNTARY TRANSGRESSIONS AND SINLESS PERFECTION.

To explain myself a little farther on

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

“What advice would you give to those that do, and those that do not, call them so?”

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

“Let those who do call them so, beware how they confound these defects with sins properly so called.

“But how will they avoid it? How will these be distinguished from those, if they are all promiscuously calls sins? I am much afraid, if we should allow any sins to be consistent with perfection, few would confine the idea to those defects concerning which only the assertion could be true.

“But how can a liability to mistake consist with perfect love? Is not a person who is perfected in love every moment under its influence?”

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