



SECTION I

What I purpose in the following papers is, to give a plain and distinct account of the steps by which I was led, during a course of many years, to embrace the doctrine of Christian Perfection. This I owe to the serious part of mankind, those who desire to know all “the truth as it is in Jesus.” And these only are concerned in questions of this kind. To these I would nakedly declare the thing as it is, endeavoring all along to show, from one period to another, both what I thought, and why I thought so.



SECTION 2

In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil.

Can any serious person doubt of this, or find a medium between serving God and serving the devil?



SECTION 3

In the year 1726, I met with Kempis' *Christian's Pattern*. The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw, that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this, and go no farther) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to him. I saw, that "simplicity of intention, and purity of affection," one design in all we speak or do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed "the wings of the soul," without which she can never ascend to the mount of God.



SECTION 4

A year or two after, Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call* were put into my hands. These convinced me, more than ever, of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian; and I determined, through his grace (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of), to be all devoted to God, to give him all my soul, my body, and my substance.

Will any considerate man say, that this is carrying matters too far? or that anything less is due to him who has given himself for us, than to give him ourselves, all we have, and all we are?



SECTION 5

In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study, the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having the mind which was in Christ, and of walking as Christ also walked; even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in him; and of walking as he walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more than of bending this rule to the experience of myself, or of other men; of allowing myself in any the least disconformity to our grand Exemplar.



SECTION 6

On January 1, 1733, I preached before the University in St. Mary's church on "the Circumcision of the Heart," an account of which I gave in these words:

It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being so "renewed in the image of our mind," as to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect" (*Works*, vol. V., p. 203).

In the same sermon I observed,

"Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." It is not only the first and great command, but all the commandments in one. "Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," they are all comprised in this one word, love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

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heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake—the fruition of him who is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with him that made them, the having “fellowship with the Father and the Son,” the being “joined to the Lord in one spirit.” One design ye are to pursue to the end of time—the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things so far as they tend to this; love the creature, as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought and word, and action, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole end, as well as source, of your being” (*Ibid.*, pp. 207, 208).

I concluded in these words:

Here is the sum of the perfect law, the circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. Other sacrifices from us he would not, but the living sacrifice of the heart hath he chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with him; for he is a jealous God. His throne will he not divide with another; he will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has him for its ultimate object. This is the way wherein those children of God once walked, who being dead still speak to us: Desire not to live but to praise his name; let all your thoughts, words, and works tend to his glory. Let your soul be filled with so entire a love to him that you may love nothing but for his sake. Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to his glory in all your actions. For then, and not till then, is that mind in us, which was also in Christ Jesus, when in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we pursue nothing but in relation to him, and in subordination to his pleasure; when we too neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfill our own will, but the will of him that sent us; when, “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do it all “to the glory of God” (*Ibid.*, p. 211).

It may be observed, this sermon was composed the first of all my writings which have been published. This was the view of religion I then

had, which even then I scrupled not to term *Perfection*. This is the view I have of it now, without any material addition or diminution. And what is there here, which any man of understanding, who believes the Bible, can object to? What can he deny, without flatly contradicting the Scripture? what retrench, without taking from the word of God?