The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR.

1. TO a great extent, the truths of the blessed gospel have been hidden under a false philosophy. In my early inquiries on the subject of religion, I found myself wholly unable to understand either the oral or written instructions of uninspired religious teachers. They seemed to me to resolve all religion into states either of the intellect or of the sensibility, which my consciousness assured me were wholly passive or involuntary. When I sought for definitions and explanations, I felt assured that they did not well understand themselves. I was struck with the fact that they so seldom defined, even to themselves, their own positions. Among the words of most frequent use I could find scarcely a single term intelligibly defined. I inquired in what sense the terms "regeneration," "faith," "repentance," "love," &c., were used, but could obtain no answer, at which it did not appear to me that both reason and revelation revolted. The doctrines of a nature, sinful per se, of a necessitated will, of inability, and of physical regeneration, and physical Divine influence in regeneration, with their kindred and resulting dogmas, embarrassed and even confounded me at every step. I often said to myself, "If these things are really taught in the Bible, I must be an infidel." But the more I read my Bible, the more clearly I saw that these things were not found there upon any fair principles of interpretation, such as would be admitted in a court of justice. I could not but perceive that the true idea of moral government had no place in the theology of the church; and, on the contrary, that underlying the whole system were the assumptions that all government was physical, as opposed to moral, and that sin and holiness are rather natural attributes, than moral, voluntary acts. These errors were not stated in words, but I could not fail to see that they were assumed. The distinction between original and actual sin, and the utter absence of a distinction between physical and moral depravity, embarrassed me. Indeed, I was satisfied either that I must be an infidel, or that these were errors that had no place in the Bible. I was often warned against reasoning and leaning to my own understanding. I found that the discriminating teachers of religion were driven to confess that they could not establish the logical consistency of their system, and that they were obliged to shut their eyes and believe, when revelation seemed to conflict with the affirmations of reason. But this course I could not take. I found, or thought I found, nearly all the doctrines of Christianity embarrassed by the assumptions above-named. But the Spirit of God conducted me through the darkness, and delivered me from the labyrinth and fog of a false philosophy, and set my feet upon the rock of truth, as I trust. But to this day I meet with those who seem to me to be in much confusion upon most of the practical doctrines of Christianity. They will admit, that sin and holiness must be voluntary, and yet speak of regeneration as consisting in anything but a voluntary change, and of Divine influence in regeneration; as anything but moral or persuasive. They seem not at all aware of what must follow from, and be implied in, the admission of the existence of moral government, and that sin and holiness must be free and voluntary acts and states of mind. In this work I have endeavoured to define the terms used by Christian divines, and the doctrines of Christianity, as I understand them, and to push to their logical consequences the cardinal admissions of the more recent and standard theological writers. Especially do I urge, to their logical consequences, the two admissions that the will is free, and that sin and holiness are voluntary acts of mind.

I also undertake to show that the freedom of the will is a first truth of reason, and that sin and holiness must be voluntary. I will not presume that I have satisfied others upon the points I have discussed, but I have succeeded at least in satisfying myself. I regard the assertion, that the doctrines of theology cannot preserve a logical consistency throughout, as both dangerous and ridiculous.

2. My principle design in publishing on Systematic Theology at first, was to furnish my pupils with a class or text book, wherein many points and questions were discussed of great practical importance, but which have not, to my knowledge, been discussed in any system of theological instruction extant. I also hoped to benefit other studious and pious minds.

3. I have written for those who are willing to take the trouble of thinking and of forming opinions of their own on theological questions. It has been no part of my aim to spare my pupils or any one else the trouble of intense thought. Had I desired to do so, the subjects discussed would have rendered such an attempt abortive.

4. There are many questions of great practical importance, and questions in which multitudes are taking a deep interest at present, that cannot be intelligently settled without instituting fundamental inquiries involving the discussion of those questions that lie at the foundation of morality and religion.

5. I am too well acquainted with the prejudices of the great mass of professing Christians, and with their unwillingness to be at the pains of studying elementary truths and of judging for themselves, to expect that this book will soon find favour with the majority of them. Still I am aware, that a spirit of inquiry into the fundamental and elementary truths of religion, and of all science, is abroad, and is waking up more and more in the church. There is a deep and growing demand for explanation in regard to the subjects discussed in this work. Especially is this true of ministers and leading laymen and women. This book is a humble attempt to meet this demand. My object has been to simplify and explain. The book has no literary merit, and claims none.

6. The book is highly metaphysical. This however is owing to the nature of the subject. The subject is, "Mind in its relations to Moral Law." Hence the discussion, to be anything to the purpose, must be metaphysical. To avoid metaphysics in such a discussion were to waive my subject, and to write about something else.

7. Most of the subjects of dispute among Christians at the present day are founded in misconceptions upon the subjects discussed in this volume. If I have succeeded in settling the questions which I have discussed, we shall see, that in a future volume most of the subjects of disagreement among Christians at the present day can be satisfactorily adjusted with comparative ease.

8. What I have said on "Moral Law" and on the "Foundation of Moral Obligation" is the key to the whole subject. Whoever masters and understands these can readily understand all the rest. But he who will not possess himself of my meaning upon these subjects, will not understand the rest.

9. Let no one despair in commencing the book, nor stumble at the definitions, thinking that he can never understand so abstruse a subject. Remember that what follows is an expansion and an explanation by way of application, of what you find so condensed in the first pages of the book. My brother, sister, friend--read, study, think, and read again. You were made to think. It will do you good to think; to develope your powers by study. God designed that religion should require thought, intense thought, and should thoroughly develope our powers of thought. The Bible itself is written in a style so condensed as to require much intense study. Many know nothing of the Bible or of religion, because they will not think and study. I do not pretend to so explain theology as to dispense with the labour of thinking. I have no ability and no wish to do so.

10. If any of my brethren think to convince me of error, they must first understand me, and show that they have read the book through, and that they understand it, and are candidly inquiring after truth and not "striving for masteries." If my brother is inquiring after truth, I will, by the grace of God, "hear with both ears, and then judge." But I will not promise to attend to all that cavillers may say, nor to notice what those impertinent talkers and writers may say or write who must have controversy. But to all honest inquirers after truth I would say, hail! my brother! Let us be thorough. Truth shall do us good.

11. This work, as was expected, has been freely criticised and reviewed in the United States. Several periodicals have highly commended it, and others have condemned it. Of the commendations, I have said nothing in this edition. To the reviews condemnatory, I have replied, and my replies will be found either in the body of the work or in the Appendix. To these replies, I beg leave to call the reader's particular attention, and hope he will give them an attentive reading. No answer has ever been made to any of them. The reader will see why. It will be seen that reference is had in the body of the work to Mahan's Moral Philosophy. That author objected only to my views of the ground of obligation. I have introduced a very brief critique upon his views, and given a laconic reply to his strictures on my own. After the most attentive consideration of all that has been written, I have seen no cause to change my views upon any point of doctrine contained in the American edition of this work. This volume is therefore the same as to doctrine as were the two volumes of the former edition. I have, however, for the sake of perspicuity, omitted considerable of the discussions contained in those volumes, and have written and introduced several new lectures in this. In some places I have amplified, and explained, and in others abridged; so that considerable changes in the form of the work have been introduced.

It is my earnest hope, that reviewers in this country may not follow the example of those American reviewers to whom I have replied, and which replies will be found in this volume. Those reviewers did not take pains to understand the work they reviewed, as the reader will see. The Princeton reviewer stated in the outset the necessity of reading the work through, and omitting no part or sentence, as a condition of understanding it, and yet unfortunately he immediately betrayed his ignorance of the work. Dr. Duffield, as I was informed, read my reply to Princeton, and acknowledged its conclusiveness, but thought he could prove my book to be highly heretical. Of his attempt the reader will judge. I am not aware that any complaint has been made that I either misunderstood or unfairly represented my reviewers in any respect.

12. It will be seen that the present volume contains only a part of a course of Systematic Theology. Should the entire course ever appear before the public, one volume will precede, and another succeed the present one. I published this volume first, because it contains all the points upon which I have been supposed to differ from the commonly received views. As a teacher of theology, I thought it due to the church and to the world, to give them my views upon those points upon which I had been accused of departing from the common opinions of Christians.

13. It is not my intention to set myself before the British public as a teacher of my ministerial brethren; but since my orthodoxy has been extensively called in question in England, as well as in America, and since I have spent some months in propagating what I hold to be the gospel, in different parts of this country, it is no more than justice that this work should be put within your reach, that all may understand my views who will study for themselves.

14. I beg that no false issues may be made by any one. The question is not, what is English or American orthodoxy. It is not what have been the views of any uninspired man or set of men, but what is true in theology. The question is not, whether this volume accords with the past or present views of the church, but does it accord with the word of God.

15. I have not yet been able to stereotype my theological views, and have ceased to expect ever to do so. The idea is preposterous. None but an omniscient mind can continue to maintain a precise identity of views and opinions. Finite minds, unless they are asleep or stultified by prejudice, must advance in knowledge. The discovery of new truth will modify old views and opinions, and there is perhaps no end to this process with finite minds in any world. True Christian consistency does not consist in stereotyping our opinions and views, and in refusing to make any improvement lest we should be guilty of change, but it consists in holding our minds open to receive the rays of truth from every quarter and in changing our views and language and practice as often and as fast, as we can obtain further information. I call this Christian consistency, because this course alone accords with a Christian profession. A Christian profession implies the profession of candour and of a disposition to know and obey all truth. It must follow, that Christian consistency implies continued investigation and change of views and practice corresponding with increasing knowledge. No Christian, therefore, and no theologian should be afraid to change his views, his language, or his practices in conformity with increasing light. The prevalence of such a fear would keep the world, at best, at a perpetual stand-still, on all subjects of science, and consequently all improvements would be precluded.

Every uninspired attempt to frame for the church an authoritative standard of opinion which shall be regarded as an unquestionable exposition of the word of God, is not only impious in itself, but it is also a tacit assumption of the fundamental dogma of Papacy. The Assembly of Divines did more than to assume the necessity of a Pope to give law to the opinions of men; they assumed to create an immortal one, or rather to embalm their own creed, and preserve it as the Pope of all generations: or it is more just to say, that those who have adopted that confession of faith and catechism as an authoritative standard of doctrine, have absurdly adopted the most obnoxious principle of Popery, and elevated their confession and catechism to the Papal throne and into the place of the Holy Ghost. That the instrument framed by that assembly should in the nineteenth century be recognized as the standard of the church, or of an intelligent branch of it, is not only amazing, but I must say that it is highly ridiculous. It is as absurd in theology as it would be in any other branch of science, and as injurious and stultifying as it is absurd and ridiculous. It is better to have a living than a dead Pope. If we must have an authoritative expounder of the word of God, let us have a living one, so as not to preclude the hope of improvement. "A living dog is better than a dead lion;" so a living Pope is better than a dead and stereotyped confession of faith, that holds all men bound to subscribe to its unalterable dogmas and its unvarying terminology.

16. I hold myself sacredly bound, not to defend these positions at all events, but on the contrary, to subject every one of them to the most thorough discussion, and to hold and treat them as I would the opinions of any one else; that is, if upon further discussion and investigation I see no cause to change, I hold them fast; but if I can see a flaw in any one of them, I shall amend or wholly reject it, as a further light shall demand. Should I refuse or fail to do this, I should need to blush for my folly and inconsistency, for I say again, that true Christian consistency implies progress in knowledge and holiness, and such changes in theory and in practice as are demanded by increasing light.

On the strictly fundamental questions in theology, my views have not, for many years, undergone any change, except as I have clearer apprehensions of them than formerly, and should now state some of them, perhaps, in some measure, differently from what I should then have done.

THE AUTHOR.
London, 27th March, 1851.

Contents

LECTURE 1.

Various classes of truths, and how the mind attains to a knowledge of them

LECTURE 2. -- Moral Government.

Definition of the term law . . Distinction between physical and moral law . . The essential attributes of moral law . . Subjectivity . . Objectivity . . Liberty, as opposed to necessity . . Fitness . . Universality . . Impartiality . . Justice . . Practicability . . Independence . . Immutability . . Unity . . Equity . . Expediency . . Exclusiveness

LECTURE 3. -- Moral Government--Continued.

Definition of the term government . . Distinction between moral and physical government . . The fundamental reason of moral government . . Whose right it is to govern . . What is implied in the right to govern . . Point out the limits of this right . . What is implied in moral government . . Moral obligation . . The conditions of moral obligation . . Remarks

LECTURE 4. -- Moral Government--Continued.

Man a subject of moral obligation . . Extent of moral obligation . . Shown by an appeal to reason, or to natural theology, to what acts and states of mind moral obligation cannot directly extend . . Shown to what acts and states of mind moral obligation must directly extend . . To what acts and mental states moral obligation indirectly extends

LECTURE 5. -- Foundation of Moral Obligation.

What is intended by the foundation of moral obligation . . The extent of moral obligation . . Remind you of the distinction between the ground and conditions of obligation . . Points of agreement among the principal parties in this discussion . . Wherein they disagree . . That the sovereign will of God is not the foundation of moral obligation . . The theory of Paley . . The utilitarian philosophy

LECTURE 6. -- Foundation of Moral Obligation. False Theories.

The theory that regards right as the foundation of moral obligation

LECTURE 7. -- Foundation of Moral Obligation. False Theories.

The theory that the goodness or moral excellence of God is the foundation of moral obligation

LECTURE 8. -- Foundation of Moral Obligation. False Theories.

The philosophy which teaches that moral order is the foundation of moral obligation . . The theory that maintains that the nature and relations of moral beings is the true foundation of moral obligation . . The theory that teaches that moral obligation is founded in the idea of duty . . That philosophy which teaches the complexity of the foundation of moral obligation

LECTURE 9. -- Foundation of Obligation.

Another form of the theory that affirms the complexity of the foundation of moral obligation; complex however only in a certain sense

LECTURE 10. -- Foundation of Obligation.

The intrinsic absurdity of various theories

LECTURE 11.

Summing up

LECTURE 12. -- Foundation of Moral Obligation. Practical Bearings of the Different Theories.

The theory that regards the sovereign will of God as the foundation of moral obligation . . The theory of the selfish school . . The natural and necessary results of utilitarianism

LECTURE 13. -- Practical Bearings and Tendency of Rightarianism.

The philosophy which teaches that the divine goodness or moral excellence is the foundation of moral obligation . . The theory which teaches that moral order is the foundation of moral obligation . . The practical bearings of the theory that moral obligation is founded in the nature and relations of moral agents . . The theory which teaches that the idea of duty is the foundation of moral obligation . . The complexity of the foundation of moral obligation . . The practical bearings of what is regarded as the true theory of the foundation of moral obligation, viz. that the highest well-being of God and of the universe is the sole foundation of moral obligation

LECTURE 14. -- Moral Government--Continued.

What constitutes obedience to moral law . . Obedience cannot be partial in the sense that the subject ever does or can partly obey and partly disobey at the same time . . Can the will at the same time make opposite choices? . . The choice of an ultimate end is, and must be, the supreme preference of the mind . . An intelligent choice must respect ends or means . . No choice whatever can be made inconsistent with the present choice of an ultimate end . . Inquiry respecting the strength or intensity of the choice . . The law does not require the constant and most intense action of the will . . An intention cannot be right and honest in kind, and deficient in the degree of intensity . . Examination of the philosophy of the question, whether sin and holiness consist in supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices or intentions . . Objections to the foregoing philosophy considered . . This philosophy examined in the light of the scriptures

LECTURE 15. -- Moral Government--Continued.

In what sense we have seen that obedience to moral law cannot be partial . . In what sense obedience to moral law can be partial . . The government of God accepts nothing as virtue but obedience to the law of God . . There can be no rule of duty but moral law . . Nothing can be virtue or true religion but obedience to the moral law . . Nothing can be virtue that is not just what the moral law demands. That is, nothing short of what it requires can be in any sense virtue . . Uses of the term justification . . Fundamentally important inquiries respecting this subject . . Remarks

LECTURE 16. -- Moral Government--Continued.

What constitutes obedience to moral law . . Just rules of legal interpretation . . That actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation shown from scripture . . In the light of the above rules, inquire what is not implied in entire obedience to the law of God

LECTURE 17. -- Moral Government--Continued.

What is implied in obedience to the moral law . . Call attention to certain facts in mental philosophy, as they are revealed in consciousness . . Point out the attributes of that love which constitutes obedience to the law of God . . Voluntariness . . Liberty . . Intelligence . . Virtuousness . . Disinterestedness . . Impartiality . . Universality

LECTURE 18. -- Attributes of Love.

Efficiency . . Penitence . . Faith . . Complacency

LECTURE 19. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Opposition to Sin . . Compassion

LECTURE 20. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Mercy . . Justice . . Veracity

LECTURE 21. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Patience . . Meekness . . Long-suffering . . Humility

LECTURE 22. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Self-denial . . Condescension . . Candour . . Stability . . Kindness . . Severity

LECTURE 23. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Holiness, or Purity . . Modesty . . Sobriety . . Sincerity . . Zeal . . Unity . . Simplicity

LECTURE 24. -- Attributes of Love--Continued.

Gratitude . . Wisdom . . Grace . . Economy

LECTURE 25. -- Moral Government.

Revert to some points that have been settled . . Show what disobedience to moral law cannot consist in . . What disobedience to moral law must consist in

LECTURE 26. -- Moral Government.

What constitutes disobedience . . What is not implied in disobedience to the law of God

LECTURE 27. -- Attributes of Selfishness.

What constitutes disobedience to moral law . . What is implied in disobedience to moral law . . Attributes of Selfishness. Voluntariness . . Liberty . . Intelligence . . Unreasonableness . . Interestedness . . Partiality . . Impenitence . . Unbelief

LECTURE 28. -- Attributes of Selfishness--Continued.

Efficiency . . Opposition to benevolence or to virtue . . Cruelty . . Injustice

LECTURE 29. -- Attributes of Selfishness--Continued.

Oppression . . Hostility . . Unmercifulness . . Falsehood, or lying . . Pride

LECTURE 30. -- Attributes of Selfishness--Continued.

Enmity . . Madness . . Impatience . . Intemperance . . Moral recklessness . . Unity

LECTURE 31. -- Attributes of Selfishness--Continued.

Egotism . . Simplicity . . Total moral depravity implied in selfishness as one of its attributes . . The scriptures assume and affirm it . . Remarks

LECTURE 32. -- Moral Government--Continued.

A return to obedience to moral law is and must be, under every dispensation of the divine government, the unalterable condition of salvation . . Under a gracious dispensation, a return to full obedience to moral law is not dispensed with as a condition of salvation, but this obedience is secured by the indwelling spirit of Christ received by faith to reign in the heart

LECTURE 33. -- Moral Government--Continued.

What constitutes the sanctions of law . . There can be no law without sanctions . . In what light sanctions are to be regarded . . The end to be secured by law, and the execution of penal sanctions . . By what rule sanctions ought to be graduated . . God's law has sanctions . . What constitutes the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God . . The perfection and duration of the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God . . What constitutes the vindicatory sanctions of the law of God . . Duration of the penal sanctions of the law of God . . Inquire into the meaning of the term infinite . . Infinites may differ indefinitely in amount . . I must remind you of the rule by which degrees of guilt are to be estimated . . That all and every sin must from its very nature involve infinite guilt in the sense of deserving endless punishment . . Notwithstanding all sin deserves endless punishment, yet the guilt of different persons may vary indefinitely, and punishment, although always endless in duration, may and ought to vary in degree, according to the guilt of each individual . . That penal inflictions under the government of God must be endless . . Examine this question in the light of revelation

LECTURE 34. -- Atonement.

I will call attention to several well established governmental principles . . Define the term atonement . . I am to inquire into the teachings of natural theology, or into the à priori affirmations of reason upon this subject . . The fact of atonement . . The design of the atonement . . Christ's obedience to the moral law as a covenant of works, did not constitute the atonement . . The atonement was not a commercial transaction . . The atonement of Christ was intended as a satisfaction of public justice . . His taking human nature, and obeying unto death, under such circumstances, constituted a good reason for our being treated as righteous

LECTURE 35. -- Extent of Atonement.

For whose benefit the atonement was intended . . Objections answered . . Remarks on the atonement

LECTURE 36. -- Human Government.

The ultimate end of God in creation . . Providential and moral governments are indispensable means of securing the highest good of the universe . . Civil and family governments are indispensable to the securing of this end, and are therefore really a part of the providential and moral government of God . . Human governments are a necessity of human nature . . This necessity will continue as long as human beings exist in this world . . Human governments are plainly recognized in the Bible as a part of the moral government of God . . It is the duty of all men to aid in the establishment and support of human government . . It is absurd to suppose that human governments can ever be dispensed with in the present world . . Objections answered . . Inquire into the foundation of the right of human governments . . Point out the limits or boundary of this right

LECTURE 37. -- Human Governments--Continued.

The reasons why God has made no form of civil government universally obligatory . . The particular forms of state government must and will depend upon the virtue and intelligence of the people . . That form of government is obligatory, that is best suited to meet the necessities of the people . . Revolutions become necessary and obligatory, when the virtue and intelligence or the vice and ignorance of the people demand them . . In what cases human legislation is valid, and in what cases it is null and void . . In what cases we are bound to disobey human governments . . Apply the foregoing principles to the rights and duties of governments and subjects in relation to the execution of the necessary penalties of law

LECTURE 38. -- Moral Depravity.

Definition of the term depravity . . Point out the distinction between physical and moral depravity . . Of what physical depravity can be predicated . . Of what moral depravity can be predicated . . Mankind are both physically and morally depraved . . Subsequent to the commencement of moral agency and previous to regeneration the moral depravity of mankind is universal . . The moral depravity of the unregenerate moral agents of our race, is total

LECTURE 39. -- Moral Depravity--Continued.

Proper method of accounting for the universal and total moral depravity of the unregenerate moral agents of our race . . Moral depravity consists in selfishness, or in the choice of self-interest, self-gratification, or self-indulgence, as an end . . Dr. Wood's view of physical and moral depravity examined . . Standards of the Presbyterian Church examined

LECTURE 40. -- Moral Depravity--Continued.

Further examination of the arguments adduced in support of the position that human nature is in itself sinful

LECTURE 41. -- Moral Depravity--Continued.

The proper method of accounting for moral depravity . . Pres. Edwards's views examined . . Summary of the truth on this subject . . Remarks

LECTURE 42. -- Regeneration.

The common distinction between regeneration and conversion . . I am to state the assigned reasons for this distinction . . I am to state the objections to this distinction . . What regeneration is not . . What regeneration is . . The universal necessity of regeneration . . Agencies employed in regeneration . . Instrumentalities employed in the work . . In regeneration the subject is both passive and active . . What is implied in regeneration

LECTURE 43. -- Regeneration--Continued.

Philosophical theories of regeneration . . The different theories of regeneration examined . . Objections to the taste scheme . . The divine efficiency scheme . . Objections to the divine efficiency . . The susceptibility scheme . . Theory of a divine moral suasion . . Objections to this theory . . Remarks

LECTURE 44. -- Regeneration--Continued.

Evidences of regeneration . . Introductory remarks . . Wherein the experience and outward life of saints and sinners may agree . . Remarks

LECTURE 45. -- Regeneration--Continued.

Wherein saints and sinners or deceived professors must differ

LECTURE 46. -- Regeneration--Continued.

In what saints and sinners differ . . What is it to overcome the world? . . Who are those that overcome the world? . . Why do believers overcome the world?

LECTURE 47. -- Regeneration--Continued.

Wherein saints and sinners differ

LECTURE 48. -- Natural Ability.

Show what is the Edwardean notion of ability . . This natural ability is no ability at all . . What, according to this school, constitutes natural inability . . This natural inability is no inability at all . . Natural ability is identical with freedom or liberty of will . . The human will is free, therefore men have ability to do all their duty

LECTURE 49. -- Moral Ability.

What constitutes moral inability according to the Edwardean school . . Their moral inability consists in real disobedience, and a natural inability to obey . . This pretended distinction between natural and moral inability is nonsensical . . What constitutes moral ability according to this school . . Their moral ability to obey God is nothing else than real obedience, and a natural inability to disobey

LECTURE 50. -- Inability.

What is thought to be the fundamental error of the Edwardean school on the subject of ability . . State the philosophy of the scheme of inability about to be considered . . The claims of this philosophy

LECTURE 51. -- Gracious Ability.

What is intended by the term . . This doctrine as held is an absurdity . . In what sense a gracious ability is possible

LECTURE 52. -- The Notion of Inability.

Proper mode of accounting for it

LECTURE 53.

[There is no Lecture LIII in the printed book. The lectures are incorrectly numbered.]

LECTURE 54. -- Repentance and Impenitence.

What repentance is not, and what it is . . What is implied in it . . What impenitence is not . . What it is . . Some things that are implied in it . . Some evidences of it

LECTURE 55. -- Faith and Unbelief.

What evangelical faith is not . . What it is . . What is implied in it . . What unbelief is not . . What it is,--What is implied in it . . Conditions of both faith and unbelief . . The guilt and desert of unbelief . . Natural and governmental consequences of both faith and unbelief

LECTURE 56. -- Justification.

What justification is not . . What it is . . Conditions of gospel justification

LECTURE 57. -- Sanctification.

An account of the recent discussions that have been had on this subject

LECTURE 58. -- Sanctification.

Remind you of some points that have been settled in this course of study . . Definition of the principal terms to be used in this discussion

LECTURE 59. -- Sanctification.

Entire sanctification is attainable in this life

LECTURE 60. -- Sanctification.

Bible argument

LECTURE 61. -- Sanctification.

Paul entirely sanctified

LECTURE 62. -- Sanctification.

Condition of its attainment

LECTURE 63. -- Sanctification.

Condition of its attainment--continued . . Relations of Christ to the believer

LECTURE 64. -- Sanctification.

Relations of Christ to the believer--continued

LECTURE 65. -- Sanctification.

Relations of Christ to the believer--continued

LECTURE 66. -- Sanctification.

Relations of Christ to the believer--continued

LECTURE 67. -- Sanctification.

Relations of Christ to the believer--continued

LECTURE 68. -- Sanctification.

Objections answered

LECTURE 69. -- Sanctification.

Tendency of the denial that Christians have valid grounds of hope that they should obtain a victory over sin in this life

LECTURE 70. -- Sanctification.

Objections--continued

LECTURE 71. -- Sanctification.

Objections--continued

LECTURE 72. -- Sanctification.

Objections--continued

LECTURE 73. -- Sanctification.

Remarks

LECTURE 74.

Election

LECTURE 75.

Reprobation

LECTURE 76.

Divine Sovereignty

LECTURE 77.

Purposes of God

LECTURE 78. -- Perseverance of Saints.

Notice the different kinds of certainty . . What is not intended by the perseverance of the saints

LECTURE 79.

Perseverance of Saints proved

LECTURE 80. -- Perseverance of Saints.

Further objections considered

LECTURE 81. -- Perseverance of Saints.

Consideration of principal arguments in support of the doctrine

LECTURE 82. -- Perseverance of Saints.

Perseverance proved

LECTURE 83. -- Perseverance of Saints.

Further objections answered

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE I.

HOW WE ATTAIN TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF CERTAIN TRUTHS.

ALL teaching and reasoning take certain truths as granted. That the unequivocal, *à priori* affirmations of the reason are valid, for all the truths and principles thus affirmed, must be assumed and admitted, or every attempt to construct a *science*, of any kind, or to attain to certain knowledge upon any subject, is vain and even preposterous. As I must commence my lectures on moral government by laying down certain moral postulates, or axioms, which are, *à priori*, affirmed by the reason, and therefore self-evident to all men, when so stated as to be understood, I will spend a few moments in stating certain facts belonging more appropriately to the department of psychology. Theology is so related to psychology, that the successful study of the former without a knowledge of the latter, is impossible. Every theological system, and every theological opinion, assumes something as true in psychology. Theology is, to a great extent, the science of mind in its relations to moral law. God is a mind or spirit: all moral agents are in his image. Theology is the doctrine of God, comprehending his existence, attributes, relations, character, works, word, government providential and moral, and, of course, it must embrace the facts of human nature, and the science of moral agency. All theologians do and must assume the truth of some system of psychology and mental philosophy, and those who exclaim most loudly against metaphysics, no less than others.

There is a distinction between the mind's knowing a truth, and knowing that it knows it. Hence I begin by defining self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness is the mind's recognition of itself. It is the noticing of, or act of knowing itself. Its existence, attributes, acts, and states, with the attributes of liberty or necessity which characterize those acts and states. Of this, I shall frequently speak hereafter.

THE REVELATIONS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

Self-consciousness reveals to us three primary faculties of mind, which we call *intellect*, *sensibility*, and *will*. The intellect is the faculty of knowledge; the sensibility is the faculty or susceptibility of feeling; the will is the *executive* faculty, or the faculty of doing or acting. All thinking, perceiving, intuiting, reasoning, opining, forming notions or ideas, belong to the intellect.

Consciousness reveals the various functions of the intellect, and also of the sensibility and will. In this place, we shall attend only to the functions of the intellect, as our present business is to ascertain the methods by which the intellect arrives at its knowledges, which are given to us in self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness is, itself, of course, one of the functions of the intellect; and here it is in place to say, that a revelation in consciousness is *science*, or *knowledge*. What consciousness gives us we know. Its testimony is infallible and conclusive, upon all subjects upon which it testifies.

Among other functions of the intellect, which I need not name, self-consciousness reveals the three-fold, fundamental distinction of the *sense*, the *reason*, and the *understanding*.

OF THE SENSE.

The sense is the power that perceives sensation and brings it within the field of consciousness. Sensation is an impression made upon the sensibility by some object without or some thought within the mind. The sense takes up, or perceives the sensation, and this perceived sensation is revealed in consciousness. If the sensation is from some object without the mind, as sound or colour, the perception of it belongs to the outer sense. If from some thought, or mental exercise, the perception is of the inner sense. I have said that the testimony of consciousness is conclusive, for all the facts given by its unequivocal testimony. We neither need, nor can we have, any higher evidence of the existence of a sensation, than is given by consciousness.

Our first impressions, thoughts, and knowledges, are derived from sense. But knowledge derived purely from this source would, of necessity, be very limited.

OF THE REASON.

Self-consciousness also reveals to us the reason or the *à priori* function of the intellect. The reason is that function of the intellect which immediately beholds or intuits a class of truths which, from their nature, are not cognizable either by the understanding or the sense. Such, for example, as the mathematical, philosophical, and moral axioms, and postulates. The reason gives *laws* and *first principles*. It gives the *abstract*, the *necessary*, the *absolute*, the *infinite*. It gives all its affirmations by a direct beholding or intuition, and not by induction or reasoning. The classes of truths given by this function of the intellect are self-evident. That is, the reason intuits, or directly beholds them, as the faculty of sense intuits, or directly beholds, a sensation. Sense gives to consciousness the direct vision of sensation, and therefore the existence of the sensation is certainly known to us. The reason gives to consciousness the direct vision of the class of truths of which it takes cognizance; and of the existence and validity of these truths we can no more doubt, than of the existence of our sensations.

Between knowledge derived from sense and from reason there is a difference: in one case, consciousness gives us the *sensation*: it may be questioned whether the perceptions of the sense are a direct beholding of the object of the sensation, and consequently whether the object really exists, and is the real archetype of the sensation. That the sensation exists we are certain, but whether that exists which we suppose to be the object and the cause of the sensation, admits of doubt. The question is, does the sense immediately intuit or behold the object of the sensation. The fact that the report of sense cannot always be relied upon, seems to show that the perception of sense is not an immediate beholding of the object of the sensation; sensation exists, this we know, that it has a cause we know; but that we rightly know the cause or object of the sensation, we may not know.

But in regard to the intuitions of the reason, this faculty directly beholds the truths which it affirms. These truths are the objects of its intuitions. They are not received at second hand. They are not inferences nor inductions, they are not opinions, nor conjectures, nor beliefs, but they are direct knowings. The truths given by this faculty are so directly seen and known, that to doubt them is impossible. The reason, by virtue of its own laws, beholds them with open face, in the light of their own evidence.

OF THE UNDERSTANDING.

The understanding is that function of the intellect that takes up, classifies and arranges the objects and truths of sensation, under a law of classification and arrangement given by the reason, and thus forms notions and opinions, and theories. The notions, opinions, and theories of the understanding, may be erroneous, but there can be no error in the *à priori* intuitions of the reason. The knowledges of the understanding are so often the result of induction or reasoning, and fall so entirely short of a direct beholding, that they are often knowledges only in a modified and restricted sense.

Of the imagination, and the memory, &c., I need not speak in this place.

What has been said has, I trust, prepared the way for saying that the truths of theology arrange themselves under two heads.

I. *Truths which need proof.*

II. *Truths which need no proof.*

I. *Truths which need proof.*

First. Of this class it may be said, in general, that to it belong all truths which are not directly intuited by some function of the intellect in the light of their own evidence.

Every truth that must be arrived at by reasoning or induction, every truth that is attained to by other testimony than that of direct beholding, perceiving, intuiting, or cognizing, is a truth belonging to the class that needs proof.

Second. Truths of demonstration belong to the class that needs proof. When truths of demonstration are truly demonstrated by any mind, it certainly knows them to be true, and affirms that the contrary cannot possibly be true. To possess the mind of others with those truths, we must lead them through the process of demonstration. When we have done so, they cannot but see the truth demonstrated. The human mind will not ordinarily receive, and rest in, a truth of demonstration, until it has demonstrated it. This it often does without recognizing the process of demonstration. The laws of knowledge are physical. The laws of logic are inherent in every mind; but in various states of developement in different minds. If a truth which needs demonstration, and which is capable of demonstration, is barely announced, and not demonstrated, the mind feels a dissatisfaction, and does not rest short of the demonstration of which it feels the necessity. It is therefore of little use to dogmatize, when we ought to reason, demonstrate, and explain. In all cases of truths, not self-evident, or of truths needing proof, religious teachers should understand and comply with the logical conditions of knowledge and rational belief; they tempt God when they merely dogmatize, where they ought to reason, and explain, and prove, throwing the responsibility of producing conviction and faith upon the sovereignty of God. God convinces and produces faith, not by the overthrow of, but in accordance with, the fixed laws of mind. It is therefore absurd and ridiculous to dogmatize and assert, when explanation, illustration, and proof are possible, and demanded by the laws of the intellect. To do this, and then leave it with God to make the people understand and believe, may be at present convenient for us, but if it be not death to our auditors, no thanks are due to us. We are bound to inquire to what class a truth belongs, whether it be a truth which, from its nature and the laws of mind, needs to be illustrated, or proved. If it does, we have no right merely to assert it, when it has not been proved. Let us comply with the necessary conditions of a rational conviction, and then leave the event with God.

To the class of truths that need proof belong those of *divine revelation*.

All truths known to man are divinely revealed to him in some sense, but I here speak of truths revealed to man by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible announces many self-evident truths, and many truths of demonstration. These may, or might be known, at least many of them, irrespective of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But the class of truths of which I here speak, rest wholly upon the testimony of God, and are truths of pure inspiration. Some of these truths are above reason, in the sense that the reason can, *à priori*, neither affirm nor deny them.

When it is ascertained that God has asserted them, the mind needs no other evidence of their truth, because by a necessary law of the intellect, all men affirm the veracity of God. But for this necessary law of the intellect, men could not rest upon the simple testimony of God, but would ask for evidence that God is to be believed. But such is the nature of mind, as constituted by the Creator, that no moral agent needs proof that God's testimony ought to be received. Let it be once settled that God has declared a fact, or a truth, and this is, with every moral agent, all the evidence he needs. The reason, from its own laws, affirms the perfect veracity of God, and although the truth announced may be such that the reason, *à priori*, can neither affirm, or deny it, yet when asserted by God, the reason irresistibly affirms that God's testimony ought be received.

These truths need proof in the sense that it needs to be shown that they were given by a divine inspiration. This fact demonstrated, the truths themselves need only to be understood, and the mind necessarily affirms its obligation to believe them.

Under this head I might notice the probable or possible truths; that is, those that are supported by such evidence as only shows them to be probable or possible, but I forbear.

My present object more particularly is to notice--

II. *Truths which need no proof.*

These are *à priori* truths of reason, and truths of sense; that is, they are truths that need no proof, because they are directly intuited or beheld by one of these faculties.

The *à priori* truths of reason may be classed under the heads of *first truths*: *self-evident truths which are necessary and universal*: *and self-evident truths not necessary and universal.*

1. First truths have the following attributes.

(1.) They are *absolute* or *necessary truths*, in the sense that the reason affirms that they must be true. Every event must have an adequate cause. Space must be. It is impossible that it should not be, whether any thing else were or not. Time must be, whether there were any events to succeed each other in time or not. Thus necessity is an attribute of this class.

(2.) *Universality* is an attribute of a first truth. That is, to truths of this class there can be no exception. Every event must have a cause, there can be no event without a cause.

(3.) *First truths are truths of necessary and universal knowledge*. That is, they are not merely knowable, but they are known to all moral agents, by a necessary law of their intellect.

That space and time are, and must be, that every event has and must have a cause, and such like truths, are universally known and assumed by every moral agent, whether the terms in which they are stated have ever been so much as heard by him, or not. This last is the characteristic that distinguishes first truths from others merely self-evident, of which we shall soon speak.

(4.) First truths are, of course, *self-evident*. That is, they are universally directly beheld, in the light of their own evidence.

(5.) First truths are truths of the *pure reason*, and of course truths of certain knowledge. They are universally known with such certainty as to render it impossible for any moral agent to deny, forget, or practically overlook them. Although they may be denied in theory, they are always, and necessarily, recognized in practice. No moral agent, for example, can, by any possibility, practically deny, or forget, or overlook the first truths that time and space exist and must exist, that every event has and must have a cause.

It is, therefore, always to be remembered that first truths are universally assumed and known, and in all our teachings, and in all our inquiries we are to take the first truths of reason for granted. It is preposterous to attempt to prove them, for the reason that we necessarily assume them as the basis and condition of all reasoning.

The mind arrives at a knowledge of these truths by directly and necessarily beholding them, upon condition of its first perceiving their logical condition. The mind beholds, or attains to the conception of, an *event*. Upon this conception it instantly assumes, whether it thinks of the assumption or not, that this event had, and that every event must have, a cause.

The mind perceives, or has the notion of body. This conception necessarily developes the first truth, *space is and must be*.

The mind beholds or conceives of succession; and this beholding, or conception, necessarily developes the first truth, *time is, and must be*.

As we proceed we shall notice divers truths which belong to this class, some of which, in theory, have been denied. Nevertheless, in their practical judgments, all men have admitted them and given as high evidence of their knowing them, as they do of knowing their own existence.

Suppose, for example, that the law of causality should not be, at all times or at any time, a subject of distinct thought and attention. Suppose that the proposition in words, should never be in the mind, that "every event must have a cause," or that this proposition should be denied. Still the truth is there, in the form of absolute knowledge, a necessary assumption, an *à priori* affirmation, and the mind has so firm a hold of it, as to be utterly unable to overlook, or forget, or practically deny it. Every mind has it as a certain knowledge, long before it can understand the language in which it is expressed, and no statement or evidence whatever can give the mind any firmer conviction of its truth, than it had from necessity at first. This is true of all the truths of this class. They are always, and necessarily, assumed by all moral agents, whether distinctly thought of or not. And for the most part this class of truths are assumed, without being frequently, or at least without being generally, the object of thought or direct attention. The mind assumes them, without a distinct consciousness of the assumption. For example, we act every moment, and judge, and reason, and believe, upon the assumption that every event must have a cause, and yet we are not conscious of thinking of this truth, nor that we assume it, until something calls the attention to it.

First truths of reason, then, let it be distinctly remembered, are always and necessarily assumed, though they may be seldom thought of. They are universally known, before the words are understood, by which they may be expressed; and although they may never be expressed in a formal proposition, yet the mind has as certain a knowledge of them as it has of its own existence.

All reasoning proceeds upon the assumption of these truths. It must do so, of necessity. It is preposterous to attempt to prove first truths to a moral agent; for, being a moral agent, he must absolutely know them already, and if he did not, in no possible way could he be put in possession of them, except by presenting to his perception the chronological condition of their developement, and in no case could any thing else be needed, for upon the occurrence of this perception, the assumption, or developement, follows by a law of absolute and universal necessity. And until these truths are actually developed, no being can be a moral agent.

There is no reasoning with one who calls in question the first truths of reason, and demands proof of them. All reasoning must, from the nature of mind and the laws of reasoning, assume the first-truths of reason as certain, and admitted, and as the *à priori* condition of all logical deduction and demonstration. Some one of these must be assumed as true, directly or indirectly, in every syllogism and in every demonstration.

In all our future investigations we shall have abundant occasion for the application and illustration of what has now been said of first truths of reason. If, at any stage of our progress, we light upon a truth of this class, let it be borne in mind that the nature of the truth is the preclusion, or, as lawyers would express it, the *estopple* of all controversy.

To deny the reality of this class of truths, is to deny the validity of our most perfect knowledge. The only question to be settled is, does the truth in question belong to this class? There are many truths which men, all sane men, certainly know, of which they not only seldom think, but which, in theory, they strenuously deny.

2. The second class of truths that need no proof are *self-evident truths*, possessing the attributes of *necessity* and *universality*.

Of these truths, I remark--

(1.) That they, like first truths, are affirmed by the pure reason, and not by the understanding, nor the sense.

(2.) They are affirmed, like first truths, *à priori*; that is, they are directly beheld or intuited, and not attained to by evidence or induction.

(3.) They are truths of universal and necessary affirmation, when so stated as to be understood. By a law of the reason, all sane men must admit and affirm them, in the light of their own evidence, whenever they are understood.

This class, although self-evident, when presented to the mind, are not, like first truths, universally and necessarily known to all moral agents.

The mathematical axioms, and first principles, the *à priori* grounds and principles of all *science*, belong to this class.

(4.) They are, like first truths, *universal* in the sense that there is no exception to them.

(5.) They are *necessary truths*. That is, the reason affirms, not merely that they are, but that they must be, true; that these truths cannot but be. The abstract, the infinite, belong to this class.

To compel other minds to admit this class of truths, we need only to frame so perspicuous a statement of them as to cause them to be distinctly perceived or understood. This being done, all sound minds irresistibly affirm them, whether the heart is, or is not, honest enough to admit the conviction.

3. A third class of truths that need no proof, are truths of *rational intuition*, but possess not the attributes of *universality and necessity*.

Our own existence, personality, personal identity, &c., belong to this class. These truths are intuited by the reason, are self-evident, and given, as such, in consciousness; they are known to self, without proof, and cannot be doubted. They are at first developed by sensation, but not inferred from it. Suppose a sensation to be perceived by the sense, all that could be logically inferred from this is, that there is some subject of this sensation, but that *I* exist, and am the subject of this sensation, does not logically appear. Sensation first awakes the mind to self-consciousness; that is, a sensation of some kind first arouses the attention of mind to the facts of its own existence and personal identity. These truths are directly beheld and affirmed. The mind does not say, *I feel*, or *I think*, and therefore *I am*, for this is a mere sophism; it is to assume the existence of the *I* as the subject of feeling, and afterwards to infer the existence of the *I* from the feeling or sensation.

4. A fourth class of truths that need no proof are *sensations*. It has been already remarked, that all sensations given by consciousness, are self-evident to the subject of them. Whether I ascribe my sensations to their real cause may admit of doubt, but that the sensation is real there can be no doubt. The testimony of the sense is valid, for that which it immediately beholds or intuits, that is, for the reality of the sensation. The judgment may err by ascribing the sensation to the wrong cause.

But I must not proceed further with this statement; my design has been, not to enter too minutely into nice metaphysical distinctions, nor by any means to exhaust the subject of this lecture, but only to fix attention upon the distinctions upon which I have insisted, for the purpose of precluding all irrelevant and preposterous discussions about the validity of first and self-evident truths. I must assume that you possess some knowledge of psychology, and of mental philosophy, and leave to your convenience a more thorough and extended examination of the subject but hinted at in this lecture.

Enough, I trust, has been said to prepare your minds for the introduction of the great and fundamental axioms which lie at the foundation of all our ideas of morality and religion. Our next lecture will present the nature and attributes of *moral law*. We shall proceed in the light of the *à priori* affirmations of the reason, in postulating its nature and its attributes. Having attained to a firm footing upon these points, we shall be naturally conducted by reason and revelation to our ultimate conclusions.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE II.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

I. DEFINITION OF LAW.

II. DISTINCTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MORAL LAW.

III. ATTRIBUTES OF MORAL LAW.

I. In discussing this subject, I must begin with defining the term Law.

Law, in a sense of the term both sufficiently popular and scientific for my purpose, is a RULE OF ACTION. In its *generic* signification, it is applicable to every kind of action, whether of matter or of mind--whether intelligent or unintelligent--whether free or necessary action.

II. I must distinguish between *Physical and Moral Law*.

Physical law is a term that represents the order of sequence, in all the changes that occur under the law of necessity, whether in matter or mind. I mean all changes, whether of state or action, that do not consist in the states or actions of free will. Physical law is the law of force, or necessity, as opposed to the law of liberty. Physical law is the law of the material universe. It is also the law of mind, so far as its states and changes are involuntary. All mental states or actions, which are not free and sovereign actions of will, must occur under, and be subject to, physical law. They cannot possibly be accounted for, except as they are ascribed to the law of necessity or force.

Moral law is a rule of moral action with sanctions. It is that rule to which moral agents ought to conform all their voluntary actions, and is enforced by sanctions equal to the value of the precept. It is the rule for the government of free and intelligent action, as opposed to necessary and unintelligent action. It is the law of liberty, as opposed to the law of necessity--of motive and free choice, as opposed to force of every kind. Moral law is primarily a rule for the direction of the action of free will, and strictly of free will only. But secondarily, and less strictly, it is the rule for the regulation of all those actions and states of mind and body, that follow the free actions of will by a law of necessity. Thus, moral law controls involuntary mental states and outward action, only by securing conformity of the actions of free will to its precept.

III. I must call attention to *the essential attributes of moral law*.

1. *Subjectivity*. It is, and must be, an idea of reason, developed in the mind of the subject. It is an idea, or conception, of that state of will, or course of action, which is obligatory upon a moral agent. No one can be a moral agent, or the subject of moral law, unless he has this idea developed; for this idea is identical with the law. It is the law developed, or revealed within himself; and thus he becomes "a law to himself," his own reason affirming his obligation to conform to this idea, or law.

2. *Objectivity*. Moral law may be regarded as a rule of duty, prescribed by the supreme Lawgiver, and external to self. When thus contemplated, it is objective; when contemplated as a necessary idea or affirmation of our own reason, we regard it subjectively, or as imposed upon us by God, through the necessary convictions of our own minds. When contemplated as within ourselves, and as the affirmation of our own reason we predicate of it subjectivity; but when thought of as a law declared and enforced by the will of God, it is contemplated as distinct from our own necessary ideas, and predicate of it objectivity.

3. A third attribute is *liberty, as opposed to necessity*. The precept must lie developed in the reason, as a rule of duty--a law of moral obligation--a rule of choice, or of ultimate intention, declaring that which a moral agent ought to choose, will, intend. But it does not, must not, can not possess the attribute of necessity in its relations to the actions of free will. It must not, cannot, possess an element or attribute of force, in any such sense as to render conformity of will to its precept, unavoidable. This would confound it with physical law.

4. A fourth attribute of moral law, is *fitness*. It must be the law of nature, that is, its precept must prescribe and require, just those actions of the will which are suitable to the nature and relations of moral beings, and nothing more nor less; that is, the intrinsic value of the well-being of God and of the universe being given as the *ground*, and the nature and relations of moral beings as the *condition* of the obligation, the reason hereupon necessarily affirms the intrinsic propriety and fitness of choosing this good, and of consecrating the whole being to its promotion. This is what is intended by the *law of nature*. It is the law or rule of action imposed on us by God, in and by the nature which he has given us.

5. A fifth attribute of moral law is *universality*. The conditions and circumstances being the same, it requires, and must require, of all moral agents, the same things, in whatever world they may be found.

6. A sixth attribute of moral law is, and must be, *impartiality*. Moral law is no respecter of persons--knows no privileged classes. It demands one thing of all, without regard to anything, except the fact that they are moral agents. By this it is not intended, that the same course of outward conduct is required of all; but the same state of heart in all--that all shall have one ultimate intention--that all shall consecrate themselves to one end--that all shall entirely conform, in heart and life, to their nature and relations.

7. A seventh attribute of moral law is, and must be, *justice*. That which is unjust cannot be law.

Justice, as an attribute of moral law, must respect both the precept and the sanction. Justice, as an attribute of the precept, consists in the requisition of just that, and no more, which is in exact accordance with the nature and relations of the ruler and the subject.

Justice, as an attribute of the sanction, consists in apportioning rewards and punishments, to the merit of obedience on the one hand, and to the guilt of disobedience on the other.

Sanctions belong to the very essence and nature of moral law. A law without sanctions is no law; it is only counsel, or advice. Sanctions are the motives which the law presents, to secure obedience to the precept. Consequently, they should always be graduated by the importance of the precept; and that is not properly law which does not promise, expressly or by implication, a reward proportionate to the merit of obedience, and threaten punishment equal to the guilt of disobedience. Law cannot be unjust, either in precept or sanction: and it should always be remembered, that what is unjust, is not law, cannot be law. It is contrary to the true definition of law. *Moral law is a rule of action, founded in the nature and relations of moral beings, sustained by sanctions equal to the merit of obedience, and the guilt of disobedience.*

8. An eighth attribute of moral law is *practicability*. That which the precept demands must be possible to the subject. That which demands a natural impossibility is not, and cannot be, moral law. The true definition of law excludes the supposition that it can, under any circumstances, demand an absolute impossibility. Such a demand could not be in accordance with the nature and relations of moral agents, and therefore practicability must always be an attribute of moral law. To talk of inability to obey moral law, is to talk nonsense.

9. A ninth attribute of moral law is *independence*. It is founded in the self-existent nature of God. It is an eternal and necessary idea of the divine reason. It is the eternal self-existent rule of the divine conduct, the law which the intelligence of God prescribes to himself. Moral law, as we shall see hereafter more fully, does not, and cannot originate in the will of God. It originates, or rather, is founded in his eternal, self-existent nature. It eternally existed in the divine reason. It is the idea of that state of will which is obligatory upon God upon condition of his natural attributes, or, in other words, upon condition of his nature. As a law, it is entirely independent of his will just as his own existence is. It is obligatory also upon every moral agent, entirely independent of the will of God. Their nature and relations being given, and their intelligence being developed, moral law must be obligatory upon them, and it lies not in the option of any being to make it otherwise. Their nature and relations being given, to pursue a course of conduct suited to their nature and relations, is necessarily and self-evidently obligatory, independent of the will of any being.

10. A tenth attribute of moral law is *immutability*. Moral law can never change, or be changed. It always requires of every moral agent a state of heart, and course of conduct, precisely suited to his nature and relations. Whatever his nature is, his capacity and relations are; entire conformity to just that nature, those capacities and relations, so far as he is able to understand them, is required at every moment and nothing more nor less. If capacity is enlarged, the subject is not thereby rendered capable of works of supererogation--of doing more than the law demands; for the law still, as always, requires the full consecration of his whole being to the public interests. If by any means whatever, his ability is abridged, moral law, always and necessarily consistent with itself, still requires that what is left--nothing more or less--shall be consecrated to the same end as before. Whatever demands more or less than *entire, universal, and constant conformity of heart and life, to the nature, capacity and relations of moral agents, be they what they may, is not, and cannot be, moral law*. To suppose that it could be otherwise, would be to contradict the true definition of moral law. If therefore, the capacity is by any means abridged, the subject does not thereby become incapable of rendering full obedience; for the law still demands and urges, that the heart and life shall be fully conformed to the present, existing nature, capacity, and relations. Anything that requires more or less than this, whatever else it is, is not, and cannot be, moral law. To affirm that it can, is to talk nonsense. Moral law invariably holds one language. It never changes the spirit of its requirement. "Thou shalt love," or be perfectly benevolent, is its uniform and its only demand. This demand it never varies, and never can vary. It is as immutable as God is, and for the same reason. To talk of letting down, or altering moral law, is to talk absurdly. The thing is naturally impossible. No being has the right or the power to do so. The supposition overlooks the very nature of moral law. Should the natural capability of the mind, by any means whatever, be enlarged or abridged, it is perfectly absurd, and a contradiction of the nature of moral law, to say, that the claims of the law are either elevated or lowered. Moral law is not a statute, an enactment, that has its origin or its foundation in the will of any being. It is the law of nature, the law which the nature or constitution of every moral agent imposes on himself, and which God imposes upon us because it is entirely suited to our nature and relations, and is therefore naturally obligatory upon us. It is the unalterable demand of the reason, that the whole being, whatever there is of it at any time, shall be entirely consecrated to the highest good of universal being, and for this reason God requires this of us, with all the weight of his authority. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that moral law is nothing more nor less, than the law of nature revealed in the necessary ideas of our own reason, and enforced by the authority of God. It is an idea of that which is fit, suitable, agreeable to our nature and relations for the time being, that which it is reasonable for us to will and do, at any and every moment, in view of all the circumstances of our present existence,--just what the reason affirms, and what God affirms, to be suited to our nature and relations, under all the circumstances of the case.*(see below)

11. An eleventh attribute of moral law is *unity*. Moral law proposes but one ultimate end of pursuit to God, and to all moral agents. All its requisitions, in their spirit, are summed up and expressed in one word, *love* or *benevolence*. This I only announce here. It will more fully appear hereafter. Moral law is a pure and simple idea of the reason. It is the idea of perfect, universal, and constant consecration of the whole being, to the highest good of being. Just this is, and nothing more nor less can be, moral law; for just this, and nothing more nor less, is a state of heart and a course of life exactly suited to the nature and relations of moral agents, which is the only true definition of moral law.

12. *Equity* is another attribute of moral law. Equity is *equality*. That only is equitable which is *equal*. The interest and well-being of every sentient existence, and especially of every moral agent, is of some value in comparison with the interests of others, and of the whole universe of creatures. Moral law demands that the interest and well-being of every member of the universal family shall be regarded by each according to its relative or comparative value, and that in no case shall it be sacrificed or wholly neglected, unless it be forfeited by crime. The distinction, allowed by human tribunals, between law and equity, does not pertain to moral law, nor does nor can it strictly pertain to any law. For it is impossible that that should be law, in the sense of imposing obligation, of which equity is not an attribute. An inequitable law cannot be. The requirements of law must be equal. A moral agent may, by transgression, forfeit the protection of law, and may come into such governmental relations, by trampling on the law, that moral law may demand that he be made a public example--that his interest and well-being be laid upon the altar, and that he be offered a sacrifice to public justice, as a preventive of crime in others. It may happen also that sacrifices may be demanded by moral law of *innocent* beings, for the promotion of a greater amount of good than that sacrificed by the innocent. Such was the case with the atonement of Christ, and such is the case with the missionary, and with all who are called by the law of love to practice self-denial for the good of others. But let it be remembered, that moral law never requires nor allows any degree of self-denial and self-sacrifice that relinquishes a good of greater value than that gained by the sacrifice. Nor does it in any case demand nor permit that any interest, not forfeited by its possessor, shall be relinquished or finally neglected, without adequate ultimate compensation. As has been said, every interest is of some comparative value; and ought to be so esteemed and treated. Moral law demands, and must demand, that it shall be so regarded by all moral agents to whom it is known. "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF" is its unalterable language. It can absolutely utter no other language than this, and nothing can be *moral law* which holds any other language. Law is not, and cannot be, an arbitrary enactment of any being or number of beings. *Unequal* LAW *is a misnomer*. That which is unequal in its demands, is not and cannot be, law. Law must respect the interests and the rights of all, and of each member of the universal family. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, and still be law.

13. *Expediency* is another attribute of moral law.

That which is upon the whole most wise is expedient,--that which is upon the whole expedient is demanded by *moral law*. True expediency and the spirit of moral law are always identical. Expediency may be inconsistent with the letter, but never with the spirit of moral law. Law in the form of commandment is a revelation or declaration of that course which is expedient. It is expediency revealed, as in the case of the decalogue, and the same is true of every precept of the Bible, it reveals to us what is expedient. A revealed law or commandment is never to be set aside by our views of expediency. We may know with certainty that what is required is expedient. The command is the expressed judgment of God in the case, and reveals with unerring certainty the true path of expediency. When Paul says, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient," we must not understand him as meaning that all things in the absolute sense were lawful to him, or that anything that was not expedient was lawful to him. But he doubtless intended, that many things were *inexpedient* that are not expressly prohibited by the letter of the law,--that the spirit of the law prohibited many things not expressly prohibited by the letter. It should never be forgotten that that which is plainly demanded by the highest good of the universe is *law*. It is expedient. It is wise. The true spirit of the moral law does and must demand it. So, on the other hand, whatever is plainly inconsistent with the highest good of the universe is illegal, unwise, inexpedient, and must be prohibited by the spirit of moral law. But let the thought be repeated, that the Bible precepts always reveal that which is truly expedient, and in no case are we at liberty to set aside the spirit of any commandment upon the supposition that expediency requires it. Some have denounced the doctrine of expediency altogether, as at all times inconsistent with the *law of right*. These philosophers proceed upon the assumption that the law of right and the law of benevolence are not identical but inconsistent with each other. This is a common but fundamental mistake, which leads me to remark that--

Law proposes the highest good of universal being as its end, and requires all moral agents to consecrate themselves to the promotion of this end. Consequently, expediency must be one of its attributes. That which is upon the whole in the highest degree useful to the universe must be demanded by moral law. Moral law must, from its own nature, require just that course of willing and acting that is upon the whole in the highest degree promotive of the public good,--in other words, that which is upon the whole in the highest degree useful, and therefore expedient. It has been strangely and absurdly maintained that right would be obligatory if it necessarily tended to and resulted in universal and perfect misery. Than which a more nonsensical affirmation was never made. The affirmation assumes that the law of right and of good-will are not only distinct, but may be antagonistic. It also assumes that that can be *law* that is not suited to the nature and relations of moral agents. Certainly it will not be pretended that that course of willing and acting that necessarily tends to, and results in, universal misery, can be consistent with the nature and relations of moral agents. Nothing is or can be suited to their nature and relations, that is not upon the whole promotive of their highest well-being. Expediency and right are always and necessarily at one. They can never be inconsistent. That which is upon the whole most expedient is right, and that which is right is upon the whole expedient.

14. *Exclusiveness* is another attribute of moral law. That is, moral law is the only possible rule of moral obligation. A distinction is usually made between moral, ceremonial, civil, and positive laws. This distinction is in some respects convenient, but is liable to mislead and to create an impression that something can be obligatory, in other words can be law, that has not the attributes of moral law. Nothing can be law, in any proper sense of the term, that is not and would not be universally obligatory upon moral agents under the same circumstances. It is law because and only because, under all the circumstances of the case, the course prescribed is fit, proper, suitable, to their natures, relations, and circumstances. There can be no other rule of action for moral agents but moral law, or the law of benevolence. Every other rule is absolutely excluded by the very nature of moral law. Surely there can be no law that is or can be obligatory upon moral agents but one suited to, and founded in their nature, relations, and circumstances. This is and must be the law of love or benevolence. This is the law of right, and nothing else is or can be. Every thing else that claims to be law and to impose obligation upon moral agents, from whatever source it emanates, is not and cannot be a law, but must be an imposition and "a thing of nought."

*(from above) It has been said, that if we "dwarf," or abridge our powers, we do not thereby abridge the claims of God; that if we render it impossible to perform so high a service as we might have done, the Lawgiver, nevertheless, requires the same as before, that is, that under such circumstances he requires of us an impossibility;--that should we dwarf, or completely derange, or stultify our powers, he would still hold us under obligation to perform all that we might have performed, had our powers remained in their integrity. To this I reply,

That this affirmation assumes, that moral law and moral obligation are founded in the will of God;--that his mere will makes law. This is a fundamental mistake. God cannot legislate in the sense of *making* law. He declares and enforces the *common law* of the universe, or, in other words, the law of nature. This law, I repeat it, is nothing else than that rule of conduct which is in accordance with the nature and relations of moral beings. The totality of its requisitions are, both in its letter and its spirit, "Thou shalt love, &c., with all *thy* heart, *thy* soul, *thy* might, *thy* strength." That is, whatever there is of us, at any moment, is to be wholly consecrated to God, and the good of being, and nothing more nor less. If our nature or relations are changed, no matter by what means, or to what extent, provided we are still moral agents, its language and spirit are the same as before,--"Thou shalt love with all *thy strength*," &c.

I will here quote from the "Oberlin Evangelist," an extract of a letter from an esteemed brother, embodying the substance of the above objection, together with my reply.

"One point is what you say of the claims of the law, in the 'Oberlin Evangelist,' vol. ii. p. 50:--'the question is, what does the law of God require of Christians of the present generation, in all respects in our circumstances, with all the ignorance and debility of body and mind which have resulted from the intemperance and abuse of the human constitution through so many generations?' But if this be so, then the more ignorant and debilitated a person is in body and mind in consequence of his own or ancestors' sins and follies, the less the law would require of him, and the less would it be for him to become perfectly holy--and, the nearer this ignorance and debility came to being perfect, the nearer would he be to being perfectly holy, for the less would be required of him to make him so. But is this so? Can a person be perfectly sanctified, while particularly that 'ignorance of mind,' which is the effect of the intemperance and abuse of the human constitution, remains? Yea, can he be sanctified at all, only as *this* ignorance is removed by the truth and Spirit of God; it being a moral and not a physical effect of sinning? I say it kindly, here appears to me, at least, a very serious entering wedge of error. Were the effect of human depravity upon man simply to disable him, like taking from the body a limb, or destroying in part, or in whole, a faculty of the mind, I would not object; but to say, this effect is ignorance, a moral effect wholly, and then say, having this ignorance, the law levels its claims according to it, and that with it, a man can be entirely sanctified, looks not to me like the teachings of the bible."

1. I have seen the passage from my lecture, here alluded to, quoted and commented upon, in different periodicals, and uniformly with entire disapprobation.

2. It has always been separated entirely from the exposition which I have given of the law of God in the same lectures; with which exposition, no one, so far as I know, has seen fit to grapple.

3. I believe, in every instance, the objections that have been made to this paragraph, were made by those who profess to believe in the present natural ability of sinners to do all their duty.

4. I would most earnestly and respectfully inquire, what consistency there is, in denominating this paragraph a dangerous heresy, and still maintaining that men are at present naturally able to do all that God requires of them?

5. I put the inquiry back to those brethren,--By what authority do you affirm, that God requires any more of any moral agent in the universe, and of man in his present condition, than he is at present able to perform?

6. I inquire, does not the very language of the law of God prove to a demonstration, that God requires no more of man than, in his present state, he is able to perform? Let us hear its language: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and will all *thy strength*. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now here, God so completely levels his claims, by the very wording of these commandments, to the present capacity of every human being, however young or old, however maimed, debilitated, or idiotic, as, to use the language or sentiment of Prof. Hickok, of Auburn Seminary, uttered in my hearing that, "if it were possible to conceive of a *moral pigmy*, the law requires of him nothing more, than to use whatever strength he has, in the service and for the glory of God."

7. I most respectfully but earnestly inquire of my brethren, if they believe that God requires as much of men as of angels, of a child as of a man, of a half-idiot as of a Newton? I mean not to ask whether God requires an equally perfect consecration of all the powers actually possessed by each of these classes; but whether in degree, he really requires the same, irrespective of their present natural ability?

8. I wish to inquire, whether my brethren do not admit that the brain is the organ of the mind, and that every abuse of the physical system has abridged the capacity of the mind, while it remains connected with the body? And I would also ask, whether my brethren mean to maintain, at the same breath, the doctrine of present natural ability to comply with all the requirements of God, and also the fact that God now requires of man just the same degree of service that he might have rendered if he had never sinned, or in any way violated the laws of his being? And if they maintained these two positions at the same time, I further inquire, whether they believe that man has naturally ability at the present moment to bring all his faculties and powers, together with his knowledge, into the same state in which they might have been, had he never sinned? My brethren, is there not some inconsistency here?

The fact is, you contradict yourselves. Your positions are precisely as follow:--

(1.) Man is able perfectly to keep all the commandments of God.

(2.) God requires of man just that service in kind and degree, which would have been possible to him had he never sinned.

(3.) But man has sinned, abused, and crippled his powers, in so much that, to render the kind and degree of service which God demands of him, is a natural impossibility.

9. In the paragraph above quoted, the brother admits, that if a man by his own act had deprived himself of any of his corporeal faculties, he would not thenceforth have been under an obligation to use those faculties. But he thinks this principle does not hold true, in respect to ignorance; because he esteems ignorance a moral, and not a natural defect. Here I beg leave to make a few inquiries:

(1.) Should a man wickedly deprive himself of the use of his hand, would not this be a moral act? No doubt it would.

(2.) Suppose a man by his own act should make himself an idiot, would not this be a moral act?

(3.) Would he not in both cases render himself naturally unable, in the one case to use his hand, and in the other his reason? Undoubtedly he would. But how can it be affirmed, with any show of reason, that in the one case his natural inability discharges him from obligation, and not in the other--that he is still bound to use his reason, but not his hand? Now the fact is, that in both these cases the inability is *natural*.

(4.) I ask, if a man willingly remained in ignorance of God, whether his ignorance would constitute a moral inability? If a moral inability, he can instantly overcome it, by the right exercise of his own will, for nothing can be a moral inability that cannot be instantaneously removed by our own volition. But can the present ignorance of mankind be instantaneously removed by an act of volition on the part of men, and their knowledge become as perfect as it might have been had they never sinned? If not, why call ignorance a moral inability, or a moral effect? The fact is that ignorance is often the natural effect of moral delinquency. Neglect of duty occasions ignorance; and this ignorance, while it remains, constitutes a natural inability to perform those duties of which the mind is ignorant; and all that can be required is, that from the present moment, the mind should diligently engage in acquiring what knowledge it can, and perfectly obey, as fast as it obtains the light. If this is not true, it is utter nonsense to talk about natural ability as being a *sine quà non* of moral obligation. And I would kindly, but most earnestly, ask my brethren, by what rule of consistency they maintain, at the same breath, the doctrine of a natural ability to do whatever God requires, and also insist that he requires men to know as much, and in all respects to render him the same kind and *degree* of service as if they never had sinned, or rendered themselves in any respect naturally incapable of doing and being, at the present moment, all that they might have done and been, had they never, in any instance, neglected duty?

10. This objector appears to be strongly impressed with the consideration, that if a man's ignorance can be any excuse for his not doing, at present, what he might have done, but for this ignorance, it will follow, that the less he knows the less is required of him, and should he become a perfect idiot, he would be entirely discharged from moral obligation. To this I answer: Yes, or the doctrine of natural ability and the entire government of God, are a mere farce. If a man should annihilate himself, would not he thereby set aside his moral obligation to obey God? Yes truly. Should he make himself an idiot, would he not thereby *annihilate* his *moral agency*; and of course his natural ability to obey God? Will my New School brethren adopt the position of Dr. Wilson of Cincinnati, as maintained on the trial of Dr. Beecher, that "moral obligation does not imply ability of any kind?" The truth is, that for the time being, a man may destroy his moral agency, by rendering himself a lunatic or an idiot; and while this lunacy or idiotcy continues, obedience to God is naturally impossible, and therefore not required.

But it is also true, that no human being can deprive himself of reason and moral agency, but for a limited time. There is no reason to believe, that the soul can be deranged or idiotic, when separated from the body. And therefore moral agency will in all cases be renewed in a future, if not in the present state of existence, when God will hold men fully responsible for having deprived themselves of power to render him all that service which they might otherwise have rendered. But do let me inquire again, can my dear brethren maintain, that an idiot or a lunatic can be a moral agent? Can they maintain that a being is the subject of moral obligation any farther than he is in a state of sanity? Can they maintain, that an infant is the subject of moral obligation, previous to all knowledge? And can they maintain, that moral obligation can, in any case, exceed knowledge? If they can and do--then, to be consistent, they must flatly deny that natural ability is a *sine quà non* of moral obligation, and adopt the absurd dogma of Dr. Wilson, that "moral obligation does not imply any ability whatever." When my brethren will take this ground, I shall then understand and know where to meet them. But I beseech you not to complain of inconsistency in me, nor accuse me of teaching dangerous heresy, while I teach nothing more than you must admit to be true, or unequivocally admit *in extenso*, the very dogma of Dr. Wilson, quoted above.

I wish to be distinctly understood. I maintain, that *present* ignorance is *present* natural inability, as absolutely as that the present want of a hand is present natural inability to use it. And I also maintain, that the law of God requires nothing more of any human being, than that which he is at present naturally able to perform, under the present circumstances of his being. Do my brethren deny this? If they do, then they have gone back to Dr. Wilson's ground. If they do not, why am I accounted a heretic by them, for teaching what they themselves maintain?

11. In my treatise upon the subject of entire sanctification, I have shown from the Bible, that actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation, and that the legal maxim, "ignorance of the law excuses no one," is not good in morals.

12. Professor Stuart, in a recent number of the Biblical Repository, takes precisely the same ground that I have taken, and fully maintains, that sin is the voluntary transgression of a *known* law. And he further abundantly shows, that this is no new or heterodox opinion. Now Prof. Stuart, in the article alluded to, takes exactly the same position in regard to what constitutes sin that I have done in the paragraph upon which so much has been said. And may I be permitted to inquire, why the same sentiment is orthodox at Andover, and sound theology in the Biblical Repository, but highly heterodox and dangerous at Oberlin?

13. Will my brethren of the new school, to avoid the conclusiveness of my reasonings in respect to the requirements of the law of God, go back to old schoolism, physical depravity, and accountability based upon natural inability, and all the host of absurdities belonging to its particular views of orthodoxy? I recollect that Dr. Beecher expressed his surprise at the position taken by Dr. Wilson, to which I have alluded, and said he did not believe that "many men could be found, who could march up without winking to the maintenance of such a proposition as that." But to be consistent, I do not see but that my brethren with or "without winking," are driven to the necessity, either of "marching up" to maintaining the same proposition, or they must admit that the objectionable paragraph in my lecture is the truth of God.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE III.

ON GOVERNMENT.

I. TERM GOVERNMENT DEFINED.

II. DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORAL AND PHYSICAL GOVERNMENT.

III. FUNDAMENTAL REASON OF MORAL GOVERNMENT.

IV. WHOSE RIGHT IT IS TO GOVERN.

V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE RIGHT TO GOVERN.

VI. LIMITS OF THE RIGHT TO GOVERN.

VII. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN MORAL GOVERNMENT.

VIII. MORAL OBLIGATION DEFINED.

IX. CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

I. *Government defined.*

The primary idea of government, is that of direction, guidance, control, by, or in accordance with, rule or law. This seems to be the generic signification of the term government; but it appears not to be sufficiently broad in its meaning, to express all that properly belongs to moral government. This leads me,

II. *To distinguish between moral and physical government.*

All government is, and must be, either moral or physical; that is, all guidance and control must be exercised in accordance with either moral or physical law; for there can be no laws that are neither moral nor physical. Physical government, is control, exercised by a law of necessity or force, as distinguished from the law of free will, or liberty. It is the control of substance, as opposed to free will. The only government of which substance, as distinguished from free will, is capable, is and must be physical. This is true, whether the substance be material or immaterial, whether matter or mind. States and changes, whether of matter or mind, that are not actions of free will, must be subject to the law of necessity. In no other way can they be accounted for. They must therefore belong to the department of physical government. Physical government, then, is the administration of physical law, or the law of force.

Moral government consists in the declaration and administration of moral law. It is the government of free will by motives as distinguished from the government of substance by force. Physical government presides over and controls physical states, and changes of substance or constitution, and all involuntary states and changes. Moral government presides over and controls, or seeks to control, the actions of free will: it presides over intelligent and voluntary states and changes of mind. It is a government of motive, as opposed to a government of force--control exercised, or sought to be exercised, in accordance with the law of liberty, as opposed to the law of necessity. It is the administration of moral as opposed to physical law.

Moral government includes the dispensation of rewards and punishments; and is administered by means as complicated and vast, as the whole of the works, and providence, and ways, and grace of God.

III. *I am to inquire into the fundamental reason of moral government.*

Government must be founded in a good and sufficient reason, or it is not right. No one has a right to prescribe rules for, and control the conduct of, another, unless there is some good reason for his doing so. There must be a necessity for moral government, or the administration of it is tyranny. Is there any necessity for moral government? And if so, wherein? I answer, that from the nature and relations of moral beings, virtue, or holiness, is indispensable to happiness. But holiness cannot exist without moral law and moral government; for holiness is nothing else than conformity to moral law. Moral government, then, is indispensable to the highest well-being of the universe of moral agents, and therefore ought to exist. The universe is dependent upon this as a means of securing the highest good. This dependence is a good and sufficient reason for the existence of moral government. Let it be understood, then, that moral government is a necessity of moral beings, and therefore right.--When it is said, that the right to govern is founded in the relation of dependence, it is not, or ought not to be, intended, that this relation itself confers the right to govern irrespective of the necessity of government. The mere fact, that one being is dependent on another, does not confer on one the right to govern, and impose upon the other obligation to obey, unless the dependent one needs to be governed, and consequently, that the one upon whom the other is dependent cannot fulfil to him the duties of benevolence, without governing or controlling him. The right to govern implies the duty to govern. Obligation, and consequently, the right to govern, implies that government is a necessary means of fulfilling to the dependent party the duties of benevolence. Strictly speaking, the right to govern is founded in the intrinsic value of the interests to be secured by government; and the right is conditionated upon the necessity of government as a means of securing those interests. I will briefly sum up the argument under this head, as follows:--

1. It is impossible that government should not exist.

2. Every thing must be governed by laws suited to its nature.

3. Matter must be governed by physical laws, because it is not susceptible of government by motive.

4. The free actions of will must be governed by motives, and moral agents must be governed by moral considerations; for free will is not susceptible of government by force.

5. We are conscious of moral agency, and, as moral agents, can be governed only by a moral government.

6. Our nature and circumstances demand that we should be under a moral government; because--

(1.) Moral happiness depends upon moral order.

(2.) Moral order depends upon the harmonious action of all our powers, as individuals and as members of society.

(3.) No community can perfectly harmonize in all their views and feelings, without perfect knowledge, or, to say the least, the same degree of knowledge on all subjects on which they are called to act.

(4.) But no community ever existed, or will exist, in which every individual possesses exactly the same amount of knowledge, and where the members are, therefore, entirely agreed in all their thoughts, views, and opinions.

(5.) But if they are not agreed in opinion, or have not exactly the same amount of knowledge, they will not, in every thing, harmonize, as it respects their courses of conduct.

(6.) There must, therefore, be in every community, some standard or rule of duty, to which all the subjects of the community are to conform themselves.

(7.) There must be some head or controlling mind, whose will shall be law, and whose decision shall be regarded as infallible, by all the subjects of the government.

(8.) However diverse their intellectual attainments are, in this they must all agree, that the will of the lawgiver is right, and universally the rule of duty.

(9.) This will must be authoritative, and not merely advisory.

(10.) There must of necessity be a penalty attached to, and incurred by, every act of disobedience to this will.

(11.) If disobedience be persisted in, exclusion from the privileges of the government is the lowest penalty that can consistently be inflicted.

(12.) The good, then, of the universe imperiously requires, that there should be a moral governor.

IV. *Whose right it is to govern.*

We have just seen, that necessity is a condition of the right and duty to govern--that the highest well-being of the universe demands, and is the end of moral government. It must, therefore, be his right and duty to govern, whose attributes, physical and moral, best qualify him to secure the end of government. To him all eyes and hearts should be directed, to fill this station, to exercise this control, to administer all just and necessary rewards and punishments. It is both his right and duty to govern.

That God is a moral governor, we infer--

1. From our own consciousness. From the very laws of our being, we naturally affirm our responsibility to him for our conduct. As God is our creator, we are naturally responsible to him for the right exercise of our powers. And as our good and his glory depend upon our conformity to the same rule, to which he conforms his whole being, he is under a moral obligation to require us to be holy, as he is holy.

2. His natural attributes qualify him to sustain the relation of a moral governor to the universe.

3. His moral character also qualifies him to sustain this relation.

4. His relation to the universe as Creator and preserver, when considered in connexion with the necessity of government, and with his nature and attributes, confers on him the right of universal government.

5. His relation to the universe, and our relations to him and to each other, render it obligatory upon him to establish and administer a moral government over the universe.

6. The honour of God demands that he should administer such a government.

7. His conscience must demand it. He must know that it would be wrong for him to create a universe of moral beings, and then refuse or neglect to administer over them a moral government, since government is a necessity of their nature and relations.

8. His happiness must demand it, as he could not be happy unless he acted in accordance with his conscience.

9. If God is not a moral governor he is not wise. Wisdom consists in the choice of the best ends, and in the use of the most appropriate means to accomplish those ends. If God is not a moral governor, it is inconceivable that he should have had any important end in view in the creation of moral beings, or that he should have chosen the best or any suitable means for the promotion of their happiness as the most desirable end.

10. The conduct or providence of God plainly indicates a design to exert a moral influence over moral agents.

11. His providence plainly indicates that the universe of mind is governed by moral laws, or by laws suited to the nature of moral agents.

12. Consciousness recognizes the existence of an inward law, or rule of action, together with a knowledge of the moral quality of actions.

13. This inward moral consciousness, or conscience, is proof conclusive of the existence of a rule of duty which is obligatory upon us. Indeed, this consciousness is only the mind's direct beholding this law, as affirmed by the reason. This rule implies a ruler, and this ruler must be God.

14. If God is not a moral governor, our very nature deceives us.

15. If God is not a moral governor, the whole universe, so far as we have the means of knowing it, is calculated to mislead mankind in respect to this fundamental truth.

16. If there is no such thing as moral government, there is, in reality, no such thing as moral character; but we as certainly know that we have moral character, as that we exist.

17. All nations have believed that God is a moral governor.

18. Our nature is such, that we must believe it. The conviction of our moral accountability to God, is in such a sense the dictate of our moral nature, that we cannot escape from it.

19. We must disapprove the character of God, if we ever come to a knowledge of the fact that he created moral agents, and then exercised over them no moral government.

20. The connection between moral delinquency and suffering is such as to render it certain that moral government does, as a matter of fact, exist.

21. The Bible, which has been proved to be a revelation from God, contains a most simple and yet comprehensive system of moral government.

22. If we are deceived in respect to our being subjects of moral government, we are sure of nothing.

V. *What is implied in the right to govern.*

1. From what has just been said, it must be evident, that the right to govern, implies the necessity of government, as a means of securing an intrinsically valuable end.

2. Also that the right to govern, implies the duty, or obligation to govern. There can be no right, in this case, without corresponding obligation; for the right to govern is founded in the necessity of government, and the necessity of government imposes obligation to govern.

3. The right to govern, implies obligation, on the part of the subject, to obey. It cannot be the right, or duty, of the governor to govern, unless it is the duty of the subject to obey. The governor and subject are alike dependent upon government, as the indispensable means of promoting the highest good. The governor and the subject must, therefore, be under reciprocal obligation, the one to govern, and the other to be governed, or to obey. The one must seek to govern, the other must submit to be governed.

4. The right to govern, implies the right and duty to dispense just and necessary rewards and punishments--to distribute rewards proportioned to merit, and penalties proportioned to demerit, whenever the public interest demand their execution.

5. It implies the right and duty, to use all necessary means to secure the end of government, as far as possible.

6. It implies obligation, on the part of the subject, cheerfully to acquiesce in any measure, that may be necessary, to secure the end of government, and in case of disobedience, to submit to merited punishment, and also, if necessary, to aid in the infliction of the penalty of law.

7. It implies the right and obligation of both ruler and ruled, to consecrate themselves to the promotion of the great end of government, with a single and steady aim.

8. It implies obligation, both on the part of the ruler and the ruled, to be always ready, and when occasion arises, actually to make any personal and private sacrifice demanded by the higher public good--to cheerfully meet any emergency, and exercise any degree of self-denial, that can, and will, result in a good of greater value to the public, than that sacrificed by the individual, or by any number of individuals, it always being understood, that present voluntary sacrifices shall have an ultimate reward.

9. It implies the right and duty to employ any degree of force, which is indispensable to the maintenance of order, the execution of wholesome laws, the suppression of insurrections, the punishment of rebels and disorganizers, and sustaining the supremacy of moral law. It is impossible that the right to govern should not imply this; and to deny this right, is to deny the right to govern. Should an emergency occur, in which a ruler had no right to use the indispensable means of securing order, and the supremacy of law, the moment this emergency occurred, his right to govern would, and must, cease: for it is impossible that it should be his right to govern, unless it be at the same time, and for the same reason, his duty to govern. For it is absurd to say, that it is his right and duty to govern, and yet, at the same time, that he has not a right to use the indispensable means of government. It is the same absurdity, as to say, that he has, and has not, the right to govern, at the same time. If it be asked, whether an emergency like the one under consideration is possible, and if so, what might justly be regarded as such an emergency, I answer, that should circumstances occur under which the sacrifice necessary to sustain, would overbalance the good to be derived from the prevalence of government, this would create the emergency under consideration, in which the right to govern would cease.

VI. *Point out the limits of this right.*

The right to govern is, and must be, just co-extensive with the necessity of government. We have seen, that the right to govern is founded in the necessities of moral beings. In other words, the right to govern is founded upon the fact, that the highest good of moral agents cannot be secured, but by means of government.

It is a first truth of reason, that what is good or valuable in itself, should be chosen for its own sake, and that it must therefore be the duty of moral agents to aim at securing, and so far as in them lies, to use the means of securing, the highest good of the universe, for its own sake, or on account of its intrinsic value. If moral government is the only means by which this end can be secured, then government is a necessity of the universe, thence a duty. But under this head, to avoid mistake, and to correct erroneous impressions, which are sometimes entertained, I must show what is not the foundation of the right to govern. The boundary of the right must, as will be seen, depend upon the foundation of the right. The right must be as broad as the reason for it. If the reason of the right be mistaken, then the limits of the right cannot be ascertained, and must necessarily be mistaken also.

1. Hence the right to govern the universe, for instance, cannot be founded in the fact, that God sustains to it the relation of Creator. This is by itself no reason why he should govern it, unless it needs to be governed--unless some good will result from government. Unless there is some necessity for government, the fact that God created the universe can give him no right to govern it.

2. The fact that God is the owner and sole proprietor of the universe is no reason why he should govern it. Unless either his own good or the good of the universe, or of both together, demand government, the relation of owner cannot confer the right to govern. Neither God, nor any other being, can own moral beings, in such a sense as to have a right to govern them, when government is wholly unnecessary, and can result in no good whatever to God, or to his creatures. Government, in such a case, would be perfectly arbitrary and unreasonable, and consequently an unjust, tyrannical and wicked act. God has no such right. No such right can, by possibility, in any case exist.

3. The right to govern cannot be founded in the fact, that God possesses all the attributes, natural and moral, that are requisite to the administration of moral government. This fact is no doubt a condition of the right; for without these qualifications he could have no right, however necessary government might be. But the possession of these attributes cannot confer the right independently of the necessity of government: for however well qualified he may be to govern, still, unless government is necessary, to securing his own glory and the highest well-being of the universe, he has no right to govern it. Possessing the requisite qualifications is the condition, and the necessity of government is the foundation of the right to govern. More strictly, the right is founded in the intrinsic value of the interests to be secured by government, and conditionated upon the fact, that government is the necessary means of securing the end.

4. Nor is the right to govern conferred by the value of the interests to be secured, nor by the circumstance of the necessity of government merely, without respect to the condition just above mentioned. Did not God's natural and moral attributes qualify him to sustain that relation better than any one else, the right could not be conferred on him by any other fact or relation.

5. The right to govern is not, and cannot be, an abstract right based on no reason whatever. The idea of this right is not an ultimate idea in such a sense, that our intelligence affirms the right without assigning any reason on which it is founded. The human intelligence cannot say that God has a right to govern, because he has such a right; and that this is reason enough, and all the reason that can be given. Our reason does not affirm that government is right because it is right, and that this is a first truth, and an ultimate idea. If this were so, then God's arbitrary will would be law, and no bounds could possibly be assigned to the right to govern. If God's right to govern be a first truth, an ultimate truth, fact, and idea, founded in no assignable reason, then he has the right to legislate as little, and as much, and as arbitrarily, as unnecessarily, as absurdly, and injuriously as possible; and no injustice is, or can be done; for he has, by the supposition, a right to govern, founded in no reason, and of course without any limit. Assign any other reason, as the foundation of the right to govern, then the value of the interests to be secured, and conditionated upon the necessity of government, and you may search in vain for any limit to the right. But the moment the foundation and the condition of the right are discovered, we see instantly, that the right must be co-extensive with the reason upon which it is founded, or in other words, must be limited by, and only by the fact, that thus far, and no farther, government is necessary to the highest good of the universe. No legislation can be valid in heaven or earth--no enactments can impose obligation, except upon the condition, that such legislation is demanded by the highest good of the governor and the governed. Unnecessary legislation is invalid legislation. Unnecessary government is tyranny. It can, in no case, be founded in right. It should, however, be observed, that it is often, and in the government of God universally true, that the sovereign, and not the subject, is to be the judge of what is necessary legislation and government. Under no government, therefore, are laws to be despised or rejected because we are unable to see, at once, their necessity, and hence, their wisdom. Unless they are palpably unnecessary, and therefore unwise and unjust, they are to be respected and obeyed as a less evil than contempt and disobedience, though at present we are unable to see their wisdom. Under the government of God there can never be any doubt, and of course any ground, for distrust and hesitancy, as it respects the duty of obedience.

VII. *What is implied in moral government.*

1. Moral government implies a moral governor.

2. It implies the existence of moral law.

3. It implies the existence of moral agents as the subjects of moral government.

4. It implies the existence of moral obligation to obey moral law.

5. It implies the fact of moral character, that is, of praise or blame-worthiness in the subjects of moral government. A moral agent must be under moral obligation, and one who is under moral obligation must have moral character. If he complies with obligation he must be holy and praise-worthy, if he refuse to comply with moral obligation he must be sinful and blame-worthy.

VIII. *Moral obligation.*

Obligation is a bond, or that which binds. Moral obligation is oughtness. It is a responsibility imposed on the moral agent by his own reason, and by the authority of God. God reveals obligation to and through the reason.

The idea of obligation, or of oughtness, is an idea of the pure reason. It is a simple, rational conception, and strictly speaking, does not admit of a definition, since, there are no terms more simple by which it may be defined. Obligation is a term by which we express a conception or idea which all men have, as is manifest from the universal language of men. All men have the ideas of right and wrong, and have words by which these ideas are expressed, and, perhaps, no idea among men more frequently reveals itself in words than that of oughtness or obligation. The term cannot be defined, for the simple reason that it is too well and too universally understood to need or even to admit of being expressed in any language more simple and definite than the word obligation itself.

IX. *The conditions of moral obligation.*

There is a distinction of fundamental importance between the condition and the ground of obligation, which has been overlooked by some writers, and of course they have confused the whole question of obligation. The ground of obligation is the consideration which creates or imposes obligation, the fundamental reason of the obligation. Of this I shall inquire in its proper place, in the course of which inquiry I shall have occasion to notice some instances of the confusion just alluded to, arising out of confounding the ground and the conditions of obligation. At present I am to define the conditions of obligation. But I must in this place observe that there are various forms of obligation. For example, obligation to choose an ultimate end of life as the highest good of the universe; obligation to choose the necessary conditions of this end, as holiness, for example; and obligation to put forth executive efforts to secure this end. The conditions of obligation vary with the form of obligation, as we shall fully perceive in the course of our investigations.

A condition of obligation in any particular form is a *sine quà non* of obligation in that particular form. It is that, without which, obligation in that form could not exist, and yet is not the fundamental reason of the obligation. For example, the possession of the powers of moral agency is a condition of the obligation to choose the highest good of being in general, as an ultimate end, or for its own sake. But the intrinsic value of this good is the ground of the obligation. This obligation could not exist without the possession of these powers; but the possession of these powers cannot of itself create the obligation to choose the good in preference to the ill of being. The intrinsic difference between the good and the ill of being is the ground of the obligation to will the one rather than the other. I will first define the conditions upon which all obligation depends, and without which obligation in no form can exist, and afterwards proceed to point out the conditions of distinct forms of obligation.

1. Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are *intellect, sensibility*, and *free will.*

(1.) *Intellect*, includes, amongst other functions which I need not name, reason, conscience, and self-consciousness. As has been said on a former occasion, reason is the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect. It gives by direct intuition the following among other truths: the absolute--for example, right and wrong; the necessary--space exists; the infinite--space is infinite; the perfect--God is perfect--God's law is perfect, &c. In short, it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations. It is that faculty that postulates all the *à priori* truths of science whether mathematical, philosophical, theological, or logical.

Conscience is the faculty or function of the intellect that recognizes the conformity or disconformity of the heart and life to the moral law as it lies revealed in the reason, and also awards praise to conformity, and blame to disconformity to that law. It also affirms that conformity to the moral law deserves reward, and that disconformity deserves punishment. It also possesses a propelling or impulsive power, by which it urges the conformity, and denounces the nonconformity of will, to moral law. It seems, in a certain sense, to possess the power of retribution.

Consciousness is the faculty or function of self-knowledge. It is the faculty that recognizes our own existence, mental actions, and states, together with the attributes of liberty or necessity, belonging to those actions or states.

"Consciousness is the mind in the act of knowing itself." By consciousness I know that I am--that I affirm that space is,--that I also affirm that the whole is equal to all its parts--that every event must have a cause, and many such like truths. I am conscious not only of these affirmations, but also that necessity is the law of these affirmations, that I cannot affirm otherwise than I do, in respect to this class of truths. I am also conscious of choosing to sit at my desk and write, and I am just as conscious that liberty is the law of this choice. That is, I am conscious of necessarily regarding myself as entirely free in this choice, and affirming my own ability to have chosen not to sit at my desk, and of being now able to choose not to sit and write. I am just as conscious of affirming the liberty or necessity of my mental states as I am of the states themselves. Consciousness gives us our existence and attributes, our mental acts and states, and all the attributes and phenomena of our being, of which we have any knowledge. In short, all our knowledge is given to us by consciousness. The intellect is a receptivity as distinguished from a voluntary power. All the acts and states of the intellect are under the law of necessity, or physical law. The will can command the attention of the intellect. Its thoughts, perceptions, affirmations, and all its phenomena are involuntary, and under a law of necessity. Of this we are conscious. Another faculty indispensable to moral agency is--

(2.) *Sensibility.* This is the faculty or susceptibility of feeling. All sensation, desire, emotion, passion, pain, pleasure, and, in short, every kind and degree of feeling, as the term feeling is commonly used, is a phenomenon of this faculty. This faculty supplies the chronological condition of the idea of the valuable, and hence of right and wrong, and of moral obligation. The experience of pleasure or happiness developes the idea of the valuable, just as the perception of body developes the idea of space. But for this faculty the mind could have no idea of the valuable, and hence of moral obligation to will the valuable, nor of right and wrong, nor of praise and blame-worthiness.

Self-love is a phenomenon of this department of the mind. It consists in a constitutional desire of happiness, and implies a corresponding dread of misery. It is doubtless through, or by this constitutional tendency that the rational idea of the intrinsic value of happiness or enjoyment is at first developed. Animals, doubtless, have enjoyment, but we have no evidence that they possess the faculty of reason in the sense in which I have defined the term. Consequently they have not, as we suppose, the rational conception of the intrinsic worth or value of enjoyment. They seek enjoyment from a mere impulse of their animal nature, without, as we suppose, so much as a conception of moral law, obligation, right or wrong.

But we know that moral agents have these ideas. Self-love is constitutional. Its gratification is the chronological condition of the developement of the reason's idea of the intrinsically valuable to being. This idea developes that of moral law, or in other words, the affirmation that this intrinsic good ought to be universally chosen and sought for its own sake.

The sensibility, like the intellect, is a receptivity or purely a passive, as distinguished from a voluntary faculty. All its phenomena are under the law of necessity. I am conscious that I cannot, by any direct effort, feel when and as I will. This faculty is so correlated to the intellect that when the intellect is intensely occupied with certain considerations, the sensibility is affected in a certain manner, and certain feelings exist in the sensibility by a law of necessity. I am conscious that when certain conditions are fulfilled, I necessarily have certain feelings, and that when these conditions are not fulfilled, I cannot be the subject of those feelings. I know by consciousness that my feelings and all the states and phenomena of the sensibility are only indirectly under the control of my will. By willing I can direct my intellect to the consideration of certain subjects, and in this way alone affect my sensibility, and produce a given state of feeling. So on the other hand, if certain feelings exist in the sensibility which I wish to suppress, I know that I cannot annihilate them by directly willing them out of existence, but by diverting my attention from the cause of them, they cease to exist of course and of necessity. Thus, feeling is only indirectly under the control of the will.

(3.) Moral agency implies the possession of *free-will.* By free-will is intended the power of choosing, or refusing to choose, in every instance, in compliance with moral obligation. Free-will implies the power of originating and deciding our own choices, and of exercising our own sovereignty, in every instance of choice upon moral questions--of deciding or choosing in conformity with duty or otherwise in all cases of moral obligation. That man cannot be under a moral obligation to perform an absolute impossibility, is a first truth of reason. But man's causality, his whole power of causality to perform or do anything, lies in his will. If he cannot will, he can do nothing. His whole liberty or freedom must consist in his power to will. His outward actions and his mental states are connected with the actions of his will by a law of necessity. If I will to move my muscles, they must move, unless there be a paralysis of the nerves of voluntary motion, or unless some resistance be opposed that overcomes the power of my volitions. The sequences of choice or volition are always under the law of necessity, and unless the will is free, man has no freedom; and if he has no freedom he is not a moral agent, that is, he is incapable of moral action and also of moral character. Free-will then, in the above defined sense, must be a condition of moral agency, and, of course, of moral obligation.

As consciousness gives the rational affirmation that necessity is an attribute of the affirmations of the reason, and of the states of sensibility, so it just as unequivocally gives the reason's affirmation that liberty is an attribute of the actions of the will. I am as conscious of the affirmation that I could will differently from what I do in every instance of moral obligation, as I am of the affirmation that I cannot affirm, in regard to truths of intuition, otherwise than I do. I am as conscious of affirming that I am free in willing, as I am of affirming that I am not free or voluntary in my feelings and intuitions.

Consciousness of affirming the freedom of the will, that is, of power to will in accordance with moral obligation, or to refuse thus to will, is a necessary condition of the affirmation of obligation. For example, no man affirms, or can affirm, his obligation to undo all the acts of his past life, and to live his life over again. He cannot affirm himself to be under this obligation, simply because he cannot but affirm the impossibility of it. He cannot but affirm his obligation to repent and obey God in future, because he is conscious of affirming his ability to do this. Consciousness of the affirmation of ability to comply with any requisition, is a necessary condition of the affirmation of obligation to comply with that requisition. Then no moral agent can affirm himself to be under obligation to perform an impossibility.

2. A second condition of moral obligation is *light*, or so much knowledge of our *moral relations* as to develope the idea of oughtness. This implies--

(1.) The perception or idea of the intrinsically valuable.

(2.) The affirmation of obligation to will the valuable for its own sake.

(3.) The developement of the idea that it is right to will the good, or the valuable, and wrong not to will it, for its own sake or disinterestedly.

Before I can affirm my obligation to will, I must perceive something in that which I am required to will, as an ultimate end, that renders it worthy of being chosen. I must have an object of choice. That object must possess, in itself, that which commends itself to my Intelligence as worthy of being chosen.

All choice must respect *means* or *ends*. That is, everything must be willed either as an end or a means. I cannot be under obligation to will the *means* until I know the end. I cannot know an end, or that which can possibly be chosen as an ultimate end, until I know that something is intrinsically valuable. I cannot know that it is right or wrong to choose or refuse a certain end, until I know whether the proposed object of choice is intrinsically valuable or not. It is impossible for me to choose it, as an ultimate end, unless I perceive it to be intrinsically valuable. This is self-evident; for choosing it as an end is nothing else than choosing it for its intrinsic value. Moral obligation, therefore, always and necessarily implies the knowledge that the well-being of God and of the universe is valuable in itself, and the affirmation that it ought to be chosen for its own sake, that is, impartially and on account of its intrinsic value. It is impossible that the ideas of right and wrong should be developed until the idea of the valuable is developed. Right and wrong respect intentions, and strictly nothing else, as we shall see. Intention implies an end intended. Now that which is chosen as an ultimate end, is and must be chosen for its own sake or for its intrinsic value. Until the *end* is apprehended, no idea or affirmation of obligation can exist respecting it. Consequently, no idea of right or wrong in respect to that end can exist. The end must first be perceived. The idea of the intrinsically valuable must be developed. Simultaneously with the developement of the idea of the valuable the intelligence affirms, and must affirm obligation to will it, or, which is, strictly speaking, the same thing, that it is right to will it, and wrong not to will it.

It is impossible that the idea of moral obligation, or of right and wrong, should be developed upon any other conditions than those just specified. To affirm the contrary were absurd. Suppose, for instance, it should be said that the idea of the intrinsically valuable is not necessary to the developement of the idea of moral obligation, and of right and wrong. Let us look at it. It is agreed that moral obligation, and the ideas of right and wrong respect, directly, intentions only. It is also admitted that all intentions must respect either means or ends. It is also admitted that obligation to will means, cannot exist until the end is known. It is also admitted that the choice of an ultimate end implies the choice of a thing for its own sake, or because it is intrinsically valuable. Now, from these admissions, it follows that the idea of the intrinsically valuable is the condition of moral obligation, and also of the idea of moral obligation. It must follow also that the idea of the valuable must be the condition of the idea that it would be right to choose, or wrong not to choose, the valuable. When I come to the discussion of the subject of moral depravity, I shall endeavour to show that the idea of the valuable is very early developed, and is among the earliest, if not the very first, of human intellections. I have here only to insist that the developement of this idea is a *sine quà non* of moral obligation. It is, then, nonsense to affirm that the ideas of right and wrong are developed antecedently to the idea of the valuable. It is the same as to say that I affirm it to be right to will an end, before I have the idea of an end; or which is the same thing, of the intrinsically valuable, or wrong not to will an end when as yet I have no idea or knowledge of any reason why it should be willed, or, in other words, while I have no idea of an ultimate end. This is absurd.

Let it be distinctly understood then, that the conditions of moral obligation, in the universal form of obligation to will the highest well-being of God and of the universe, for its own sake, are--

1. The possession of the powers, or faculties, and susceptibilities of a moral agent.

2. *Light*, or the developement of the ideas of the valuable, of moral obligation, of right and wrong.

It has been absurdly contended that sensibility is not necessary to moral agency. This assertion overlooks the fact that moral law is the law of nature; that, therefore, were the powers and susceptibilities radically different from what they are, or were the correlation of these powers radically otherwise than it is, they could not still be moral agents in the sense of being under the same law that moral agents now are. Possessing a different nature, they must of necessity be subject to a different law. The law of their nature must be their law, and no other could, by any possibility, be obligatory upon them.

I have defined the conditions of obligation in its universal form, i.e. obligation to be benevolent, to love God and our neighbour, or to will the universal good of being for its intrinsic value. Obligation in this form is universal and always a unit, and has always the same conditions. But there are myriads of specific forms of obligation which relate to the conditions and means of securing this ultimate end. We shall have occasion hereafter fully to show that obligation respects three classes of the will's actions, viz. the choice of an ultimate end--the choice of the conditions and means of securing that end--and executive volitions or efforts put forth to secure the end. I have already shown that moral agency, with all that is implied in it, has the universal conditions of obligation to choose the highest good of being, as an ultimate end. This must be self-evident.

Obligation to choose the conditions of this end, the holiness of God and of all moral agents, for example, must be conditioned upon the perception that these are the conditions. In other words, the perception of the relation of these means to the end must be a condition of the obligation to will their existence. The perception of the relation is not the ground but simply the condition of obligation in this form. The relation of holiness to happiness as a condition of its existence could not impose obligations to will the existence of holiness without reference to the intrinsic value of happiness, as the fundamental reason for willing it as a necessary condition and means. The ground of the obligation to will the existence of holiness, as a means of happiness, is the intrinsic value of happiness, but the perceived relation of holiness to happiness is a condition of the obligation. But for this perceived relation the obligation could not exist, yet the perceived relation could not create the obligation. Suppose that holiness is the means of happiness, yet no obligation to will holiness on account of this relation could exist but for the intrinsic value of happiness.

3. *Conditions of obligation to put forth executive acts.*

Having now defined the conditions of obligation in its universal form, and also in the form of obligation to choose the existence of holiness as a necessary means of happiness, I now proceed to point out the conditions of obligation to put forth executive volitions or efforts to secure holiness, and secure the highest good of being. Our busy lives are made up in efforts to secure some ultimate end, upon which the heart is set. The sense in which obligation extends to these executive volitions or acts I shall soon consider, at present I am concerned only to define the conditions of these forms of obligation. These forms of obligation, be it understood, respect volitions and consequent outward acts. Volitions, designed as executive acts, always suppose an existing choice of the end designed to be secured by them. Obligation to put forth executive efforts to secure an end must be conditioned upon the possibility, supposed necessity, and utility of such efforts. If the end chosen does not need to be promoted by any efforts of ours, or if such efforts are impossible to us, or if they are seen to be of no use, there can be no obligation to make them.

Anything is a condition of obligation which is essential to the existence of obligation in a given form, but it is not the ground or fundamental reason of the obligation. As we proceed, we shall have occasion to notice many instances as illustrations of what is here premised, and to show what confusion has resulted from confounding the distinction between the grounds and conditions of obligation as here stated.

But observe, executive acts are such as are put forth with design to secure some end, and presuppose the existence of both the end and the design, and also the supposition or belief that such executive acts are possible, necessary, and useful. It is important, however, to observe that the utility of ultimate choice, or the choice of an object for its own sake, is not a condition of obligation in that form.

Ultimate choice, or the choice of an object for its own sake, or for its intrinsic value, is not an effort designed to secure or obtain that object; that is, is not put forth with any such design. When the object which the mind perceives to be intrinsically valuable (as the good of being, for example), is perceived by the mind, it cannot but choose or refuse it. Indifference in this case is naturally impossible. The mind, in such circumstances, is under a necessity of choosing one way or the other. The will must embrace or reject it. The reason affirms the obligation to choose the intrinsically valuable for its own sake, and not because choosing it will secure it. Nor does the real choice of it imply a purpose or an obligation to put forth executive acts to secure it, except upon condition that such acts are seen to be necessary, and possible, and calculated to secure it.

Ultimate choice is not put forth with design to secure its object. It is only the will's embracing the object or willing it for its own sake. In regard to ultimate choice the will must choose or refuse the object entirely irrespectively of the tendency of the choice to secure the object. Assuming this necessity, the reason affirms that it is right, fit, suitable, or, which is the same thing, that the will ought, or is under obligation to choose, the good or valuable, and not refuse it, because of its intrinsic nature, and without regard to whether the choosing will secure the object chosen.

But executive acts, be it remembered, are, and must be, put forth with design to secure their object, and of course, cannot exist unless the design exist, and the design cannot exist unless the mind assumes the possibility, necessity, and utility of such efforts.

REMARKS.

1. If God's government is moral, it is easy to see how sin came to exist; that a want of experience in the universe, in regard to the nature and natural tendencies and results of sin, prevented the due influence of sanctions.

2. If God's government is moral, we see that all the developements of sin are enlarging the experience of the universe in regard to its nature and tendencies, and thus confirming the influence of moral government over virtuous minds.

3. If God's government is moral, we can understand the design and tendency of the atonement; that it is designed, and that it tends to reconcile the exercise of mercy, with a due administration of law.

4. If God's government is moral, we can understand the philosophy of the Spirit's influences in convicting and sanctifying the soul; that this influence is moral, persuasive, and not physical.

5. If the government of God is moral, we can understand the influence and necessity of faith. Confidence is indispensable to heart obedience in any government. This is emphatically true under the divine government.

6. If God's government is moral, we can see the necessity and power of Christian example. Example is the highest moral influence.

7. If God's government is moral, his natural or physical omnipotence is no proof that all men will be saved; for salvation is not effected by physical power.

8. If God's government is moral, we see the importance of watchfulness, and girding up the loins of our minds.

9. If God's government is moral, we see the necessity of a well-instructed ministry, able to wield the motives necessary to sway mind.

10. If God's government is moral, we see the philosophical bearings, tendencies, and power of the providence, law, and gospel of God, in the great work of man's salvation.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE IV.

MORAL OBLIGATION.

I. MAN A SUBJECT OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

II. EXTENT OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

I. *Man is a subject of moral obligation.*

This is a first truth of reason. A *first* truth, be it remembered, has this invariable characteristic, namely, all moral agents know it, by a necessity of nature, and assume its truth, in all their practical judgments, whatever their philosophical theories may be. Take, for example, the affirmation, or assumption, that every event must have had an adequate cause. This is a *first truth*; all men know it, and, in all their practical judgments, assume it, whatever their theorizings may be.

Now who does not know, with the same certainty, that men possess the attributes of moral agents; to wit, *intellect*, (including *reason, conscience, and consciousness,) sensibility, and free will.* Every moral agent does know, and cannot but know this. That man has intellect and sensibility, or the powers of knowing and feeling, has not, to my knowledge, been doubted. *In theory*, the freedom of the will in man has been denied. Yet the very deniers have, in their practical judgment, assumed the freedom of the human will, as well, and as fully, as the most staunch defenders of human liberty of will. Indeed, nobody ever did or can, in practice, call in question the freedom of the human will, without justly incurring the charge of insanity. By a necessity of his nature, every moral agent knows himself to be free. He can no more hide this fact from himself, or reason himself out of the conviction of its truth, than he can speculate himself into a disbelief of his own existence. He may, in speculation, deny either, but in fact he knows both. That he *is*, that he is *free*, are truths equally well known, and known precisely in the same way, namely, he intuits them--sees them in their own light, by virtue of the constitution of his being. I have said that man is conscious of possessing the powers of a moral agent. He has also the idea of the valuable, of right and of wrong: of this he is conscious. But nothing else is necessary to constitute man or any other being a subject of moral obligation, than the possession of these powers, together with sufficient light on moral subjects to develope the ideas just mentioned.

Again. Man, by a law of necessity, affirms himself to be under moral obligation. He cannot doubt it. He affirms absolutely, and necessarily, that he is praise or blame-worthy as he is benevolent or selfish. Every man assumes this of himself, and of all other men, of sound mind. This assumption is irresistible, as well as universal.

The truth assumed then, is a first truth, and not to be called in question. But if it be called in question, in theory, it still remains and must remain, while reason remains, a truth of certain knowledge from the presence of which there is, and can be, no escape. The spontaneous, universal, and irresistible affirmation that men, of sound mind, are praise or blame-worthy, as they are selfish or benevolent, shows beyond contradiction, that all men regard themselves, and others, as the subjects of moral obligation.

II. *Extent of moral obligation.*

By this is intended, to what acts and states of mind does moral obligation extend? This certainly is a solemn and a fundamentally important question.

In the examination of this question I shall,

1. Show by an appeal to reason, or to natural theology, to what acts and states of mind moral obligation cannot directly extend.

2. To what acts or states of mind moral obligation must directly extend.

3. To what acts and mental states moral obligation must indirectly extend.

I. *I am to show by an appeal to reason, or to natural theology, to what acts and states of mind moral obligation cannot directly extend.*

1. Not to external or muscular action. These actions are connected with the actions of the will, by a law of necessity. If I will to move my muscles, they *must* move, unless the nerves of voluntary motion are paralyzed, or some resistance is offered to muscular motion, that overpowers the strength of my will, or, if you please, of my muscles. It is generally understood and agreed that moral obligation does not directly extend to bodily or outward action.

2. Not to the states of the sensibility. I have already remarked, that we are conscious, that our feelings are not voluntary, but involuntary states of mind. Moral obligation cannot, therefore, directly extend to them.

3. Not to states of the intellect. The phenomena of this faculty, we also know, by consciousness, to be under the law of necessity. It is impossible that moral obligation should extend directly to any involuntary act or state of mind.

4. Not to unintelligent acts of will. There are many unintelligent volitions, or acts of will, to which moral obligation cannot extend, for example, the volitions of maniacs, or of infants, before the reason is at all developed. They must, at birth, be the subjects of volition, as they have motion or muscular action. The volitions of somnambulists are also of this character. Purely instinctive volitions must also come under the category of unintelligent actions of will. For example: a bee lights on my hand, I instantly and instinctively shake him off. I tread on a hot iron, and instinctively move my foot. Indeed, there are many actions of will, which are put forth under the influence of pure instinct, and before the intellect can affirm obligation to will or not to will. These surely cannot have moral character, and of course moral obligation cannot extend to them.

II. *To what acts and states of mind moral obligation must directly extend.*

1. To ultimate acts of will. These are, and must be, free.

Intelligent acts of will, as has been before observed, are of three classes. 1. The choice of some object for its own sake, *i.e.* because of its own nature, or for reasons found exclusively in itself, as, for example, the happiness of being. These are called ultimate choices, or intentions. 2. The choice of the conditions and means of securing the object of ultimate choice, as, for example, holiness, as the conditions or means of happiness. 3. Volitions, or executive efforts to secure the object of ultimate choice. Obligation must extend to these three classes of the actions of the will. In the most strict and proper sense it may be said, that obligation extends directly, only to the ultimate intention. We learn, from consciousness, that the choice of an end necessitates (while the choice of the end exists) the choice of the known conditions and means of securing this end. I am free to relinquish, at any moment, my choice of an end, but while I persevere in the choice, or ultimate intention, I am not free to refuse the known necessary conditions and means. If I reject the known conditions and means, I, in this act, relinquish the choice of the end. The desire of the end may remain, but the actual choice of it cannot, when the will knowingly rejects the known necessary conditions and means. In this case, the will prefers to let go the end, rather than to choose and use the necessary conditions and means. In the strictest sense the choice of known conditions and means, together with executive volitions, is implied in the ultimate intention or in the choice of an end.

When the good or valuable, *per se*, is perceived, by a moral agent, he instantly and necessarily, and without condition, affirms his obligation to choose it. This affirmation is direct and universal, absolute, or without condition. Whether he will affirm himself to be under obligation to put forth efforts to secure the good must depend upon his regarding such acts as necessary, possible, and useful.

The obligation, therefore, to put forth ultimate choice, is in the strictest sense direct, absolute, and universal.

Obligation to chose holiness, (as the holiness of God) as the means of happiness, is indirect in the sense that it is conditioned. 1. Upon the obligation to choose happiness as a good *per se*; and, 2. Upon the knowledge that holiness is the necessary means of happiness.

Obligation to put forth executive volitions is also indirect in the sense that it is conditioned; 1. Upon obligation to choose an object as an end; and, 2. Upon the necessity, possibility, and utility of such acts.

It should here be observed, that obligation to choose an object for its own sake, implies, of course, obligation to reject its opposite; and obligation to choose the conditions of an intrinsically valuable object for its own sake, implies obligation to reject the conditions or means of the opposite of this object. Also, obligation to use means to secure an intrinsically valuable object, implies obligation to use means, if necessary and possible, to prevent the opposite of this end.

For example. Obligation to will happiness, for its intrinsic value, implies obligation to reject misery, as an intrinsic evil. Obligation to will the conditions of the happiness of being, implies obligation to reject the conditions of misery. Obligation to use means to promote the happiness of being, implies obligation to use means, if necessary and practicable, to prevent the misery of being.

Again, the choice of any object, either as an end, or a means, implies the refusal of its opposite. In other words, choice implies preference, refusing is properly only choice in an opposite direction. For this reason, in speaking of the actions of the will, it has been common to omit the mention of nilling, or refusing, since such acts are properly included in the categories of choices and volitions. It should also be observed that choice, or willing, necessarily implies an object chosen, and that this object should be such that the mind can regard it as being either intrinsically, or relatively valuable, or important. As choice must consist in an act, an intelligent act, the mind must have some reason for choice. It cannot choose without a reason, for this is the same as to choose without an object of choice. A mere abstraction without any perceived or assumed, intrinsic, or relative importance, to any being in existence, cannot be an object of choice, either ultimate or executive. The ultimate reason which the mind has for choosing is in fact the object of choice; and where there is no reason there is no object of choice.

2. I have said, that moral obligation respects in the strictest sense, and directly the intention only. I am now prepared to say still further, that this is a first truth of reason. It is a truth universally and necessarily assumed, by all moral agents, their speculations to the contrary, in any wise, notwithstanding. This is evident from the following considerations.

(1.) Very young children know and assume this truth universally. They always deem it a sufficient vindication of themselves, when accused of any delinquency, to say, "I did not mean to," or if accused of short coming, to say, "I meant or intended to have done it--I designed it." This, if true, they assume to be an all-sufficient vindication of themselves. They know that this, if believed, must be regarded as a sufficient excuse to justify them in every case.

(2.) Every moral agent necessarily regards such an excuse as a perfect justification, in case it can be sincerely and truly made.

(3.) It is a saying as common as men are, and as true as common, that men are to be judged by their motives, that is, by their designs, intentions. It is impossible for us not to assent to this truth. If a man intend evil, though, perchance, he may do us good, we do not excuse him, but hold him guilty of the crime which he intended. So if he intend to do us good, and, perchance, do us evil, we do not, and cannot condemn him. For this intention and endeavour to do us good, we cannot blame him, although it has resulted in evil to us. He may be to blame for other things connected with the affair. He may have come to our help too late, and have been to blame for not coming when a different result would have followed; or he may have been blameable for not being better qualified for doing us good. He may have been to blame for many things connected with the transaction, but for a sincere, and of course hearty endeavour to do us good, he is not culpable, nor can he be, however it may result. If he honestly intended to do us good, it is impossible that he should not have used the best means in his power, at the time: this is implied in honesty of intention. And if he did this, reason cannot pronounce him guilty, for it must judge him by his intentions.

(4.) Courts of criminal law have always in every enlightened country assumed this as a first truth. They always inquire into the *quo animo*, that is, the intention, and judge accordingly.

(5.) The universally acknowledged truth that lunatics are not moral agents and responsible for their conduct, is but an illustration of the fact that the truth we are considering, is regarded, and assumed, as a *first truth of reason*.

3. We have seen that the choice of an end implies, and, while the choice continues, necessitates the choice of the known conditions and means of the end, and also the putting forth of volition to secure the end. If this is true, it follows that the choice of the conditions and means of securing an end, and also the volitions put forth as executive efforts to secure it, must derive their character from the ultimate choice or intention, which gives them existence. This shows that moral obligation extends, primarily and directly, only to the ultimate intention or choice of an end, though really, but less directly, to the choice of the conditions and means, and also to executive volitions.

But I must distinguish more clearly between ultimate and proximate intentions, which discrimination will show, that in the most strict and proper sense, obligation belongs to the former, and only in a less strict and proper sense to the latter.

An ultimate end, be it remembered, is an object chosen for its own sake.

A proximate end is an object chosen as a condition or means of securing an ultimate end.

An ultimate end is an object chosen because of its intrinsic nature and value.

A proximate end is an object chosen for the sake of the end, and upon condition of its relation as a condition or means of the end.

Example:--A student labours to get wages, to purchase books, to obtain an education, to preach the gospel, to save souls, and to please God. Another labours to get wages, to purchase books, to get an education, to preach the gospel, to secure a salary, and his own ease and popularity. In the first supposition he loves God and souls, and seeks, as his ultimate end, the happiness of souls, and the glory and gratification of God. In the last case supposed, he loves himself supremely, and his ultimate end is his own gratification. Now the proximate ends, or immediate objects of pursuit, in these two cases, are precisely alike, while their ultimate ends are entirely opposite. Their first, or nearest end is to get wages. Their next end is, to obtain books, and so we follow them, until we ascertain their ultimate end, before we learn the moral character of what they are doing. The means they are using, i.e. their immediate objects or proximate ends of pursuit, are the same, but the ultimate ends, at which they aim, are entirely different, and every moral agent, from a necessary law of his own intellect, must, as soon as he understands the ultimate end of each, pronounce the one virtuous, and the other sinful, in his pursuits. One is selfish and the other benevolent. From this illustration it is plain, that strictly speaking, moral character, and, of course, moral obligation, respect directly, the ultimate intention only. We shall see, in the proper place, that obligation also extends, but less directly, to the use of means to obtain the end.

4. The Bible every where, either expressly or impliedly recognizes this truth. "If there be a willing mind," that is, a right willing or intention, "it is accepted," &c.

5. Again. All the law is fulfilled in one word, "love." Now this cannot be true, if the spirit of the whole law does not directly respect intentions only. If it extends directly to thoughts, emotions, and outward actions, it cannot be truly said that love is the fulfilling of the law. This love must be good will, for how could involuntary love be obligatory?

6. Again. The spirit of the Bible every where respects the intention. If the intention is right, or if there be a willing mind, it is accepted as obedience. But if there be not a willing mind, that is, right intention, no outward act is regarded as obedience. The willing, is always regarded by the scripture, as the doing. "If a man look on a woman, to lust after her," that is, with licentious intentions, or willing, "he hath committed adultery with her already," &c. So on the other hand, if one intends to perform a service for God, which, after all, he is unable to perform, he is regarded as having virtually done it, and is rewarded accordingly.

This is too obviously the doctrine of the Bible to need further elucidation.

III. *To what acts and mental states moral obligation indirectly extends*.

Under this head I remark--

That it has been already said, the choice of means and executive volitions, together with outward action, and also the states of the intellect and sensibility, are connected with ultimate intention by a law of necessity.

(1.) The muscles of the body are, directly, under the control of the will. I will to move, and my muscles must move, unless there be interposed some physical obstruction of sufficient magnitude to overcome the strength of my will.

(2.) The intellect is also directly under the control of the will. I am conscious that I can control and direct my attention as I please, and think, upon one subject or another.

(3.) The sensibility, I am conscious, is only indirectly controlled by the will. Feeling can be produced only by directing the attention and thoughts to those subjects that excite feeling, by a law of necessity.

The way is now prepared to say--

1. That obligation extends indirectly to all intelligent acts of will in the sense already explained, all men are too conscious to need proof.

2. That moral obligation extends indirectly, to outward, or bodily actions. These are often required, in the word of God. The reason is, that being connected with the actions of the will, by a law of necessity, if the will is right, the outward action must follow, except upon the contingencies just named, and therefore such action may reasonably be required. But if the contingencies, just named, intervene, so that outward action does not follow the choice or intention, the Bible accepts the will for the deed, invariably. "If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according," &c.

3. Moral obligation extends, but more directly, to the states of the sensibility, so that certain emotions or feelings are required as outward actions are, and for the same reason, namely, the states of the sensibility are connected with the actions of the will, by a law of necessity. But when the sensibility is exhausted, or when, for any reason, the right action of the will does not produce the required feelings, it is accepted upon the principle just named.

4. Moral obligation, indirectly, extends also to the states of the intellect; consequently the Bible, to a certain extent, and in a certain sense, holds men responsible for their thoughts and opinions. It everywhere assumes that if the heart be *constantly* right, the thoughts and opinions will correspond with the state of the heart, or will; "If any man will do his will he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God." "If thine eye be single thy body shall be full of light." It is, however, manifest that the word of God every where assumes that, strictly speaking, all virtue and vice belong to the heart or intention. Where this is right, all is regarded as right; and where this is wrong, all is regarded as wrong. It is upon this assumption that the doctrine of total depravity rests. It is undeniable that the veriest sinners do many things outwardly, which the law of God requires. Now unless the intention decides the character of these acts, they must be regarded as really virtuous. But when the intention is found to be selfish, then it is ascertained that they are sinful notwithstanding their conformity to the letter of the law of God.

The fact is, that moral agents are so constituted that it is impossible for them not to judge themselves, and others, by their subjective motives or intentions. They cannot but assume it, as a first truth, that a man's character is as his intention is, and consequently that moral obligation respects, directly, intention only.

5. Moral obligation then indirectly extends to every thing about us, over which the will has direct, or indirect control. The moral law, while, strictly, it legislates over intentions only, yet in fact, in a sense less direct, legislates over the whole being, inasmuch as all our powers are directly or indirectly connected with intention, by a law of necessity. Strictly speaking, however, moral character belongs alone to the intention. In strict propriety of speech, it cannot be said that either outward action, or any state of the intellect, or sensibility, has a moral element or quality belonging to it. Yet in common language, which is sufficiently accurate for most practical purposes, we speak of thought, feeling, and outward action as holy or unholy. By this, however, all men really mean, that the agent is holy or unholy, is praise or blame-worthy, in his exercises and actions, because they regard them as proceeding from the state or attitude of the will.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE V.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

In the discussion of this question, I will--

I. STATE WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE FOUNDATION, OR GROUND OF OBLIGATION.

II. REMIND YOU OF THE DISTINCTION, ALREADY POINTED OUT, BETWEEN THE GROUND AND CONDITIONS OF OBLIGATION.

III. CALL ATTENTION TO THE POINTS OF GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG VARIOUS CLASSES OF PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANS.

IV. SHEW WHEREIN THEY INCONSISTENTLY, DISAGREE.

V. POINT OUT THE INTRINSIC ABSURDITY OF THE VARIOUS CONFLICTING THEORIES.

VI. LASTLY. SHOW THE PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF THE VARIOUS THEORIES.

I. *State what is intended by the foundation, or ground of obligation*.

I shall use the terms ground and foundation, as synonymous. Obligation must be founded on some good and sufficient reason. Be it remembered, that moral obligation respects moral action. That moral action, is voluntary action. That properly speaking, obligation respects intentions only. That still more strictly, obligation respects only the ultimate intention. That ultimate intention or choice, which terms I use as synonymous, consists in choosing an object for its own sake, i.e. for what is intrinsic in the object, and for no reason that is not intrinsic in that object. That every object of ultimate choice, must, and does possess that in its own nature, the perception or knowledge of which necessitates the rational affirmation, that it ought to be universally chosen, by moral agents, for its own sake, or, which is the same thing, because it is what it is, or, in other words still, because it is intrinsically valuable to being, and not on account of its relations.

The ground of obligation, then, is that reason, or consideration, intrinsic in, or belonging to, the nature of an object, which necessitates the rational affirmation, that it ought to be chosen for its own sake. It is that reason, intrinsic in the object, which thus creates obligation by necessitating this affirmation. For example, such is the nature of the good of being, that it necessitates the affirmation, that benevolence is a universal duty.

II. *I must remind you of the distinction, already pointed out, between the ground and conditions of obligation.*

I will not repeat, but refer the reader to the distinctions, as defined in a former lecture (Lecture III. IX).

III. *Call attention to the points of general agreement among various classes of philosophers and theologians.*

I shall not fill my pages with quotations from authors, showing in what there is a general agreement, as this would occupy much space, and besides I regard it as wholly unnecessary, since every intelligent reader, will, upon the bare statement of those points, see, at a glance, that thus far moral agents must agree. In saying that in the points I am about to name, there is, and must be, a general agreement, I do not mean that the various authors, who have written upon this subject, have been consistent throughout, and that they have taught nothing inconsistent with those generally and necessarily admitted truths. What I intend is, that upon those points men have held and affirmed alike, although they have often inconsistently held and stated opposing theories. To their inconsistencies we shall attend in due season. Our object just now is to state the points of general agreement.

1. They agree that in the most strict and proper sense, moral obligation extends to moral actions only.

2. That, strictly speaking, involuntary states of mind are not moral actions.

3. That intentions alone are, properly, moral actions.

4. That, in the most strict and proper sense, ultimate intentions, alone, are moral actions.

5. They agree in their definition of ultimate intention, namely that it is the choice of an object for its own sake, or for what is intrinsic in the object. That ultimate choice, or intention, must find its reasons exclusively in the object chosen, and not in the relations of the object to something else.

6. In their definition of the ground of obligation, namely, that it is that reason or consideration intrinsic in the object of ultimate choice, which necessitates the affirmation of obligation to choose it, for this reason, i.e. for its own sake.

7. That while, in the strictest sense, obligation respects only the ultimate intention, yet, that, in a less strict and proper sense, obligation extends to the choice of the conditions and means of securing an intrinsically valuable end, and also to executive acts put forth with design to secure such end. Hence--

8. They agree, that there are different forms of obligation. For example, obligation to put forth ultimate choice. To choose the known necessary conditions and means. To put forth executive volitions, &c.

9. They agree, that there are conditions of obligation.

10. That a condition is a *sine quà non* of obligation, but not the ground, or fundamental reason of the obligation. For example, susceptibility for happiness must be a condition of obligation, to will and endeavour to promote the happiness of a being. But the intrinsic value of the happiness to the being, is and must be the ground of the obligation. For mere susceptibility for happiness would of itself no more impose obligation to will happiness; than susceptibility for misery would impose obligation to will misery.

11. They agree, that different forms of obligation, must have different conditions. For example, moral agency, including the possession of the requisite powers, together with the developement of the ideas of the intrinsically valuable, of obligation, of right and wrong, are conditions of obligation in its universal form, namely obligation to will the good of being in general for its own sake.

12. They must agree, that obligation to will the existence of the conditions and means to the above end, and to put forth executive efforts to secure that end, have not only the conditions above named, but obligation in these forms must be conditional, also, upon the knowledge that there are conditions and means, and what they are, and also that executive efforts are necessary, possible, and useful.

13. That any thing may be a condition, as distinct from a ground of obligation, in a given form, which is a *sine quà non*, and yet not the fundamental reason of obligation, in that form.

14. They also agree that the well-being of God, and of the universe, of sentient existences, and especially of moral agents, is intrinsically important, or valuable, and that all moral agents are under obligation to choose it for its own sake.

15. That entire, universal, uninterrupted consecration to this end, is the universal duty of all moral agents.

16. That this consecration is identical with disinterested benevolence.

17. That this consecration is really demanded by the law of God, as revealed in the two great precepts laid down by Christ, and that this benevolence, when perfect, is in fact a compliance with the entire spirit of the law.

18. That this is always right in itself, and consequently is always duty and always right, and that in all possible circumstances; and, of course, that no obligation inconsistent with this can ever, in any case, exist.

19. That reason and revelation agree in this; that the law of benevolence is the law of right; and that it is the law of nature, and of course, that no moral law, inconsistent with this, can exist.

20. That holiness, or obedience to moral law, or, in other words still, that disinterested benevolence is a natural, and of course necessary condition of the existence of that blessedness which is an ultimate or intrinsic good to moral agents.

21. That it ought to be chosen for that reason, i.e. that is a sufficient reason.

22. Of course, that the ground of obligation to choose holiness, and to endeavour to promote it in others, as a condition of the highest well-being of the universe, is the intrinsic nature of that good or well-being, and that the relation of holiness to this end is a condition of the obligation to choose it, as a means to this end.

23. That truth, and conformity of heart and life, to all known and practical truths, are conditions and means of the highest good of being.

24. Of course, that obligation to conform to such truths is universal, because of this relation of truth, and of conformity to truth, to the highest good.

25. That the intrinsic value of the good must be the ground, and the relation only a condition, of the obligation.

26. That God's ultimate end, in all he does, or omits, is the highest well-being of himself, and of the universe, and that, in all his acts and dispensations, his ultimate object is the promotion of this end.

27. That all moral agents ought to do the same, and that this comprises their whole duty.

28. That the intrinsic value of the end creates, or imposes, and of course, is the ground of the obligation to choose it, and endeavour to promote it, for its own sake.

29. That hence, this intention or consecration to the intrinsically and infinitely valuable end, is virtue, or holiness, in God and in all moral agents.

30. That God is infinitely and equally holy in all things, because he does all things for the same ultimate reason, namely, to promote the highest good of being.

31. That all God's moral attributes are only so many attributes of love or of disinterested benevolence; that is, that they are only benevolence existing and contemplated in different relations.

32. That creation and moral government, including both law and gospel, together with the infliction of penal sanctions, are only efforts of benevolence, to secure the highest good.

33. That God has but one ultimate end; of course, but one object of ultimate choice. Of course, but one ground of obligation; and this obligation is imposed upon him through his own reason by the intrinsic and infinite value of the good of universal being.

34. That he requires, both in his law and gospel, that all moral agents should choose the same end, and do whatever they do, for its promotion: that is, that this should be the ultimate reason for all they do.

35. Consequently, and of course, that all obligation resolves itself into an obligation to choose the highest good of God, and of being in general, for its own sake, and to choose all the known conditions and means of this end, for the sake of the end.

36. That the intrinsic value of this end is the ground of this obligation, both as it respects God and all moral agents in all worlds.

37. That the intrinsic value of this end, rendered it fit, or right, that God should require moral agents, to choose it, for its own sake, and of course.

38. That its intrinsic value, and not any arbitrary sovereignty, was, and is, his reason for requiring moral agents to choose it for its own sake.

39. That its known intrinsic value would, of itself, impose obligation on moral agents, to choose it, for its own sake, even had God never required it; or, if such a supposition were possible, he had forbidden it.

Observe, then, it is agreed and must be agreed, by a necessary law of the universal reason, that disinterested benevolence is a universal and an invariable duty. That this benevolence consists in willing the highest good of being, in general, for its own sake, or, in other words, in entire consecration to this good as the end of life. That the intrinsic value of this good does, of its own nature, impose obligation upon all moral agents, to will it for its own sake, and consecrate the whole being, without intermission, to its promotion.

Now it is self-evident, and is agreed, that moral character belongs to the ultimate intention, and that a man's character is as the end is for which he lives, and moves, and has his being. The present inquiry respects this end; it is, therefore, all-important. What is virtue? It consists in consecration to the right end; to the end to which God is consecrated. This end, whatever it is, is, and must be, by virtue of its own nature, the ground of obligation. That is, the nature of this end is such as to compel the reason of every moral agent to affirm, that it ought to be chosen for its own sake. It is agreed that this end is the good of being, and that therefore disinterested benevolence, or good will, is a universal duty.

Now, with these universally admitted facts, distinctly kept in mind, let us proceed to the examination of the various conflicting and inconsistent theories of the ground of obligation.

IV. *I am to show wherein they, inconsistently, disagree.*

1. I will first consider the theory of those who hold that the sovereign will of God is the ground, or ultimate reason, of obligation. They hold that God's sovereign will creates, and not merely reveals, and enforces, obligation. To this I reply,--1. That those who hold this also admit, as has been said, that moral law legislates directly our voluntary action only,--that moral obligation respects, primarily and strictly, the ultimate intention--that ultimate intention consists in choosing its object, for its own sake--that ultimate intention must find its reasons exclusively in its object--that the intrinsic nature and value of the object must impose obligation to choose it for its own sake--that therefore this intrinsic value is the ground and the only possible ground of obligation to choose it for its own sake. They also admit, that it would be our duty to will the highest good of God and of the universe, even did God not will that we should, or were he to will that we should not. How utterly inconsistent, then, is the assertion, that the sovereign will of God is the ground of obligation. Obligation to do what? Why to love God and our neighbour. That is, as is admitted, to will their highest good. And does God's will *create* this obligation? Should we be under no such obligation, had he not commanded it? Are we to will this good, not for its own value to God and our neighbour, but because God commands it? The answer to these questions is too obvious to need so much as to be named. But what consistency is there in holding that disinterested benevolence is a universal duty, and at the same time that the sovereign will of God is the foundation of obligation. How can men hold, as many do, that the highest good of being ought to be chosen for its own sake--that to choose it for its own sake is disinterested benevolence--that its intrinsic value imposes obligation to choose it for its own sake, and that this intrinsic value is therefore the ground of obligation, and yet that the will of God is the ground of obligation?

Why, if the will of God be the ground of obligation, then disinterested benevolence is sin. If the will of God does of itself create, and not merely reveal obligation, then the will, and not the interest and well-being of God, ought to be chosen for its own sake, and to be the great end of life. God ought to be consecrated to his own will, instead of his own highest good. Benevolence in God, and in all beings must be sin, upon this hypothesis. A purely arbitrary will and sovereignty in God is, according to this theory, of more value than his highest well-being, and that of the whole universe.

But observe,

Moral obligation respects ultimate intentions, or the choice of an end.

The foundation, or fundamental reason for choosing a thing, is that which renders it obligatory to choose it.

This reason is the thing on which the choice ought to terminate, or the true end is not chosen.

Therefore the reason and the end are identical.

1. If, then, the will of God be the foundation of obligation, it must also be the ultimate end of choice.

But it is impossible for us to will or choose the divine willing as an ultimate end. God's willing reveals a law, a rule of choice, or of intention. It requires something to be intended as an ultimate end, or for its own intrinsic value. This end cannot be the willing, commandment, law, itself. This is absurd and impossible. Does God will that I should choose his willing as an ultimate end? This is ridiculously absurd. It is a plain contradiction to say that moral obligation respects, directly, ultimate intention only, or the choice of an end, for its own intrinsic value, and yet, that the will of God is the foundation, or reason of the obligation. This is affirming at the same breath that the intrinsic value of the end which God requires me to choose, is the reason, or foundation of the obligation to choose it, and yet that this is not the reason, but the will of God is the reason.

Willing can never be an end. God cannot will our willing as an end. Nor can he will his willing as an end. Willing, choosing, always, and necessarily, implies an end willed entirely distinct from the willing, or choice itself. Willing, cannot be regarded, or willed, as an ultimate end, for two reasons:--

(1.) Because that on which choice or willing terminates, and not the choice itself, must be regarded as the end.

(2.) Because choice or willing is of no intrinsic value and of no relative value, aside from the end willed or chosen.

2. The will of God cannot be the foundation of moral obligation in created moral agents. God has moral character, and is virtuous. This implies that he is the subject of moral obligation, for virtue is nothing else than compliance with obligation. If God is the subject of moral obligation, there is some reason, independent of his own will, why he wills as he does, some reason, that imposes obligation upon him to will as he does. His will, then, respecting the conduct of moral agents, is not the fundamental reason of their obligation; but the foundation of their obligation must be the reason which induces God, or makes it obligatory on him, to will in respect to the conduct of moral agents, just what he does.

3. If the will of God were the foundation of moral obligation, he could, by willing it, change the nature of virtue and vice, which is absurd.

4. If the will of God were the foundation of moral obligation, he not only can change the nature of virtue and vice, but has a right to do so; for if there is nothing back of his will that is as binding upon him as upon his creatures, he has a right, at any time, to make malevolence a virtue, and benevolence a vice. For if his will is the ground of obligation, then his will creates right, and whatever he wills, or might will, is right simply, and only because, so he wills.

5. If the will of God be the foundation of moral obligation, we have no standard by which to judge of the moral character of his actions, and cannot know whether he is worthy of praise or blame. Upon the supposition in question, were God a malevolent being, and did he require all his creatures to be selfish, and not benevolent, he would be just as virtuous and worthy of praise as now, for the supposition is, that his sovereign will creates right, and of course, will as he might, that would be right, simply because he willed it.

6. If the will of God is the foundation of moral obligation, he has no standard by which to judge of his own character, as he has no rule, but his own will, with which to compare his own actions.

7. If the will of God is the foundation of moral obligation, he is not himself a subject of moral obligation. But,

8. If God is not a subject of moral obligation, he has no moral character; for virtue and vice are nothing else but conformity or non-conformity to moral obligation. The will of God, as expressed in his law, is the rule of duty to moral agents. It defines and marks out the path of duty, but the fundamental reason why moral agents ought to act in conformity to the will of God, is plainly not the will of God itself.

9. The will of no being can be law. Moral law is an idea of the divine reason and not the willing of any being. If the will of any being were law, that being could not, by natural possibility, will wrong, for whatever he willed would be right, simply and only because he willed it. This is absurd.

10. But let us bring this philosophy into the light of divine revelation. "To the law and to the testimony: if it agree not therewith, it is because it hath no light in it."

The law of God, or the moral law, requires that God shall be loved with all the heart and our neighbour as ourselves. Now it is agreed by the parties in this discussion, that the love required is not mere emotion, but that it consists in choice, willing, intention--i.e., in the choice of something on account of its own intrinsic value, or in the choice of an ultimate end. Now what is this end? What is that which we are to choose for its own intrinsic value? Is it the will or command of God? Are we to will as an ultimate end, that God should will that we should thus will? What can be more absurd, self-contradictory, and ridiculous than this? But again: what is this loveing, willing, choosing, intending, required by the law? We are commanded to love God and our neighbour. What is this--what can it be, but to will the highest good or well-being of God and our neighbour? This is intrinsically and infinitely valuable. This must be the end, and nothing can possibly be law that requires the choice of any other ultimate end. Nor can that, by any possibility, be true philosophy, that makes anything else the reason or foundation of moral obligation.

But it is said that we are conscious of affirming our obligation to obey the will of God, without reference to any other reason than his will; and this, it is said, proves that his will is the foundation of obligation.

To this I reply, the reason does indeed affirm that we ought to will that which God commands, but it does not and cannot assign his will as the foundation of the obligation. His whole will respecting our duty, is summed up in the two precepts of the law. These, as we have seen, require universal good-will to being, or the supreme love of God and the equal love of our neighbour--that we should will the highest well-being of God and of the universe, for its own sake, or for its own intrinsic value. Reason affirms that we ought thus to will. And can it be so self-contradictory as to affirm that we ought to will the good of God and of the universe, for its own intrinsic value; yet not for this reason, but because God wills that we should will it? Impossible! But in this assertion, the objector has reference to some outward act, some condition or means of the end to be chosen, and not to the end itself. But even in respect to any act whatever, his objection does not hold good. For example, God requires me to labour and pray for the salvation of souls, or to do anything else. Now his command is necessarily regarded by me as obligatory, not as an arbitrary requirement, but as revealing infallibly the true means or conditions of securing the great and ultimate end, which I am to will for its intrinsic value. I necessarily regard his commandment as wise and benevolent, and it is only because I so regard it, that I affirm, or can affirm, my obligation to obey him. Should he command me to choose, as an ultimate end, for its own intrinsic value, that which my reason affirmed to be of no intrinsic value, I could not possibly affirm my obligation to obey him. Should he command me to do that which my reason affirmed to be unwise and malevolent, it were impossible for me to affirm my obligation to obey him. This proves, beyond controversy, that reason does not regard his command as the foundation of obligation, but only as infallible proof that that which he commands is wise and benevolent in itself, and commanded by him for that reason.

If the will of God were the foundation of moral obligation, he might command me to violate and trample all the laws of my being, and to be the enemy of all good, and I should not only be under obligation, but affirm my obligation to obey him. But this is absurd. This brings us to the conclusion that he who asserts that moral obligation respects the choice of an end for its intrinsic value, and still affirms the will of God to be the foundation of moral obligation, contradicts his own admissions, the plainest intuitions of reason, and divine revelation. His theory is grossly inconsistent and nonsensical. It overlooks the very nature of moral law as an idea of reason, and makes it to consist in arbitrary willing. This is nonsense.

2. *I now proceed to state and examine a second theory.*

For convenience' sake I shall call it the theory of Paley. His theory, as every reader of Paley knows, makes self-interest the ground of moral obligation. Upon this theory I remark--

(1.) That if self-interest be the ground of moral obligation, then self-interest is the end to be chosen for its own sake. To be virtuous I must in every instance intend my own interest as the supreme good. Then, according to this theory, disinterested benevolence is sin. To live to God, and the universe, is not right. It is not devotion to the right end. This theory affirms self-interest to be the end for which we ought to live. Then selfishness is virtue, and benevolence is vice. These are directly opposite theories. It cannot be a trifle to embrace the wrong view of this subject. If Dr. Paley was right, all are fundamentally wrong who hold the benevolence theory.

(2.) Upon this hypothesis, I am to treat my own interest as supremely valuable, when it is infinitely less valuable than the interests of God. Thus I am under a moral obligation to prefer an infinitely less good, because it is my own, to one of infinitely greater value that belongs to another. This is precisely what every sinner in earth and hell does.

(3.) But this theory would impose on me a moral obligation to choose contrary to the nature and relations of things, and, therefore, contrary to moral law. But this is absurd.

(4.) But let us examine this theory in the light of the revealed law. If this philosophy be correct, the law should read, "Thou shalt love thyself supremely, and God and thy neighbour not at all." For Dr. Paley holds the only reason of the obligation to be self-interest. If this is so, then I am under an obligation to love myself alone, and never do my duty when I at all love God or my neighbour. He says, it is the utility of any rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it. (*Paley's Moral Philos*., book ii. chap. 6.) Again he says, "And let it be asked why I am obliged, (obligated) to keep my word? and the answer will be, Because I am urged to do so by a violent motive, namely, the expectation of being after this life rewarded if I do so, or punished if I do not."--(*Paley's Moral Philos*., book ii. chap. 3.) Thus it would seem, that it is the utility of a rule to myself only that constitutes the ground of obligation to obey it.

But should this be denied, still it cannot be denied that Dr. Paley maintains that self-interest is the ground of moral obligation. If this is so, i.e. if this be the foundation of moral obligation, whether Paley or any one else holds it to be true, then, undeniably, the moral law should read, "Thou shalt love thyself supremely, and God and thy neighbour subordinately;" or, more strictly, "Thou shalt love thyself as an end, and God and your neighbour, only as a means of promoting your own interest."

(5.) If this theory be true, all the precepts in the Bible need to be altered. Instead of the injunction, "Whatever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord," it should read, "Whatever you do, do it heartily unto yourself." Instead of the injunction, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," it should read, "Do all to secure your own interest." Should it be said that this school would say, that the meaning of these precepts is, Do all to the glory of God to secure your own interest thereby, I answer; This is a contradiction. To do it to or for the glory of God is one thing; to do it to secure my own interest is an entirely different and opposite thing. To do it for the glory of God, is to make his glory my end. But to do it to secure my own interest, is to make my own interest the end.

(6.) But let us look at this theory in the light of the revealed conditions of salvation. "Except a man forsake all that he hath he cannot be my disciple." If the theory under consideration be true, it should read; "Except a man make his own interest the supreme end of pursuit, he cannot be my disciple." Again, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross," &c. This, in conformity with the theory in question, should read; "If any man will come after me, let him not deny himself, but cherish and supremely seek his own interest." A multitude of such passages might be quoted, as every reader of the Bible knows.

(7.) But let us examine this theory in the light of scripture declarations. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This, according to the theory we are opposing, should read, "It is more blessed to receive than to give." "Charity (love) seeketh not her own." This should read, "Charity seeketh her own." "No man (that is, no righteous man) liveth to himself." This should read, "Every (righteous) man liveth to himself."

(8.) Let this theory be examined in the light of the spirit and example of Christ. "Even Christ pleased not himself." This should read, if Christ was holy and did his duty; "Even Christ pleased himself, or, which is the same thing, sought his own interest."

"I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him who sent me." This should read, "I seek not the glory of him who sent me, but mine own glory."

But enough; you cannot fail to see that this is a selfish philosophy, and the exact opposite of the truth of God.

But let us examine this philosophy in the light of the admission, that moral obligation respects ultimate intention only. I ought to choose the good of God and my neighbour for its own intrinsic value; that is, as an ultimate end, and yet not as an ultimate end for its intrinsic value, but only as a means of promoting my own interest! This is a plain contradiction. What! I am to love, that is, will good to God and my neighbour as an ultimate end, or for its own sake, merely to promote my own happiness.

3. *I will in the next place consider the utilitarian philosophy.*

This maintains that the utility of an act or choice renders it obligatory. That is, utility is the foundation of moral obligation; that the tendency of an act, choice, or intention, to secure a good or valuable end, is the foundation of the obligation to put forth that choice or intention. Upon this theory I remark--

(1.) That utilitarians hold, in common with others, that it is our duty to will the good of God and our neighbour, for its own sake; and that the intrinsic value of this good creates obligation to will it, and to endeavour to promote it; that the tendency of choosing it, to promote it, would be neither useful nor obligatory, but for its intrinsic value. How, then, can they hold that the tendency of choosing to secure its object, instead of the intrinsic value of the object, should be a ground of obligation. But--

(2.) It is absurd to say, the foundation of the obligation to choose a certain end is to be found, not in the value of the end itself, but in the tendency of the intention to secure the end. The tendency is valuable or otherwise, as the end is valuable or otherwise. It is, and must be, the value of the end, and not the tendency of an intention to secure the end, that constitutes the foundation of the obligation to intend.

(3.) We have seen that the foundation of obligation to will or choose any end as such, that is, on its own account, must consist in the intrinsic value of the end, and that nothing else whatever can impose obligation to choose any thing as an ultimate end, but its intrinsic value. To affirm the contrary is to affirm a contradiction. It is the same as if to say, that I ought to choose a thing as an end, and yet not as an end, that is, for its own sake, but for some other reason, to wit, the tendency of my choice to secure that end. Here I affirm at the same breath, that the thing intended is to be an end, that is, chosen for its own intrinsic value, and yet not as an end or for its intrinsic value, but for an entirely different reason, to wit, the tendency of the choice to secure it.

(4.) But we have also seen that the end chosen and the reason for the choice are identical. If utility be the foundation of moral obligation, then utility is the end to be chosen. That is, the tendency of the choice to secure its end is the end to be chosen. This is absurd.

(5.) But the very announcement of this theory implies its absurdity. A choice is obligatory, because it tends to secure good. But why secure good rather than evil? The answer is, because good is valuable. Ah! here then we have another reason, and one which must be the true reason, to wit, the value of the good which the choice tends to secure. Obligation to use means to do good may, and must, be conditionated upon the tendency of those means to secure the end, but the obligation to use them is founded solely in the value of the end.

But let us examine this philosophy in the light of the oracles of God. What say the scriptures?

(1.) The law. Does this require us to love God and our neighbour, because loving God and our neighbour tends to the well-being either of God, our neighbour, or ourselves? Is it the tendency or utility of love that makes it obligatory upon us to exercise it? What! will good, not from regard to its value, but because willing good will do good! But why do good? What is this love? Here let it be distinctly remembered that the love required by the law of God is not a mere emotion or feeling, but willing, choosing, intending, in a word, that this love is nothing else than ultimate intention. What, then, is to be intended as an end or for its own sake? Is it the tendency of love, or the utility of ultimate intention, that is the end to be intended? It must be the latter, if utilitarianism is true.

According to this theory, when the law requires supreme love to God, and equal love to our neighbour, the meaning is, not that we are to will, choose, intend the well-being of God and our neighbour for its own sake or because of its intrinsic value; but because of the tendency of the intention to promote the good of God, our neighbour, and ourselves. But suppose the tendency of love or intention to be what it may, the utility of it depends upon the intrinsic value of that which it tends to promote. Suppose love or intention tends to promote its end, this is a useful tendency only because the end is valuable in itself. It is nonsense then to say that love to God and man, or an intention to promote their good is required, not because of the value of their well-being, but because love tends to promote their well-being.

But the supposition that the law of God requires love to God and man, or the choice of their good, on account of the tendency of love to promote their well-being, is absurd. It is to represent the law as requiring love, not to God and our neighbour as an end, but to tendency as an end. The law in this case should read thus: "Thou shalt love the utility or tendency of love with all thy heart," &c.

If the theory under consideration is true, this is the spirit and meaning of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord and thy neighbour, that is, thou shalt choose their good, not for its own sake or as an end, but because choosing it tends to promote it." This is absurd; for, I ask again, why promote it but for its own value?

Again, this theory is absurd, because if the law of God requires ultimate intention, it is a contradiction to affirm that the intention ought to terminate on its own tendency as an end.

(2.) Again, let us examine this theory in the light of the precepts of the gospel. "Do all to the glory of God." The spirit of this requirement, as is admitted, is: Intend, choose the glory of God. But why choose the glory of God? Why, if utilitarianism be true, not because of the value of God's glory, but because choosing it tends to promote it. But again, I ask why promote it, if it be not valuable? And if it be valuable, why not will it for that reason?

(3.) But it is said that we are conscious of affirming obligation to do many things, on the ground, that those things are useful, or tend to promote good.

I answer, that we are conscious of affirming obligation to do many things upon condition of their tendency to promote good, but that we never affirm obligation to be founded on this tendency. Such an affirmation would be a downright absurdity. I am under an obligation to use the means to promote good, not for the sake of its intrinsic value, but for the sake of the tendency of the means to promote it! This is absurd.

I say again, the obligation to use means may and must be conditionated upon perceived tendency, but never founded in this tendency. Ultimate intention has no such condition. The perceived intrinsic value imposes obligation without any reference to the tendency of the intention.

(4.) But suppose any utilitarian should deny that moral obligation respects ultimate intention only, and maintain that it also respects those volitions and actions that sustain to the ultimate end the relation of means, and therefore assert that the foundation of moral obligation in respect to all those volitions and actions, is their tendency to secure a valuable end. This would not at all relieve the difficulty of utilitarianism, for in this case tendency could only be a condition of the obligation, while the fundamental reason of the obligation would and must be, the intrinsic value of the end which these may have a tendency to promote. Tendency to promote an end can impose no obligation. The end must be intrinsically valuable and this alone imposes obligation to choose the end, and to use the means to promote it. Upon condition that anything is perceived to sustain to this end the relation of a necessary means, we are, for the sake of the end alone, under obligation to use the means.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE VI.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

4. RIGHTARIANISM.--*I now pass to the consideration of the theory that regards right as the foundation of moral obligation.*

In the examination of this philosophy I must begin by defining terms. What is right? The primary signification of the term is straight. When used in a moral sense it means fit, suitable, agreeable to the nature and relations of moral agents. Right, in a moral sense, belongs to choice, intention, and is an intention straight with, or conformed to, moral law. The inquiry before us is, what is the ground of obligation to put forth choice or intention. Rightarians say that right is the ground of such obligation. This is the answer given to this question by a large school of philosophers and theologians. But what does this assertion mean? It is generally held by this school, that right, in a moral sense, pertains primarily and strictly, to intentions only. They maintain, as I do, that obligation pertains primarily and strictly to ultimate choice or intentions, and less strictly to executive volitions, and to choices of the conditions and means of securing the object of ultimate choice. Now in what sense of the term right do they regard it as the ground of obligation.

Right is objective and subjective. Right, in the objective sense of the term, has been recently defined to consist in the relation of intrinsic fitness existing between ultimate choice and its object (Mahan's Moral Philosophy). For example, the nature or intrinsic value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, creates the relation of intrinsic fitness between it and choice, and this relation, it is insisted, creates, or is the ground of, obligation.

Subjective right is synonymous with righteousness, uprightness, virtue. It consists in, or is an attribute of, that state of the will, which is conformed to objective right, or to moral law. It is a term that expresses the moral quality, element, or attribute of that ultimate intention which the law of God requires. In other words still, it is conformity of heart to the law of objective right, or, as I just said, it is more strictly the term that designates the moral character of that state of heart. Some choose to regard subjective right as consisting in this state of heart, and others insist that it is only an element, attribute, or quality of this state of heart, or of this ultimate intention. I shall not contend about words, but shall show that it matters not, so far as the question we are about to examine is concerned, in which of these lights subjective right is regarded, whether as consisting in ultimate intention conformed to law, or, as being an attribute, element, or quality of this intention.

The theory under consideration was held by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. It was the theory of Kant, and is now the theory of the transcendental school in Europe and America. Cousin, in manifest accordance with the views of Kant, states the theory in these words; "Do right for the sake of the right, or rather, will the right for the sake of the right. Morality has to do with the intentions."--(*Enunciation of Moral Law--Elements of Psychology*, p. 162.) Those who follow Kant, Cousin, and Coleridge state the theory either in the same words, or in words that amount to the same thing. They regard right as the foundation of moral obligation. "Will the right for the sake of the right." This, if it has any meaning, means; will the right as an ultimate end, that is, for its own sake. Let us examine this very popular philosophy, first, in the light of its own principles, and secondly in the light of revelation.

The writer, first above alluded to, has professedly given a critical definition of the exact position and teaching of rightarians. They hold, according to him, and I suppose he has rightly defined the position of that school, that objective right is the ground of obligation. We shall see, in another lecture, that subjective right, or righteousness, can never be a ground of moral obligation. We will here attend to the critically defined position of the rightarian who holds that the relation of intrinsic fitness existing between choice and an intrinsically valuable object, is the ground of obligation to choose that object.

Now observe--

(1.) This same writer holds that, strictly speaking, obligation pertains only to the ultimate choice or intention.

(2.) He also strenuously maintains, that the reason for ultimate choice must be found exclusively in the object of such choice, in other words, that ultimate choice, is the choice of its object for its own sake, or for what is intrinsic in the object itself. To this I agree.

(3.) He also affirms repeatedly, that the ground of obligation is, and must be, found exclusively in the object of ultimate choice.

(4.) He often affirms that the ground of obligation is the consideration, intrinsic in the object of choice, which compels the reason to affirm the obligation to choose it for its own sake. To this I also agree. But all this as flatly as possible contradicts his rightarian theory, as above stated. If the ground of obligation to put forth ultimate choice is to be found, as it certainly must be, in the nature of the object of choice, and in nothing extrinsic to it, as he often affirms, how can it consist in the relation of intrinsic fitness existing between the choice and its object? Plainly it cannot. This relation is not intrinsic in the object of choice.

Observe. The obligation is to choose the object of ultimate choice, not for the sake of the relation existing between the choice and its object, but exclusively for the sake of what is intrinsic in the object itself. The relation is not the object of choice, but the relation is created by the object of choice. Choice being what it is, the intrinsic nature or value of the object, as the good of being for example, creates both the relation of rightness and the obligation to choose the object for its own sake. That which creates the relation of objective rightness must, for the same reason, create the obligation, for it is absurd to say that the intrinsic value of the object creates the relation of rightness between itself and choice, and yet that it does not impose or create obligation to choose itself for its own sake. The supposition of the rightarian is, that the intrinsic nature of the object creates the relation of rightness between itself and choice, and that this relation creates the obligation to choose the object. But this is absurd.

Observe again. The obligation is to choose the object for its own sake, and not for the sake of the relation in question. But the ground of obligation is that intrinsic in the object, for the sake of which the object ought to be chosen.

It is self-evident then, that since the object ought to be chosen for the sake of its own nature, or for what is intrinsic in it, and not for the sake of the relation in question, the nature of the object, and not the relation, is, and must be, the ground of obligation.

But, the writer who has given the above defined position of the rightarians, says that "the intelligence, in judging an act to be right or wrong, does not take into the account the object nor the act by itself, but both together, in their intrinsic relations, as the ground of its affirmation."

Here then, we learn that the ground of obligation is neither what is intrinsic in the object of choice, nor in the choice itself, but both together in their intrinsic relations. But how is this? This same writer has asserted, over and over again, and that with truth, that the ground of obligation must be intrinsic in the object of choice, and in nothing extraneous to it. This he has often postulated, as a universal truth. He has also postulated, as a universal truth, that the character of the choice itself, is the sole ground of obligation. So, as we shall see in its proper place, he has affirmed sundry other universal, contradictory, and exclusive grounds of obligation.

But let us now attend to the assertion just above quoted, namely, that the nature of the object of choice, the nature of the choice itself, with their intrinsic relations, together, form the ground of obligation. Here, as is almost universal with this writer, the ground is confounded with the condition of obligation. Had he said that in affirming obligation to choose an ultimate object, as the good of being, for example, the intelligence regards the nature of the object, the nature of the choice, and their intrinsic relations, as conditions of the affirmation of obligation, he would have stated a truth. But to represent these three as together comprising the ground of obligation, is, not only absurd in itself, but as emphatically as possible contradicts what he has elsewhere so repeatedly and critically affirmed, namely, that ultimate choice must always and necessarily find the ground of its obligation, in its object and in nothing extraneous to it.

But let us attend to the intrinsic absurdity of the above statement of rightarianism. The statement is, that the nature of ultimate choice, and the nature of its object, the good of being, for example, with their intrinsic relations to each other, form a ground of obligation to choose--what? the choice--the object; and their intrinsic relations? No, but simply and only to choose the good for its own sake, or solely for the sake of what is intrinsic in it.

Now observe, it is, and must be agreed, and is often affirmed by this writer, that ultimate choice is the choice of an object for its own sake, or for what is intrinsic in the object itself. That the ground of obligation to put forth ultimate choice, must, in every case, be intrinsic in the object of choice.

Now the object of choice in this case is the good of being, and not the nature of the choice, and of the good of being, together with the intrinsic relation of rightness existing between them. The form of the obligation discloses the ground of it. The form of the obligation is to choose the good of being, i.e. the object of choice, for what is intrinsic in it. Then, the ground of the obligation must be, the intrinsic nature of the good, i.e. of the object of choice. The nature of choice, and the intrinsic relations of the choice, and the good, are conditions, but not the ground, of the obligation. Had this writer only kept in mind his own most critical definition of ultimate intention, his often repeated assertions that the ground of obligation must be, in every case, found intrinsically in the object of ultimate choice, and in nothing extraneous to it, he never could have made the statement we have just examined. We shall be obliged to advert in another place, to a large number of contradictory statements, on this subject, by this same author.

The duty of universal disinterested benevolence is universally and necessarily affirmed and admitted. But if the rightarian be the true theory then disinterested benevolence is sin. According to this scheme, the right, and not the good of being is the end to, and for which, God and all moral agents ought to live. According to this theory, disinterested benevolence can never be duty, can never be right, but always and necessarily wrong. I do not mean that the advocates of this theory see and avow this conclusion. But it is wonderful that they do not, for nothing is more self-evident. If moral agents ought to will the right for the sake of the right, or will good, not for the sake of the good, but for the sake of the relation of rightness existing between the choice and the good, then to will the good for its own sake is sin. It is not willing the right end. It is willing the good and not the right as an ultimate end. These are opposing theories. Both cannot be true. Which is the right to will, the good for its own sake, or the right. Let universal reason answer.

But let us examine this philosophy in the light of the oracles of God.

(1.) In the light of the moral law. The whole law is expressed by the great Teacher thus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all they might, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." Paul says: "All the law is fulfilled in one word--love: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Now it is admitted by this philosophy, that the love required by the law is not a mere emotion, but that it consists in willing, choice, intention; that it consists in the choice of an ultimate end, or in the choice of something for its own sake, or, which is the same thing, for its intrinsic value. What is this which the law requires us to will to God and our neighbour? Is it to will something to, or respecting, God and our neighbour, not for the sake of the intrinsic value of that something to them, but for the sake of the relation of rightness existing between choice and that something? This were absurd. Besides, what has this to do with loving God and our neighbour? To will the something, the good, for example, of God, and our neighbour, for the sake of the relation in question, is not the same as to love God and our neighbour, as it is not willing the good, for its own sake. It is not willing their good out of any regard to them, but solely out of regard to the relation of fitness existing between the willing and the object willed. Suppose it be said, that the law requires us to will the good, or highest blessedness of God and our neighbour, because it is right. This is a contradiction and an impossibility. To will the blessedness of God and our neighbour, in any proper sense, is to will it for its own sake, or as an ultimate end. But this is not to will it because it is right. To will the good of God and our neighbour for its own sake, or for its intrinsic value, is right. But to will it, not for the sake of its intrinsic value to them, but for the sake of the relations in question, is not right. To will the good because it is good, or the valuable because it is valuable, is right, because it is willing it for the right reason. But to will it, not for its value, but for the sake of the relation of fitness between the willing and the object, is not right, because it is not willing it for the right reason. The law of God does not, cannot, require us to love right more than God and our neighbour. What! right of greater value than the highest well being of God and of the universe? Impossible. It is impossible that the moral law should require anything else than to will the highest good of universal being as an ultimate end, i.e. for its own sake. It is a first truth of reason, that this is the most valuable thing possible or conceivable; and that could by no possibility be law, that should require anything else to be chosen as an ultimate end. According to this philosophy, the revealed law should read: "Thou shalt love the right for its own sake, with all thy heart and with all thy soul." The fact is, the law requires the supreme love of God, and the equal love of our neighbour. It says nothing, and implies nothing, about doing right for the sake of the right. Rightarianism is a rejection of the divine revealed law, and a substituting in its stead an entirely different rule of moral obligation: a rule that deifies right, that rejects the claims of God, and exalts right to the throne.

(2.) "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Does this precept require us to will the glory of God for its intrinsic or relative value, or for the sake of the relation of intrinsic fitness between the willing and its object? The glory or renown of God, is of infinite value to him, and to the universe, and for this reason it should be promoted. The thing required here is doing, an executive act. The spirit of the requisition is this: Aim to spread abroad the renown or glory of God, as a means of securing the highest well-being of the universe. Why? I answer: for the sake of the intrinsic value of this well-being, and not for the sake of the relation of fitness existing between the willing and the object.

(3.) "Do good unto all men, as ye have opportunity." Here again, are we required to do the good, for the sake of the good, or for the sake of the relation of rightness, between the doing and the good. I answer: we are to do the good for the sake of the good.

(4.) Take the commands to pray and labour for the salvation of souls. Do such commandments require us to go forth to will or do the right for the sake of the right, or to will the salvation of souls for the intrinsic value of their salvation? When we pray and preach and converse, must we aim at right, must the love of right, and not the love of God and of souls influence us? When I am engaged in prayer, and travail night and day for souls, and have an eye so single to the good of souls and to the glory of God, and am so swallowed up with my subject as not so much as to think of the right, am I all wrong? Must I pray because it is right, and do all I do, and suffer all I suffer, not from good-will to God and man, but because it is right? Who does not know, that to intend the right for the sake of the right in all these things, instead of having an eye single to the good of being, would and must be anything rather than true religion?

(5.) Examine this philosophy in the light of scriptural declarations. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, are we to understand that God gave his Son, not from any regard to the good of souls for its own sake, but for the sake of the right? Did he will the right for the sake of the right? Did he give his Son to die for the right for the sake of the right, or to die to render the salvation of souls possible, and for the sake of the souls?

(6.) Did Christ give Himself to labour and die for the right for the sake of the right, or for souls from love to souls? Did prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and have the saints in all ages, willed the right for the sake of the right, or have they laboured and suffered and died for God and souls, from love to them?

(7.) How infinitely strange would the Bible read, if it adopted this philosophy. The law, as has been said, would read thus: "Thou shalt love the right with all thy heart;" "Whatsoever ye do, do all for the sake of the right;" "Do the right unto all men for the sake of the right;" "God so loved the world for the sake of the right, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for the world, not for the sake of the world, but for the sake of the relation of intrinsic rightness existing between his giving and the world." Should we interrogate the holy men of all ages, and ask why they do and suffer as they do, with this philosophy, they must answer, We are willing and doing the right for the sake of the right. We have no ultimate regard to God or to the good of any being, but only to the right.

(8.) But take another passage which is quoted in support of this philosophy: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Now what is the spirit of this requirement? What is it to obey parents? Why, if as this philosophy holds, it must resolve itself into ultimate intention, what must the child intend for its own sake? Must he will good to God and his parents, and obey his parents as a means of securing the highest good, or must he will the right as an end for the sake of the right, regardless of the good of God or of the universe? Would it be right to will the right for the sake of the right, rather than to will the good of the universe for the sake of the good, and obey his parents as a means of securing the highest good?

It is right to will the highest good of God and of the universe, and to use all the necessary means, and fulfil all the necessary conditions of this highest well-being. For children to obey their parents is one of the means, and for this reason it is right, and upon no other condition can it be required. But it is said that children affirm their obligation to obey their parents, entirely irrespective of the obedience having any reference, or sustaining any relation, to the good of being. This is a mistake. The child, if he is a moral agent, and does really affirm moral obligation, not only does, but must, perceive the end upon which his choice or intention ought to terminate. If he really makes an intelligent affirmation, it is and must be, that he ought to will an end, that this end is not, and cannot be the right, as has been shown. He knows that he ought to will his parents' happiness, and his own happiness, and the happiness of the world, and of God; and he knows that obedience to his parents sustains the relation of a means to this end. The fact is, it is a first truth of reason, that he ought to will the good of his parents and the good of every body. He also knows that obedience to his parents is a necessary means to this end. If he does not know these things, it is impossible for him to be a moral agent, or to make any intelligent affirmation at all; and if he has any idea of obedience, it is, and must be, only such as animals have who are actuated wholly by hope, fear and instinct. As well might we say, that an ox or a dog, who gives indication of knowing in some sense, that he ought to obey us, affirms moral obligation of himself, as to say this of a child in whose mind the idea of the good, or valuable to being is not developed. What! does moral obligation respect ultimate intention only; and does ultimate intention consist in the choice of something for its own intrinsic value, and yet is it true that children affirm moral obligation before the idea of the intrinsically valuable is at all developed? Impossible! But this objection assumes that children have the idea of right developed before the idea of the valuable. This cannot be. The end to be chosen must be apprehended by the mind, before the mind can have the idea of moral obligation to chose an end, or of the right or wrong of choosing or not choosing it. The developement of the idea of the good or valuable, must precede the developement of the ideas of right and of moral obligation.

Take this philosophy on its own ground, and suppose the relation of rightness existing between choice and its object to be the ground of obligation, it is plain that the intrinsically valuable object must be perceived, before this relation can be perceived. So that the idea of the intrinsically valuable must be developed, as a condition of the existence of the idea of the relation in question.

The law of God, then, is not, and cannot be, developed in the mind of a child who has no knowledge or idea of the valuable, and who has, and can have, no reference to the good of any being, in obedience to his parents.

It is one thing to intend that, the intending of which is right, and quite another to intend the right as an end. For example, to choose my own gratification as an end, is wrong. But this is not choosing the wrong, as an end. A drunkard chooses to gratify his appetite for strong drink, as an end, that is, for its own sake. This is wrong. But the choice does not terminate on the wrong, but on the gratification. The thing intended is not the wrong. The liquor is not chosen, the gratification is not intended, because it is wrong, but notwithstanding it is wrong. To love God is right, but to suppose that God is loved because it is right, is absurd. It is to suppose that God is loved, not from any regard to God, but from a regard to right. This is an absurdity and a contradiction. To love or will the good of my neighbour, is right. But to will the right, instead of the good of my neighbour, is not right. It is loving right instead of my neighbour; but this is not right.

(1.) But, it is objected, that I am conscious of affirming to myself that I ought to will the right. This is a mistake. I am conscious of affirming to myself, that I ought to will that, the willing of which is right, to wit, to will the good of God and of being. This is right. But this is not choosing the right as an end.

But it is still insisted, that we are conscious of affirming obligation to will, and do, many things, simply and only because it is right thus to will, and do, and in view of this rightness.

To this I reply, that the immediate reason for the act, thought of at the time, and immediately present to the mind, may be the rightness of the act, but in such cases the rightness is only regarded by the mind as a condition and never as the ground of obligation. The act must be ultimate choice, or the choice of conditions and means. In ultimate choice surely, the mind can never affirm, or think of the relation of rightness between the choice and its object, instead of the intrinsic value of the object, as the ground of obligation. Nor can the mind think of the relation of rightness between the choice of conditions and means, and its object, as the ground of the obligation to choose them. It does, and must, assume the value of the end, as creating both the obligation to choose, and the relation in question. The fact is, the mind necessarily assumes, without always thinking of this assumption, its obligation to will the good, for its own sake, together with all the known conditions and means. Whenever therefore it perceives a condition, or a means of good, it instantly and necessarily affirms obligation to choose it, or, which is the same thing, it affirms the rightness of such choice. The rightness of the choice may be, and often is the thing immediately thought of, but the assumption is, and must be, in the mind, that this obligation, and hence the rightness, is created by the nature of the object to which this thing sustains the relation of a condition or a means.

(2.) But it is said again, "I am conscious of affirming to myself that I ought to will the good of being, because it is right." That is, to will the good of being, as a means, and the right as an end! which is making right the supreme good, and the good of being a means to that end. This is absurd. But to say, that I am conscious of affirming to myself my obligation to love or will the good of God and my neighbour, because it is right, is a contradiction. It is the same as to say, I ought to love, or intend the good of God and my neighbour, as an ultimate end, and yet not to intend the good of God and my neighbour, but intend the right.

(3.) But it is said, that "I ought to love God in compliance with, and out of respect to my obligation; that I ought to will it, because and for the reason that I am bound to will it." That is, that in loving God and my neighbour, I must intend to discharge or comply with my obligation; and this, it is said, is identical with intending the right. But ought my supreme object to be to discharge my duty--to meet obligation instead of willing the well-being of God and my neighbour for its own sake? If my end is to do my duty, I do not do it. For what is my obligation? Why, to love, or will the good of God and my neighbour, that is, as an end, or for its own value. To discharge my obligation, then, I must intend the good of God and my neighbour, as an end. That is, I must intend that which I am under an obligation to intend. But I am not under an obligation to intend the right, because it is right, nor to do my duty because it is duty, but to intend the good of God and of my neighbour, because it is good. Therefore, to discharge my obligation, I must intend the good, and not the right--the good of God and my neighbour, and not to do my duty. I say again, to intend the good, or valuable, is right; but to intend the right is not right.

(4.) But it is said, that in very many instances, at least, I am conscious of affirming my moral obligation to do the right, without any reference to the good of being, when I can assign no other reason for the affirmation of obligation than the right. For example, I behold virtue, I affirm spontaneously and necessarily, that I ought to love that virtue. And this, it is said, has no reference to the good of being. Is willing the right for the sake of the right, and loving virtue, the same thing? But what is it to love virtue? not a mere feeling of delight or complacency in it? It is agreed that moral obligation, strictly speaking, respects the ultimate intention only. What, then, do I mean by the affirmation that I ought to love virtue? What is virtue? It is ultimate intention, or an attribute of ultimate intention. But what is loving virtue? It consists in willing its existence. But it is said that I affirm my obligation to love virtue as an end, or for its own sake, and not from any regard to the good of being. This is absurd, and a contradiction. To love virtue, it is said, is to will its existence as an end. But virtue consists in intending an end. Now, to love virtue, it is said, is to will, intend its existence as an end, for its own sake. Then, according to this theory, I affirm my obligation to intend the intention of a virtuous being as an end, instead of intending the same end that he does. This is absurd; his intention is of no value, is neither naturally good nor morally good, irrespective of the end intended. It is neither right nor wrong, irrespective of the end chosen. It is therefore impossible to will, choose, intend the intention as an end, without reference to the end intended. To love virtue, then, is to love or will the end upon which virtuous intention terminates, namely, the good of being, or, in other words, to love virtue, is to will its existence, for the sake of the end it has in view, which is the same thing as to will the same end. Virtue is intending, choosing an end. Loving virtue is willing that the virtuous intention should exist for the sake of its end. Take away the end, and who would or could will the intention? Without the end, the virtue, or intention, would not or could not exist. It is not true, therefore, that in the case supposed, I affirm my obligation to will, or intend, without any reference to the good of being.

(5.) But again, it is said, that when I contemplate the moral excellence of God, I affirm my obligation to love him solely for his goodness, without any reference to the good of being, and for no other reason than because it is right. But to love God because of his moral excellence, and because it is right, are not the same thing. It is a gross contradiction to talk of loving God for his moral excellence, because it is right. It is the same as to say, I love God for the reason that he is morally excellent, or worthy, yet not at all for this reason, but for the reason that it is right. To love God for his moral worth, is to will good to him for its own sake upon condition that he deserves it. But to will his moral worth because it is right, is to will the right as an ultimate end, to have supreme regard to right, instead of the moral worth, or the well-being of God.

But it may reasonably be asked, why should rightarians bring forward these objections? They all assume that moral obligation may respect something else than ultimate intention. Why, I repeat it, should rightarians affirm that the moral excellence of God is the foundation of moral obligation, since they hold that right is the foundation of moral obligation? Why should the advocates of the theory that the moral excellence of God is the foundation of moral obligation, affirm that right is the foundation, or that we are bound to love God for his moral excellence, because this is right? These are gross contradictions. Rightarians hold that disinterested benevolence is a universal duty; that this benevolence consists in willing the highest good of being in general, for its own sake; that this good, by virtue of its own nature, imposes obligation to choose it, for its own sake, and therefore and for this reason, it is right thus to choose it. But notwithstanding all this, they most inconsistently affirm that right is universally the ground of obligation. Consistency must compel them to deny that disinterested benevolence ever is, or can be, duty, and right, or to abandon the nonsensical dogma, that right is the ground of obligation. There is no end to the absurdities in which error involves its advocates, and it is singular to see the advocates of the different theories, each in his turn, abandon his own and affirm some other, as an objection to the true theory. It has also been, and still is, common for writers to confound different theories with each other, and to affirm, in the compass of a few pages, several different theories. At least this has been done in some instances.

Consistent rightarianism is a godless, Christless, loveless philosophy. This Kant saw and acknowledged. He calls it pure legality, that is, he understands the law as imposing obligation by virtue of its own nature, instead of the intrinsic value of the end, which the law requires moral agents to choose. He loses sight of the end, and does not recognize any end whatever. He makes a broad distinction between morality and religion. Morality consists, according to him in the adoption of the maxim, "Do right for the sake of the right," or, "Act at all times upon a maxim fit for law universal." The adoption of this maxim is morality. But now, having adopted this maxim, the mind goes abroad to carry its maxim into practice. It finds God and being to exist, and sees it to be right to intend their good. This intending the good is religion, according to him. Thus, he says, ethics lead to or result in religion.--(See Kant, on Religion.) But we feel prompted to inquire, whether, when we apprehend God and being, we are to will their well-being as an end, or for its own sake, or because it is right? If for its own sake, where then is the maxim, "Will the right for the sake of the right?" for if we are to will the good, not as an ultimate end, but for the sake of the right, then right is the end that is preferred to the highest well-being of God and of the universe. It is impossible that this should be religion. Indeed Kant himself admits that this is not religion.

But enough of this cold and loveless philosophy. As it exalts right above all that is called God, and subverts all the teachings of the Bible, it cannot be a light thing to be deluded by it. But it is remarkable and interesting to see Christian rightarians, without being sensible of their inconsistency, so often confound this philosophy with that which teaches that good-will to being constitutes virtue. Numerous examples of it occur everywhere in their writings, which demonstrate that rightarianism is with them only a theory that "plays round the head but comes not near the heart."

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE VII.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

DIVINE MORAL EXCELLENCE THEORY.

5. I NOW ENTER UPON THE DISCUSSION OF THE THEORY, THAT THE GOODNESS, OR MORAL EXCELLENCE, OF GOD IS THE FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

To this philosophy I reply,

1. That its absurdity may be shown in several ways.

(1.) Let it be remembered, that moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate end.

(2.) That the reason of the obligation, or that which imposes obligation, is identical with the end on which the intention ought to terminate. If, therefore, the goodness of God be the reason, or foundation of moral obligation, then the goodness of God is the ultimate end to be intended. But as this goodness consists in love, or benevolence, it is impossible that it should be regarded or chosen, as an ultimate end; and to choose it were to choose the divine choice, to intend the divine intention as an ultimate end, instead of choosing what God chooses, and intending what he intends.

Or if the goodness or moral excellence of God is to be regarded, not as identical with, but as an attribute or moral quality of benevolence, then, upon the theory under consideration, a moral agent ought to choose a quality or attribute of the divine choice or intention as an ultimate end, instead of the end upon which the divine intention terminates. This is absurd.

(3.) It is impossible that virtue should be the foundation of moral obligation. Virtue consists in a compliance with moral obligation. But obligation must exist before it can be complied with. Now, upon this theory, obligation cannot exist until virtue exists as its foundation. Then this theory amounts to this: virtue is the foundation of moral obligation; therefore virtue must exist before moral obligation can exist. But as virtue consists in a conformity to moral obligation, moral obligation must exist before virtue can exist. Therefore neither moral obligation nor virtue, can ever, by any possibility, exist. God's virtue must have existed prior to his obligation, as its foundation. But as virtue consists in compliance with moral obligation, and as obligation could not exist until virtue existed as its foundation; in other words, as obligation could not exist without the previous existence of virtue, as its foundation, and as virtue could not exist without the previous existence of obligation, it follows, that neither God, nor any other being, could ever be virtuous, for the reason that he could never be the subject of moral obligation. Should it be said, that God's holiness is the foundation of our obligation to love him, I ask in what sense it can be so? What is the nature or form of that love, which his virtue lays us under an obligation to exercise? It cannot be a mere emotion of complacency, for emotions being involuntary states of mind and mere phenomena of the sensibility, are not strictly within the pale of legislation and morality. Is this love resolvable into benevolence, or good-will? But why will good to God rather than evil? Why, surely, because good is valuable in itself. But if it is valuable in itself, this must be the fundamental reason for willing it as a possible good; and his virtue must be only a secondary reason or condition of the obligation, to will his actual blessedness. But again the foundation of moral obligation must be the same in all worlds, and with all moral agents, for the simple reason, that moral law is one and identical in all worlds. If God's virtue is not the foundation of moral obligation in him, which it cannot be, it cannot be the foundation of obligation in us, as moral law must require him to choose the same end that it requires us to choose. His virtue must be a secondary reason of his obligation to will his own actual blessedness, and the condition of our obligation to will his actual and highest blessedness, but cannot be the fundamental reason, that always being the intrinsic value of his well-being.

If this theory is true, disinterested benevolence is sin. Undeniably benevolence consists in willing the highest well being of God and the universe for its own sake, in devoting the soul and all to this end. But this theory teaches us, either to will the moral excellence of God, for its own sake, or as an ultimate end, or to will his good and the good of the universe, not for its own sake, but because he is morally excellent. The benevolence theory regards blessedness as the end, and holiness or moral excellence only as a condition of the end. This theory regards moral excellence itself as the end. Does the moral excellence of God impose obligation to will his moral excellence for its own sake? if not, it cannot be a ground of obligation. Does his moral excellence impose obligation to will his highest good, and that of the universe, for its own sake? No, for this were a contradiction. For, be it remembered, no one thing can be a ground of obligation to choose any other thing, for its own sake. That which creates obligation to choose, by reason of its own nature, must itself be the identical object of choice; the obligation is to choose that object, for its own sake.

If the divine moral excellence is the ground of obligation to choose, then this excellence must be the object of this choice, and disinterested benevolence is never right, but always wrong.

2. But for the sake of a somewhat systematic examination of this subject, I will--

(1.) Show what virtue, or moral excellence is.

(2.) That it cannot be the foundation of moral obligation.

(3.) Show what moral worth or good desert is.

(4.) That it cannot be the foundation of moral obligation.

(5.) Show what relation virtue, merit, and moral worth sustain to moral obligation.

(6.) Answer objections.

(1.) Show what virtue, or moral excellence is.

Virtue, or moral excellence, consists in conformity of will to moral law. It must either be identical with love or good-will, or it must be the moral attribute or element of good-will or benevolence.

(2.) It cannot be the foundation of moral obligation.

It is agreed, that the moral law requires love; and that this term expresses all that it requires. It is also agreed that this love is good-will, or that it resolves itself into choice, or ultimate intention. It must, then, consist in the choice of an ultimate end. Or, in more common language, this love consists in the supreme devotion of heart and soul, to God and to the highest good of being. But since virtue either consists in choice, or is an attribute of choice, or benevolence, it is impossible to will it as an ultimate end. For this would involve the absurdity of choosing choice, or intending intention, as an end, instead of choosing that as an end upon which virtuous choice terminates. Or, if virtue be regarded as the moral attribute of love or benevolence, to make it an ultimate end would be to make an attribute of choice an ultimate end, instead of that on which choice terminates, or ought to terminate. This is absurd.

(3.) Show what moral worth, or good desert is.

Moral worth, or good desert, is not identical with virtue, or obedience to moral law, but is an attribute of character, resulting from obedience. Virtue, or holiness, is a state of mind. It is an active and benevolent state of the will. Moral worth is not a state of mind, but is the result of a state of mind. We say that a man's obedience to moral law, is valuable in such a sense that a holy being is worthy, or deserving of good, because of his virtue, or holiness. But this worthiness, this good desert, is not a state of mind, but, as I said, it is a result of benevolence. It is an attribute or quality of character, and not a state of mind.

(4.) Moral worth or good desert cannot be the foundation of moral obligation.

(*a.*) It is admitted, that good, or the intrinsically valuable to being, must be the foundation of moral obligation. The law of God requires the choice of an ultimate end. This end must be intrinsically valuable, for it is its intrinsic value that imposes obligation to will it. Nothing, then, can be the foundation of moral obligation but that which is a good, or intrinsically valuable in itself.

(*b.*) Ultimate good, or the intrinsically valuable, must belong to, and be inseparable from, sentient existences. A block of marble cannot enjoy, or be the subject of, good. That which is intrinsically good to moral agents, must consist in a state of mind. It must be something that is found within the field of consciousness. Nothing can be to them an intrinsic good, but that of which they can be conscious. By this, it is not intended, that everything of which they are conscious, is to them an ultimate good, or a good in any sense; but it is intended, that that cannot be to them an ultimate, or intrinsic good, of which they are not conscious. Ultimate good must consist in a conscious state of mind. Whatever conduces to the state of mind that is necessarily regarded by us as intrinsically good or valuable, is to us a relative good. But the state of mind alone is the ultimate good. From this it is plain, that moral worth, or good desert, cannot be the foundation of moral obligation, because it is not a state of mind, and cannot be an ultimate good. The consciousness of good desert, that is, the consciousness of affirming of ourselves good desert, is an ultimate good. Or, more strictly, the satisfaction which the mind experiences, upon occasion of affirming its good desert, is an ultimate good. But neither the conscious affirmation of good desert, nor the satisfaction occasioned by the affirmation, is identical with moral worth or good desert. Merit, moral worth, good desert, is the condition, or occasion, of the affirmation, and of the resulting conscious satisfaction, and is therefore a good, but it is not, and cannot be an ultimate, or intrinsic good. It is valuable, but not intrinsically valuable. Were it not that moral beings are so constituted, that it meets a demand of the intelligence, and therefore produces satisfaction in its contemplation, it would not be, and could not reasonably be regarded as a good in any sense. But since it meets a demand of the intelligence, it is a relative good, and results in ultimate good.

(5.) Show what relation moral excellence, worth, merit, desert, sustain to moral obligation.

(*a.*) We have seen, that neither of them can be the foundation of moral obligation; that neither of them has in it the element of the intrinsic, or ultimate good, or valuable; and that, therefore, a moral agent can never be under obligation to will or choose them as an ultimate end.

(*b.*) Worth, merit, good desert, cannot be a distinct ground, or foundation, of moral obligation, in such a sense as to impose obligation, irrespective of the intrinsic value of good. All obligation must respect, strictly, the choice of an object for its own sake, with the necessary conditions and means. The intrinsic value of the end is the foundation of the obligation to choose both it and the necessary conditions and means of securing it. But for the intrinsic value of the end there could be no obligation to will the conditions and means. Whenever a thing is seen to be a necessary condition or means of securing an intrinsically valuable end, this perceived relation is the condition of our obligation to will it. The obligation is, and must be, founded in the intrinsic value of the end, and conditionated upon the perceived relation of the object to the end. The intelligence of every moral agent, from its nature and laws, affirms, that the ultimate good and blessedness of moral beings is, and ought to be, conditionated upon their holiness and good desert. This being a demand of reason, reason can never affirm moral obligation to will the actual blessedness of moral agents, but upon condition of their virtue, and consequent good desert, or merit. The intelligence affirms, that it is fit, suitable, proper, that virtue, good desert, merit, holiness, should be rewarded with blessedness. Blessedness is a good in itself, and ought to be willed for that reason, and moral agents are under obligation to will that all beings capable of good may be worthy to enjoy, and may, therefore, actually enjoy blessedness. But they are not under obligation to will that every moral being should actually enjoy blessedness, but upon condition of holiness and good desert. The relation that holiness, merit, good desert, &c., sustain to moral obligation, is this: they supply the condition of the obligation to will the actual blessedness of the being or beings who are holy. The obligation must be founded in the intrinsic value of the good we are to will to them. For it is absurd to say, that we are, or can be, under obligation to will good to them for its own sake, or as an ultimate end, and yet that the obligation should not be founded in the intrinsic value of the good. Were it not for the intrinsic value of their good, we should no sooner affirm obligation to will good to them than evil. The good or blessedness is the thing, or end, we are under obligation to will. But obligation to will an ultimate end cannot possibly be founded in anything else than the intrinsic value of the end. Suppose it should be said, that in the case of merit, or good desert, the obligation is founded in merit, and only conditionated on the intrinsic value of the good I am to will. This would be to make desert the end willed, and good only the condition, or means. This were absurd.

(*c.*) But again: to make merit the ground of the obligation, and the good willed only a condition, amounts to this: I perceive merit, whereupon I affirm my obligation to will--what? Not good to the deserving because of its value to him, nor from any disposition to see him enjoy blessedness for its own sake, but because of his merit. But what does he merit? Why, good, or blessedness. It is good, or blessedness, that I am to will to him, and this is the end I am bound to will; that is, I am to will his good, or blessedness, for its own intrinsic value. The obligation, then, must be founded in the intrinsic value of the end, that is, his well-being, or blessedness, and only conditionated upon merit.

(6.) I am to answer objections.

(*a.*) It is objected, that, if virtue is meritorious, if it merits, deserves anything, this implies corresponding obligation, and that merit, or desert, must impose, or be the ground of, the obligation to give that which is merited. But this objection is either a mere begging of the question, or it is sheer logomachy. It assumes that the words, desert and merit, mean what they cannot mean. Let the objector remember, that he holds that obligation respects ultimate intention, that ultimate intention must find the grounds of its obligation exclusively in its object. Now, if desert or merit is a ground of obligation, then merit or desert must be the object of the intention. Desert, merit, must be willed for its own sake. But is this the thing that is deserved, merited? Does a meritorious being deserve that his merit or desert should be willed for its own sake? Indeed, is this what he deserves? We understandingly speak of good desert, the desert of good and of evil; can a being deserve that his desert shall be chosen for its own sake. If not, then it is impossible that desert or merit should be a ground of obligation; for be it remembered, that whatever is a ground of obligation ought to be chosen for its own sake. But if good desert deserves good, it is self-evident that the intrinsic value of the good is the ground, and merit only a condition, of obligation to will the actual and particular enjoyment of the good by the meritorious individual. Thus merit changes merely the form of obligation. If an individual is wicked, I ought to will his good as valuable in itself, and that he should comply with the necessary conditions of happiness, and thereupon actually enjoy happiness. If he is virtuous, I am to will his good still for its intrinsic value; and, since he has complied with the conditions of enjoyment, that he actually enjoy happiness. In both cases, I am bound to will his good, and for the same fundamental reason, namely, its intrinsic value. Neither the fact nor the ground of obligation to will his good is changed by his virtue; the form only of the obligation is changed. I may be under obligation to will evil to a particular being, but in this case I am not bound to will the evil for its own sake, and, therefore, not as an end or ultimate. I ought sometimes to will the punishment of the guilty, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the public good; and the intrinsic value of the good to be promoted, is the ground of the obligation, and guilt or demerit is only a condition of the obligation in that form. If merit or desert be a ground of obligation, then merit or desert ought to be chosen for its own sake. It would follow from this, that ill desert ought to be chosen for its own sake, as well as good desert. But who will pretend that ill desert ought to be willed for its own sake? But if this is not, cannot be so, then it follows, that desert is not a ground of obligation, and that it is not an object of ultimate choice, or of choice at all, only as a means to an end.

(*b.*) It is asserted, in support of the theory we are examining, that the Bible represents the goodness of God as a reason for loving him, or as a foundation of the obligation to love him.

To this I answer,

(i.) The Bible may assign, and does assign the goodness of God as a reason for loving him, but it does not follow, that it affirms, or assumes, that this reason is the foundation, or a foundation of the obligation. The inquiry is, in what sense does the Bible assign the goodness of God as a reason for loving him? Is it that the goodness of God is the foundation of the obligation, or only a condition of the obligation to will his actual blessedness in particular? Is his goodness a distinct ground of obligation to love him? But what is this love that his goodness lays us under an obligation to exercise to him? It is agreed, that it cannot be an emotion, that it must consist in willing something to him. It is said by some, that the obligation is to treat him as worthy. But I ask, worthy of what? Is he worthy of anything? If so, what is it? For this is the thing that I ought to will to him. Is he merely worthy that I should will his worthiness for its own sake? This must be, if his worthiness is the ground of obligation, for that which is the ground of obligation to choose must be the object of choice. Why, he is worthy of blessing, and honour, and praise. But these must all be embraced in the single word, love! The law has for ever decided the point, that our whole duty to God is expressed by this one term. It has been common to make assertions upon the subject, that involve a contradiction of the Bible. The law of God, as revealed in the two precepts, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," covers the whole ground of moral obligation. It is expressly and repeatedly taught in the Bible, that love to God and our neighbour, is the fulfilling of the law. It is, and must be, admitted, that this love consists in willing something to God and our neighbour. What, then, is to be willed to them? The command is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This says nothing about the character of my neighbour. It is the value of his interest, of his well-being, that the law requires me to regard. It does not require me to love my righteous neighbour merely, nor to love my righteous neighbour better than I do my wicked neighbour. It is my neighbour that I am to love. That is, I am to will his well-being, or his good, with the conditions and means thereof, according to its value. If the law contemplated the virtue of any being as a distinct ground of obligation, it could not read as it does. It must, in that case, have read as follows: "If thou art righteous, and thy neighbour is as righteous as thou art, thou shalt love him as thyself. But if he is righteous and thou are not, thou shalt love him, and not thyself. If thou are righteous, and he is not, thou shalt love thyself, and not thy neighbour." How far would this be from the gloss of the Jewish rabbies so fully rebuked by Christ, namely, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you. For if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" The fact is, the law knows but one ground of moral obligation. It requires us to love God and our neighbour. This love is good-will. What else ought we to will, or can we possibly will to God and our neighbour, but their highest good, or well-being, with all the conditions and means thereof? This is all that can be of any value to them, and all that we can, or ought to, will to them under any circumstances whatever. When we have willed this to them, we have done our whole duty to them. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." We owe them nothing more absolutely. They can have nothing more. But this the law requires us to will to God and our neighbour, on account of the intrinsic value of their good, whatever their character may be, that is, this is to be willed to God and our neighbour, as a possible good, whether they are holy or unholy, simply because of its intrinsic value.

But while the law requires that this should be willed to all, as a possible and intrinsic good, irrespective of character; it cannot, and does not require us to will that God, or any moral agent in particular, shall be actually blessed, but upon condition that he be holy. Our obligation to the unholy, is to will that they might be holy, and perfectly blessed. Our obligation to the holy is to will that they be perfectly blessed. As has been said, virtue only modifies the form, but does not change the ground, of obligation. The Bible represents love to enemies as one of the highest forms of virtue: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But if love to enemies be a high and a valuable form of virtue, it must be only because the true spirit of the law requires the same love to them as to others, and because of the strong inducements not to love them. Who does not regard the virtue of the atonement as being as great as if it had been made for the friends, instead of the enemies, of God? And suppose God were supremely selfish and unreasonably our enemy, who would not regard good-will exercised toward him as being as praiseworthy as it now is. Now, if he were unjustly our enemy, would not a hearty good-will to him in such a case be a striking and valuable instance of virtue? In such a case we could not, might not, will his actual blessedness, but we might and should be under infinite obligation to will that he might become holy, and thereupon be perfectly blessed. We should be under obligation to will his good in such a sense, that should he become holy, we should will his actual blessedness, without any change in our ultimate choice or intention, and without any change in us that would imply an increase of virtue. So of our neighbour: we are bound to will his good, even if he is wicked, in such a sense as to need no new intention or ultimate choice, to will his actual blessedness, should he become holy. We may be as holy in loving a sinner, and in seeking his salvation while he is a sinner, as in willing his good after he is converted and becomes a saint. God was as virtuous in loving the world and seeking to save it while in sin, as he is in loving those in it who are holy. The fact is, if we are truly benevolent, and will the highest well-being of all, with the conditions and means of their blessedness, it follows of course, and of necessity, that when one becomes holy we shall love him with the love of complacency; that we shall, of course, will his actual blessedness, seeing that he has fulfilled the necessary conditions, and rendered himself worthy of blessedness. It implies no increase of virtue in God, when a sinner repents, to exercise complacency toward him. Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints. This is the universal doctrine of the Bible. It is in exact accordance with the spirit and letter of the law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" that is, whatever his character may be. This is the doctrine of reason, and accords with the convictions of all men. But if this is so, it follows that virtue is not a distinct ground of moral obligation, but only modifies the form of obligation. We are under obligation to will the actual blessedness of a moral being, upon condition of his holiness. We ought to will good or blessedness for its own value, irrespective of character; but we ought to will the enjoyment of it, by an individual, in particular, only upon condition of his holiness. Its intrinsic value is the foundation of the obligation, and his holiness changes not the fact, but form, of the obligation, and is the condition of the obligation to will his actual enjoyment of perfect blessedness in particular. When, therefore, the Bible calls on us to love God for his goodness, it does not and cannot mean to assign the fundamental reason, or foundation of the obligation to will his good; for it were absurd to suppose, that his good is to be willed, not for its intrinsic value, but because he is good. Were it not for its intrinsic value, we should as soon affirm our obligation to will evil as good to him. The Bible assumes the first truths of reason. It is a first truth of reason, that God's well-being is of infinite value, and ought to be willed as a possible good whatever his character may be; and that it ought to be willed as an actual reality upon condition of his holiness. Now the Bible does just as in this case might be expected. It asserts his actual and infinite holiness, and calls on us to love him, or to will his good, for that reason. But this is not asserting nor implying that his holiness is the foundation of the obligation to will his good in any such sense as that we should not be under obligation to will it with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, as a possible good, whether he were holy or not. It is plain that the law contemplates only the intrinsic value of the end to be willed. It would require us to will the well-being of God with all our heart, &c., or as the supreme good, whatever his character might be. Were not this so, it could not be moral law. His interest would be the supreme and the infinite good in the sense of the intrinsically and infinitely valuable, and we should, for that reason, be under infinite obligation to will that it might be, whether he were holy or sinful, and upon condition of his holiness, to will the actual existence of his perfect and infinite blessedness. Upon our coming to the knowledge of his holiness, the obligation is instantly imposed, not merely to will his highest well-being as a possible, but as an actually existing, good.

(ii.) Again. It is impossible that goodness, virtue, good desert, merit, should be a distinct ground or foundation of moral obligation in such a sense as to impose or properly to increase obligation. It has been shown that neither of these can be an ultimate good and impose obligation to choose itself as an ultimate end, or for its intrinsic value.

But if goodness or merit can impose moral obligation to will, it must be an obligation to will itself as an ultimate end. But this we have seen cannot be; therefore these things cannot be a distinct ground or foundation of moral obligation.

But again, the law does not make virtue, good desert, or merit, the ground of obligation, and require us to love them and to will them as an ultimate end; but to love God and our neighbour as an ultimate good. It does, no doubt, require us to will God's goodness, good desert, worthiness, merit, as a condition and means of his highest well-being, and of the well-being of the universe; but it is absurd to say that it requires us to will either of these things as an ultimate end instead of his perfect blessedness, to which these sustain only the relation of a condition. Let it be distinctly understood that nothing can impose moral obligation but that which is an ultimate and an intrinsic good, for if it impose obligation it must be an obligation to choose itself for what it is, in and of itself. All obligation must respect the choice either of an end or of means. Obligation to choose means is founded in the value of the end. Whatever, then, imposes obligation must be an ultimate end. It must possess that, in and of itself, that is worthy or deserving of choice as an intrinsic and ultimate good. This we have seen, virtue, merit, &c. cannot be, therefore they cannot be a foundation of moral obligation. But it is said they can increase obligation to love God and holy beings. But we are under infinite obligation to love God and to will his good with all our power, because of the intrinsic value of his well-being, whether he is holy or sinful. Upon condition that he is holy, we are under obligation to will his actual blessedness, but certainly we are under obligation to will it with no more than all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. But this we are required to do because of the intrinsic value of his blessedness, whatever his character might be. The fact is, we can do no more, and can be under obligation to do no more, than to will his good with all our power, and this we are bound to do for its own sake; and no more than this can we be under obligation to do, for any reason whatever. Our obligation is to will his good with all our strength by virtue of its infinite value, and it cannot be increased by any other consideration than our increased knowledge of its value, which increases our ability.

The writer, who has most strenuously urged that both the Bible and reason assign the goodness or moral excellence of God as a ground of obligation to love him, holds that the love required is voluntary, and that it must consist in ultimate choice. He also affirms, that so far as good will, or willing good, to God, is concerned, the obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of the good, and is therefore the same, whatever his moral character might be. I hold that the form of the obligation is changed by the virtue of God, as I have shown. What, then, is the obligation which is founded in, and imposed by, the moral excellence of God? It must be an obligation to choose his moral excellence, for its own sake, not as a good to him, or to the universe, but simply and only for its own sake. Now observe, it is admitted that the moral excellence of God is a condition and means of his own, and of the highest good of the universe, and that for this reason we are under infinite obligation to will its existence. The intrinsic value of the good, to which it sustains the relation of a means, is the ground, and the relation only a condition, of the obligation to will it, not as an ultimate, but as a relative good. But the objector will have it that the moral excellency is a distinct ground of obligation. If so, then it ought to be willed, not only as a condition, or means, of good, but for its own sake. But this we have seen cannot be. The fact is, that we necessarily assume its relations to the good of being, when we affirm obligation to will it.

3. But it is said that favours received impose obligation to exercise gratitude; that the relation of benefactor itself imposes obligation to treat the benefactor according to this relation.

Answer: I suppose this objection contemplates this relation as a virtuous relation, that is, the benefactor is truly virtuous and not selfish in his benefaction. If not, then the relation cannot at all modify obligation.

If the benefactor has in the benefaction obeyed the law of love, if he has done his duty in sustaining this relation, I am under obligation to exercise gratitude toward him. But what is gratitude? It is not a mere emotion or feeling, for this is a phenomenon of the sensibility, and, strictly speaking, without the pale both of legislation and morality. Gratitude, when spoken of as a virtue and as that of which moral obligation can be affirmed, must be an act of will. An obligation to gratitude must be an obligation to will something to the benefactor. But what am I under obligation to will to a benefactor, but his actual highest well-being? If it be God, I am under obligation to will his actual and infinite blessedness with all my heart and with all my soul. If it be my neighbour, I am bound to love him as myself, that is, to will his actual well-being as I do my own. What else can either God or man possess or enjoy, and what else can I be under obligation to will to them? I answer, nothing else. To the law and to the testimony; if any philosophy agree not herewith, it is because there is no light in it. The virtuous relation of benefactor modifies obligation, just as any other and every other form of virtue does, and in no other way. Whenever we perceive virtue in any being, this supplies the condition upon which we are bound to will his actual highest well-being. He has done his duty. He has complied with obligation in the relation he sustains. He is truthful, upright, benevolent, just, merciful, no matter what the particular form may be in which the individual presents to me the evidence of his holy character. It is all precisely the same so far as my obligation extends. I am, independently of my knowledge of his character, under obligation to will his highest well-being for its own sake. That is, to will that he may fulfil all the conditions, and thereupon enjoy perfect blessedness. But I am not under obligation to will his actual enjoyment of blessedness until I have evidence of his virtue. This evidence, however I obtain it, by whatever manifestations of virtue in him or by whatever means, supplies the condition upon which I am under obligation to will his actual enjoyment or highest well-being. This is my whole obligation. It is all he can have, and all I can will to him. All objections of this kind, and indeed all possible objections to the true theory and in support of the one I am examining, are founded in an erroneous view of the subject of moral obligation, or in a false and anti-scriptural philosophy that contradicts the law of God, and sets up another rule of moral obligation.

Again, if gratitude is a moral act, according to this objector, it is an ultimate intention, and as such must terminate on its object, and find its reasons or ground of obligation exclusively in its object. If this is so, then if the relation of benefactor is the ground of obligation to exercise gratitude, gratitude must consist in willing this relation for its own sake, and not at all in willing anything to the benefactor. This is absurd. It is certain that gratitude must consist in willing good to the benefactor, and not in willing the relation for its own sake, and that the ground of the obligation must be the intrinsic value of the good, and the relation only a condition of the obligation in the particular form of willing his enjoyment of good in particular. It is now said, in reply to this, that the "inquiry is not, what is gratitude? but, why ought we to exercise it?" But the inquiry is after the ground of the obligation; this, it is agreed, must be intrinsic in its object; and is it impertinent to inquire what the object is? Who can tell what is the ground of the obligation to exercise gratitude until he knows what the object of gratitude is, and consequently what gratitude is? The objector affirms that the relation of benefactor is a ground of obligation to put forth ultimate choice. Of course, according to him, and in fact, if this relation is the ground of the obligation, it is, and must be, the object chosen for its own sake. To exercise gratitude to a benefactor, then, according to this teaching is, not to will any good to him, nor to myself, nor to any being in existence, but simply to will the relation of benefactor for its own sake. Not for his sake, as a good to him. Not for my sake as a good to me, but for its own sake. Is not this a sublime philosophy?

4. But it is said that, in all instances in which we affirm moral obligation, we necessarily affirm the moral excellence or goodness of God to be the foundation or reason of the obligation.

Answer: This is so great a mistake, that in no instance whatever do we or can we affirm the moral excellence of God to be the foundation of obligation, unless we do and can affirm the most palpable contradiction. Let it be remembered: 1. That moral obligation respects ultimate intention. 2. That ultimate intention is the choice of an end for its intrinsic value. 3. That the ground or reason of our obligation to intend an end is the intrinsic value of the end, and is really identical with the end to be chosen. 4. That moral excellence either consists in ultimate intention or in an attribute of this intention, and therefore cannot be chosen as an ultimate end. 5. That moral obligation always resolves itself into an obligation to will the highest well-being of God and the universe for its own intrinsic value. 6. Now, can reason be so utterly unreasonable as to affirm all these, and also that the ground or reason of the obligation to will the highest well-being of God and the universe for its own intrinsic value is not its intrinsic value, but is the divine moral excellence?

5. But it is also insisted that when men attempt to assign a reason why they are under moral obligation of any kind, as to love God, they all agree in this, in assigning the divine moral excellence as the reason of that obligation. I answer:--

(1.) There is, and can be, but one kind of moral obligation.

(2.) It is not true that all men agree in assigning the moral excellence of God as the foundation or fundamental reason of the obligation, to love him, or to will his good for its own sake. I certainly am an exception to this rule.

(3.) If any body assigns this as the reason of the obligation, he assigns a false reason, as has just been shown.

(4.) No man, who knew what he said, ever assigned the goodness of God as the foundation of the obligation to will his good as an ultimate end, for this is, as we have often seen, a gross contradiction and an impossibility.

(5.) The only reason why any man supposes himself to assign the goodness of God as the foundation of the obligation to will good to him is, that he loosely confounds the conditions of the obligation to will his actual blessedness, with the foundation of the obligation to will it for its own sake, or as a possible good. Were it not for the known intrinsic value of God's highest well-being, we should as soon affirm our obligation to will evil as good to him, as has been said.

(6.) Again: if the divine moral excellence were the foundation of moral obligation, if God were not holy and good, moral obligation could not exist in any case.

(7.) God's moral obligation cannot be founded in his own moral excellence, for his moral excellence consists in his conformity to moral obligation, and this fact implies the existence of moral obligation, prior, in the order of nature, to his moral excellence, as was said before.

(8.) The fact is, the intrinsic and infinite value of the well-being of God and of the universe, is a first truth of reason, and always and necessarily taken along with us at all times. That moral excellence or good desert is a naturally necessary condition of their highest well-being is also a first truth, always and necessarily taken along with us whether we are conscious of it or not. The natural impossibility of willing the actual existence of the highest well-being of God and the universe of moral agents but upon condition of their worthiness, is a self-evident truth. So that no man can affirm his obligation to will the actual highest well-being of God and of moral agents but upon condition of their moral excellence, any more than he can affirm his obligation to will their eternal well-being but upon condition of their existence.

That every moral agent ought to will the highest well-being of God and of all the universe for its own sake, as a possible good, whatever their characters may be, is also a first truth of reason. Reason assigns and can assign no other reason for willing their good as an ultimate end than its intrinsic value; and to assign any other reason as imposing obligation to will it as an end, or for its own sake, were absurd and self-contradictory. Obligation to will it as an end and for its own sake, implies the obligation to will its actual existence in all cases and to all persons when the indispensable conditions are fulfilled. These conditions are seen to be fulfilled in God, and therefore upon this condition reason affirms obligation to will his actual and highest blessedness for its own sake, the intrinsic value being the fundamental reason of the obligation to will it as an end, and the divine goodness the condition of the obligation to will his highest blessedness in particular. Suppose that I existed and had the idea of blessedness and its intrinsic value duly developed, together with an idea of all the necessary conditions of it; but that I did not know that any other being than myself existed, and yet I knew their existence and blessedness possible; in this case I should be under obligation to will or wish that beings might exist and be blessed. Now suppose that I complied with this obligation, my virtue is just as real and as great as if I knew their existence and willed their actual blessedness, provided my idea of its intrinsic value were as clear and just as if I knew their existence. And now suppose I came to the knowledge of the actual existence and holiness of all holy beings, I should make no new ultimate choice in willing their actual blessedness. This I should do of course, and, remaining benevolent, of necessity; and if this knowledge did not give me a higher idea of the value of that which I before willed for its own sake, the willing of the real existence of their blessedness would not make me a whit more virtuous than when I willed it as a possible good without knowing that the conditions of its actual existence would ever, in any case, be fulfilled.

The Bible reads just as it might be expected to read, and just as we should speak in common life. It being a first truth of reason that the well-being of God is of infinite value, and therefore ought to be willed for its own sake--it also being a first truth that virtue is an indispensable condition of fulfilling the demands of his own reason and conscience, and of course of his actual blessedness, and of course also a condition of the obligation to will it, we might expect the Bible to exhort and require us to love God or will his actual blessedness and mention his virtue as the reason or fulfilled condition of the obligation, rather than the intrinsic value of his blessedness as the foundation of the obligation. The foundation of the obligation, being a first truth of reason, needs not to be a matter of revelation. Nor needs the fact that virtue is the condition of his blessedness, nor the fact that we are under no obligation to will his actual blessedness but upon condition of his holiness. But that in him this condition is fulfilled needs to be impressed upon us, and therefore the Bible announces it as a reason or condition of the obligation to love him, that is, to will his actual blessedness.

God's moral excellence is naturally, and rightly, assigned by us as a condition, not the ground, of obligation to receive his revealed will as our law. Did we not assume the rectitude of the divine will, we could not affirm our obligation to receive it as a rule of duty. This assumption is a condition of the obligation, and is naturally thought of when obligation to obey God is affirmed. But the intrinsic value and importance of the interest he requires us to seek, is the ground of the obligation.

Again: it is asserted that when men would awaken a sense of moral obligation they universally contemplate the moral excellence of God as constituting the reason of their obligation, and if this contemplation does not awaken their sense of obligation nothing else can or will. I answer--

The only possible reason why men ever do or can take this course, is that they loosely consider religion to consist in feelings of complacency in God, and are endeavouring to awaken these complacent emotions. If they conceive of religion as consisting in these emotions, they will of course conceive themselves to be under obligation to exercise them and to be sure they take the only possible course to awaken both these and a sense of obligation to exercise them. But they are mistaken both in regard to their obligation and the nature of religion. Did they conceive of religion as consisting in good-will, or in willing the highest well-being of God and of the universe for its own sake, would they, could they, resort to the process in question, that is, the contemplation of the divine moral excellence, as the only reason for willing good to him, instead of considering the infinite value of those interests to the realization of which they ought to consecrate themselves?

If men often do resort to the process in question, it is because they love to feel and have a self-righteous satisfaction in feelings of complacency in God, and take more pains to awaken these feelings than to quicken and enlarge their benevolence. A purely selfish being may be greatly affected by the great goodness and kindness of God to him. I know a man who is a very niggard so far as all benevolent giving and doing for God and the world are concerned, who, I fear, resorts to the very process in question, and is often much affected with the goodness of God. He can bluster and denounce all who do not feel as he does. But ask him for a dollar to forward any benevolent enterprize and he will evade your request, and ask you how you feel, whether you are engaged in religion, &c.

It has been asserted that nothing can add to the sense of obligation thus excited.

To this I answer, that if the obligation be regarded as an obligation to feel emotions of complacency in God, this is true. But if the obligation be contemplated, as it really is, an obligation to will the highest well-being of God for its own sake, the assertion is not true, but, on the contrary, affirms an absurdity. I am under obligation to will the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an ultimate end, or for its own intrinsic value. Now according to this philosophy, in order to get the highest view of this obligation, I must contemplate, not the intrinsic value of those infinite interests that I ought to will, but the goodness of God. This is absurd. The fact is, I must prize the value of the interests to be willed, and the goodness of God as a reason for willing actual blessedness to him in particular.

But it may well be asked, why does the Bible and why do we, so often present the character of God and of Christ as a means of awakening a sense of moral obligation and of inducing virtue? Answer--

It is to lead men to contemplate the infinite value of those interest which we ought to will. Presenting the example of God and of Christ, is the highest moral means that can be used. That God's example and man's example is the most impressive and efficient way in which he can declare his views and hold forth to public gaze the infinite value of those interests upon which all hearts ought to be set. For example, nothing can set the infinite value of the soul in a stronger light than the example of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has done.

Nothing can beget a higher sense of obligation to will the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls, than the example of Christ. His example is his loudest preaching, his clearest, most impressive, exhibition, not merely of his own goodness, but of the intrinsic and infinite value of the interest he sought and which we ought to seek. It is the love, the care, the self-denial, and the example of God, in his efforts to secure the great ends of benevolence, that hold those interests forth in the strongest light, and thus beget a sense of obligation to seek the same end. But let it be observed, it is not a contemplation of the goodness of God that awakens this sense of obligation, but the contemplation of the value of those interests which he seeks, in the light of his pains-taking and example; this quickens and gives efficiency to the sense of obligation to will what he wills. Suppose, for example, that I manifest the greatest concern and zeal for the salvation of souls, it would not be contemplation of my goodness that would quicken in a by-stander a sense of obligation to save souls, but my zeal, and life, and spirit, would have the strongest tendency to arouse in him a sense of the infinite and intrinsic value of the soul, and thus quicken a sense of obligation. Should I behold multitudes rushing to extinguish a flaming house, it would not be a contemplation of their goodness, but the contemplation of the interests at stake, to the consideration of which their zeal would lead me, that would quicken a sense of obligation in me to hasten to lend my aid.

Again: it is asserted that moral action is impracticable upon any other principle.

(1.) What does this mean? Does it mean that there can be no obligation unless the goodness of God be regarded as the foundation of moral obligation? If so, the mistake is radical.

(2.) Or does it mean that action can have no moral character whatever, unless it be put forth in view of the fact or upon the assumption that the goodness of God is the foundation of moral obligation? If this be the meaning, the mistake is no less radical.

Thus we see that it is grossly absurd and self-contradictory for any one to maintain that moral obligation respects the ultimate intention or choice of an end for its own intrinsic value, and at the same time assert that the divine moral excellence is the foundation of moral obligation. The fact is, it never is, and never can be the foundation of moral obligation. Our whole duty resolves itself into an obligation to will the highest good or well-being of God and of the universe as an ultimate end. Faith, gratitude, and every phase of virtue, resolves itself into this love or good-will, and the foundation of the obligation to will this end for its own sake, can by no possibility be any other than its own intrinsic value. To affirm that it can is a most palpable contradiction. The moral law proposes an end to be sought, aimed at, chosen, intended. It is the duty of the divine Being, as well as of every other moral agent, to consecrate himself to the promotion of the most valuable end. This end cannot be his own virtue. His virtue consists in choosing the end demanded by the law of his own reason. This end cannot be identical with the choice itself; for this would be only to choose his own choice as an ultimate end. But again, it is impossible that God should require moral agents to make his own virtue an ultimate end.

If it be said that the law requires us to will God's good, blessedness, &c., because or for the reason that he is virtuous, I ask: What can be intended by this assertion? Is it intended that we are bound to will his good, not because it is valuable to him, but because he is good? But why, I ask again, should we will good rather than evil to him? The only answer must be, because good is good or valuable. If the good is to be willed because it is valuable, this must be the fundamental reason or foundation of the obligation to will it; and his goodness is and can be only a secondary reason or condition of the obligation to will good to him in particular, or to will his actual blessedness. My intelligence demands, and the intelligence of every moral being demands, that holiness should be the unalterable condition of the blessedness of God and of every moral agent. This God's intelligence must demand. Now his complying with this condition is a changeless condition of the obligation of a moral agent to will his actual blessedness. Whatever his character might be, we are under obligation to will his blessedness with the conditions and means thereof, on account of its own intrinsic value. But not until we are informed that he has met this demand of reason and conscience, and performed this condition, and thus rendered himself worthy of blessedness, are we under obligation to will it as a reality and fact.

Revelation is concerned to impress the fact that he is holy, and of course calls on us, in view of his holiness, to love and worship him. But in doing this, it does not, cannot mean that his holiness is the foundation of the obligation to will his good as an ultimate end.

Our obligation, when viewed apart from his character, is to will or wish that God might fulfil all the conditions of perfect blessedness, and upon that condition, that he might actually enjoy perfect and infinite satisfaction. But seeing that he meets the demands of his own intelligence and the intelligence of the universe, and that he voluntarily fulfils all the necessary conditions of his highest well-being, our obligation is to will his actual and most perfect and eternal blessedness.

But here it is said, as was noticed in a former lecture, that we often, and indeed generally, affirm our obligation to love God in view of his moral excellence, without any reference to the good or well-being of God as an end; that his goodness is the foundation of the obligation, and that in affirming this we have no respect to the value of his blessedness, and that indeed his well-being or blessedness is not so much as thought of, but that his holiness or goodness is the only object of thought and attention. To this I answer: if we really affirm obligation to love God, we must affirm, either that we ought to feel complacency in him, or that we ought to will something to him. It is admitted that the obligation is to will something to him. But if God is good, holy, what ought we to will to him? Why certainly something which is valuable to him, and that which is most valuable to him. What should this be but his actual, perfect, infinite, eternal blessedness? It is certainly nonsense to say, that a moral agent affirms himself to be under obligation to love God without any reference to his well-being. It is true that moral agents may be consciously and deeply affected with the consideration of the goodness of God, when they affirm their obligation to love him. But in this affirmation they do and must assume the intrinsic value of his blessedness as the foundation of the obligation, or they make no intelligent affirmation whatever. They really do affirm, and must, affirm that they ought to will good to God, assuming the intrinsic value of the good to him, or they would just as soon affirm obligation to will evil as good to him.

I am obliged to repeat much to follow the objector, because all his objections resolve themselves into one, and require to be answered much in the same way.

LECTURE VIII.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

6. THEORY OF MORAL ORDER.

7. THEORY OF NATURE AND RELATIONS.

8. THEORY THAT THE IDEA OF DUTY IS THE FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

9. COMPLEX THEORY.

6. *I now come to consider the philosophy which teaches that moral order is the foundation of moral obligation.*

But what is moral order? The advocates of this theory define it to be identical with the fit, proper, suitable. It is, then, according to them, synonymous with the right. Moral order must be, in their view, either identical with law or with virtue. It must be either an idea of the fit, the right, the proper, the suitable, which is the same as objective right; or it must consist in conformity of the will to this idea or law, which is virtue. It has been repeatedly shown that right, whether objective or subjective, cannot by any possibility be the end at which a moral agent ought to aim, and to which he ought to consecrate himself. If moral order be not synonymous with right in one of these senses, I do not know what it is; and all that I can say is, that if it be not identical with the highest well-being of God and of the universe, it cannot be the end at which moral agents ought to aim, and cannot be the foundation of moral obligation. But if by moral order, as the phraseology of some would seem to indicate, be meant that state of the universe in which all law is universally obeyed, and, as a consequence, a state of universal well-being, this theory is only another name for the true one. It is the same as willing the highest well-being of the universe with the conditions and means thereof.

Or if it be meant, as other phraseology would seem to indicate, that moral order is a state of things in which either all law is obeyed, or in which the disobedient are punished for the sake of promoting the public good;--if this be what is meant by moral order--it is only another name for the true theory. Willing moral order is only willing the highest good of the universe for its own sake, with the condition and means thereof.

But if by moral order be meant the fit, suitable, in the sense of law, physical or moral, it is absurd to represent moral order as the foundation of moral obligation. If moral order is the ground of obligation, it is identical with the object of ultimate choice. Does God require us to love moral order for its own sake? Is this identical with loving God and our neighbour? "Thou shalt will moral order with all thy heart, and with all thy soul!" Is this the meaning of the moral law? If this theory is right, benevolence is sin. It is not living to the right end.

7. *I will next consider the theory that maintains that the nature and relations of moral beings are the true foundation of moral obligation.*

(1.) The advocates of this theory confound the conditions of moral obligation with the foundation of obligation. The nature and relations of moral agents to each other, and to the universe, are conditions of their obligation to will the good of being, but not the foundation of the obligation. What! the nature and relations of moral beings the foundation of their obligation to choose an ultimate end. Then this end must be their nature and relations. This is absurd. Their nature and relations, being what they are, their highest well-being is known to them to be of infinite and intrinsic value. But it is and must be the intrinsic value of the end, and not their nature and relations, that imposes obligation to will the highest good of the universe as an ultimate end.

(2.) If their nature and relations be the ground of obligation, then their nature and relations are the great object of ultimate choice, and should be willed for their own sakes, and not for the sake of any good resulting from their natures and relations. For, be it remembered, the ground of obligation to put forth ultimate choice must be identical with the object of this choice, which object imposes obligation by virtue of its own nature.

(3.) The natures and relations of moral beings are a condition of obligation to fulfil to each other certain duties. For example, the relation of parent and child is a condition of obligation to endeavour to promote each other's particular well-being, to govern and provide for, on the part of the parent, and to obey, &c., on the part of the child. But the intrinsic value of the good to be sought by both parent and child must be the ground, and their relation only the condition, of those particular forms of obligation. So in every possible case. Relations can never be a ground of obligation to choose unless the relations be the object of the choice. The various duties of life are executive and not ultimate acts. Obligation to perform them is founded in the intrinsic nature of the good resulting from their performance. The various relations of life are only conditions of obligation to promote particular forms of good, and the good of particular individuals.

If this theory is true, benevolence is sin. Why do not its advocates see this?

Writers upon this subject are often falling into the mistake of confounding the conditions with the foundation of moral obligation. Moral agency is a condition, but not the foundation of obligation. Light, or the knowledge of the intrinsically valuable to being, is a condition, but not the foundation of moral obligation. The intrinsically valuable is the foundation of the obligation; and light, or the perception of the intrinsically valuable, is only a condition of the obligation. So the nature and relations of moral beings is a condition of their obligation to will each other's good, and so is light, or a knowledge of the intrinsic value of their blessedness; but the intrinsic value is alone the foundation of the obligation. It is, therefore, a great mistake to affirm "that the known nature and relations of moral agents is the true foundation of moral obligation."

8. *The next theory that demands attention is that which teaches that moral obligation is founded in the idea of duty.*

According to this philosophy, the end at which a moral agent ought to aim, is duty. He must in all things "aim at doing his duty." Or, in other words, he must always have respect to his obligation, and aim at discharging it.

Then disinterested benevolence is, and must be, sin. It is not living to the right end.

It is plain that this theory is only another form of stating the rightarian theory. By aiming, intending, to do duty, we must understand the advocates of this theory to mean the adoption of a resolution or maxim, by which to regulate their lives--the formation of a resolve to obey God--to serve God--to do at all times what appears to be right--to meet the demands of conscience--to obey the law--to discharge obligation, &c. I have expressed the thing intended in all these ways because it is common to hear this theory expressed in all these terms, and in others like them. Especially in giving instruction to inquiring sinners, nothing is more common than for those who profess to be spiritual guides to assume the truth of this philosophy, and give instructions accordingly. These philosophers, or theologians, will say to sinners: Make up your mind to serve the Lord; resolve to do your whole duty, and do it at all times; resolve to obey God in all things--to keep all his commandments; resolve to deny yourselves--to forsake all sin--to love the Lord with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself. They often represent regeneration as consisting in this resolution or purpose.

Such-like phraseology, which is very common and almost universal among rightarian philosophers, demonstrates that they regard virtue or obedience to God as consisting in the adoption of a maxim of life. With them, duty is the great idea to be realized. All these modes of expression mean the same thing, and amount to just Kant's morality, which he admits does not necessarily imply religion, namely; "act upon a maxim at all times fit for law universal," and to Cousin's, which is the same thing, namely, "will the right for the sake of the right." Now I cannot but regard this philosophy on the one hand, and utilitarianism on the other, as equally wide from the truth, and as lying at the foundation of much of the spurious religion with which the church and the world are cursed. Utilitarianism begets one type of selfishness, which it calls religion, and this philosophy begets another, in some respects more specious, but not a whit the less selfish, God-dishonouring and soul-destroying. The nearest that this philosophy can be said to approach either to true morality or religion, is, that if the one who forms the resolution understood himself he would resolve to become truly moral instead of really becoming so. But this is in fact an absurdity and an impossibility, and the resolution-maker does not understand what he is about, when he supposes himself to be forming or cherishing a resolution to do his duty. Observe: he intends to do his duty. But to do his duty is to form and cherish an ultimate intention. To intend to do his duty is merely to intend to intend. But this is not doing his duty, as will be shown. He intends to serve God, but this is not serving God, as will also be shown. Whatever he intends, he is neither truly moral nor religious, until he really intends the same end that God does; and this is not to do his duty, nor to do right, nor to comply with obligation, nor to keep a conscience void of offence, nor to deny himself, nor any such-like things. God aims at, and intends, the highest well-being of himself and the universe, as an ultimate end, and this is doing his duty. It is not resolving or intending to do his duty, but is doing it. It is not resolving to do right for the sake of the right, but it is doing right. It is not resolving to serve himself and the universe, but is actually rendering that service. It is not resolving to obey the moral law, but is actually obeying it. It is not resolving to love, but actually loving his neighbour as himself. It is not, in other words, resolving to be benevolent, but is being so. It is not resolving to deny self, but is actually denying self.

A man may resolve to serve God without any just idea of what it is to serve him. If he had the idea of what the law of God requires him to choose, clearly before his mind--if he perceived that to serve God, was nothing less than to consecrate himself to the same end to which God consecrates himself, to love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself, that is, to will or choose the highest well-being of God and of the universe, as an ultimate end--to devote all his being, substance, time, and influence to this end;--I say, if this idea were clearly before his mind, he would not talk of resolving to consecrate himself to God--resolving to do his duty, to do right--to serve God--to keep a conscience void of offence, and such-like things. He would see that such resolutions were totally absurd and a mere evasion of the claims of God. It has been repeatedly shown, that all virtue resolves itself into the intending of an ultimate end, or of the highest well-being of God and the universe. This is true morality, and nothing else is. This is identical with that love to God and man which the law of God requires. This then is duty. This is serving God. This is keeping a conscience void of offence. This is right, and nothing else is. But to intend or resolve to do this is only to intend to intend, instead of at once intending what God requires. It is resolving to love God and his neighbour, instead of really loving him; choosing to choose the highest well-being of God and of the universe, instead of really choosing it. Now this is totally absurd, and when examined to the bottom will be seen to be nothing else than a most perverse postponement of duty and a most God-provoking evasion of his claims. To intend to do duty is gross nonsense. To do duty is to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, that is, to choose, will, intend the highest well-being of God and our neighbour for its own sake. To intend to do duty, to aim at doing duty, at doing right, at discharging obligation, &c. is to intend to intend, to choose to choose, and such-like nonsense. Moral obligation respects the ultimate intention. It requires that the intrinsically valuable to being shall be willed for its own sake. To comply with moral obligation is not to intend or aim at this compliance as an end, but to will, choose, intend that which moral law or moral obligation requires me to intend, namely, the highest good of being. To intend obedience to law is not obedience to law, for the reason that obedience is not that which the law requires me to intend. To aim at discharging obligation is not discharging it, just for the reason that I am under no obligation to intend this as an end. Nay, it is totally absurd and nonsensical to talk of resolving, aiming, intending to do duty--to serve the Lord, &c. &c. All such resolutions imply an entire overlooking of that in which true religion consists. Such resolutions and intentions from their very nature must respect outward actions in which is no moral character, and not the ultimate intention, in which all virtue and vice consist. A man may resolve or intend to do this or that. But to intend to intend an ultimate end, or to intend to choose it for its intrinsic value, instead of willing and at once intending or choosing that end, is grossly absurd, self-contradictory, and naturally impossible. Therefore this philosophy does not give a true definition and account of virtue. It is self-evident that it does not conceive rightly of it. And it cannot be that those who give such instructions, or those who receive and comply with them, have the true idea of religion in their minds. Such teaching is radically false, and such a philosophy leads only to bewilder, and dazzles to blind.

It is one thing for a man who actually loves God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself, to resolve to regulate all his outward life by the law of God, and a totally different thing to intend to love God or to intend his highest glory and well-being. Resolutions may respect outward action, but it is totally absurd to intend or resolve to form an ultimate intention. But be it remembered, that morality and religion do not belong to outward action, but to ultimate intentions. It is amazing and afflicting to witness the alarming extent to which spurious philosophy has corrupted and is corrupting the church of God. Kant and Cousin and Coleridge have adopted a phraseology, and manifestly have conceived in idea, a philosophy subversive of all true love to God and man, and teach a religion of maxims and resolutions instead of a religion of love. It is a philosophy, as we shall see in a future lecture, which teaches that the moral law or law of right, is entirely distinct from and may be opposite to the law of benevolence or love. The fact is, this philosophy conceives of duty and right as belonging to mere outward action. This must be, for it cannot be confused enough to talk of resolving or intending to form an ultimate intention. Let but the truth of this philosophy be assumed in giving instructions to the anxious sinner, and it will immediately dry off his tears, and in all probability lead him to settle down in a religion of resolutions instead of a religion of love. Indeed this philosophy will immediately dry off, (if I may be allowed the expression,) the most genuine and powerful revival of religion, and run it down into a mere revival of a heartless, Christless, loveless philosophy. It is much easier to persuade anxious sinners to resolve to do their duty, to resolve to love God, than it is to persuade them really to do their duty, and really to love God with all their heart and with all their soul, and their neighbour as themselves.

9. *We now come to the consideration of that philosophy which teaches the complexity of the foundation of moral obligation.*

This theory maintains that there are several distinct grounds of moral obligation; that the highest good of being is only one of the grounds of moral obligation, while right, moral order, the nature and relations of moral agents, merit and demerit, truth, duty, and many such like things, are distinct grounds of moral obligation; that these are not merely conditions of moral obligation, but that each one of them can by itself impose moral obligation. The advocates of this theory, perceiving its inconsistency with the doctrine that moral obligation respects the ultimate choice or intention only, seem disposed to relinquish the position that obligation respects strictly only the choice of an ultimate end, and to maintain that moral obligation respects the ultimate action of the will. By ultimate action of the will they mean, if I understand them, the will's treatment of every thing according to its intrinsic nature and character; that is, treating every thing, or taking that attitude in respect to every thing known to the mind, that is exactly suited to what it is in and of itself. For example, right ought to be regarded and treated by the will as right, because it is right. Truth ought to be regarded and treated as truth for its own sake, virtue as virtue, merit as merit, demerit as demerit, the useful as useful, the beautiful as beautiful, the good or valuable as valuable, each for its own sake; that in each case the action of the will is ultimate, in the sense that its action terminates on these objects as ultimates; in other words, that all those actions of the will are ultimates that treat things according to their nature and character, or according to what they are in and of themselves.--See Moral Philosophy. Now in respect to this theory I would inquire:--

(1.) What is intended by the will's treating a thing, or taking that attitude in respect to it that is suited to its nature and character? Are there any other actions of will than volitions, choice, preference, intention,--are not all the actions of the will comprehended in these? If there are any other actions than these, are they intelligent actions? If so, what are those actions of will that consist neither in the choice of ends nor means, nor in volitions or efforts to secure an end? Can there be intelligent acts of will that neither respect ends nor means? Can there be moral acts of will when there is no choice or intention? If there is choice or intention, must not these respect an end or means? What then can be meant by ultimate action of will as distinguished from ultimate choice or intention? Can there be choice without there is an object of choice? If there is an object of choice, must not this object be chosen either as an end or as a means? If as an ultimate end, how does this differ from ultimate intention? If as a means, how can this be regarded as an ultimate action of the will? What can be intended by actions of will that are not acts of choice nor volition? I can conceive of no other. But if all acts of will must of necessity consist in willing or nilling, that is in choosing or refusing, which is the same as willing one way or another, in respect to all objects of choice apprehended by the mind, how can there be any intelligent act of the will that does not consist in, or that may not and must not, in its last analysis be resolvable into, and be properly considered as the choice of an end, or of means, or in executive efforts to secure an end? Can moral law require any other action of will than choice and volition? What other actions of will are possible to us? Whatever moral law does require, it must and can only require choices and volitions. It can only require us to choose ends or means. It cannot require us to choose as an ultimate end any thing that is not intrinsically worthy of choice--nor as a means any thing that does not sustain that relation.

(2.) Secondly, let us examine this theory in the light of the revealed law of God. The whole law is fulfilled in one word--love.

Now we have seen that the will of God cannot be the foundation of moral obligation. Moral obligation must be founded in the nature of that which moral law requires us to choose. Unless there be something in the nature of that which moral law require us to will that renders it worthy or deserving of choice, we can be under no obligation to will or choose it. It is admitted that the love required by the law of God must consist in an act of the will, and not in mere emotions. Now, does this love, willing, choice, embrace several distinct ultimates? If so, how can they all be expressed in one word--love? Observe, the law requires only love to God and our neighbour as an ultimate. This love or willing must respect and terminate on God and our neighbour. The law says nothing about willing right for the sake of the right, or truth for the sake of the truth, or beauty for the sake of beauty, or virtue for the sake of virtue, or moral order for its own sake, or the nature and relations of moral agents for their own sake; nor is, nor can any such thing be implied in the command to love God and our neighbour. All these and innumerable other things are, and must be, conditions and means of the highest well-being of God and our neighbour. As such, the law may, and doubtless does, in requiring us to will the highest well-being of God and our neighbour as an ultimate end, require us to will all these as the necessary conditions and means. The end which the revealed law requires us to will is undeniably simple as opposed to complex. It requires only love to God and our neighbour. One word expresses the whole of moral obligation. Now certainly this word cannot have a complex signification in such a sense as to include several distinct and ultimate objects of love, or of choice. This love is to terminate on God and our neighbour, and not on abstractions, nor on inanimate and insentient existences. I protest against any philosophy that contradicts the revealed law of God, and that teaches that anything else than God and our neighbour is to be loved for its own sake, or that anything else is to be chosen as an ultimate end than the highest well-being of God and our neighbour. In other words, I utterly object to any philosophy that makes anything obligatory upon a moral agent that is not expressed or implied in perfect good will to God, and to the universe of sentient existences. "To the word and to the testimony; if any philosophy agree not therewith, it is because there is no light in it." The revealed law of God knows but one ground or foundation of moral obligation. It requires but one thing, and that is just that attitude of the will toward God and our neighbour that accords with the intrinsic value of their highest well-being; that God's moral worth shall be willed as of infinite value, as a condition of his own well-being, and that his actual and perfect blessedness shall be willed for its own sake, and because, or upon condition, that he is worthy; that our neighbour's moral worth shall be willed as an indispensable condition of his blessedness, and that if our neighbour is worthy of happiness, his actual and highest happiness shall be willed. The fact is, that all ultimate acts of will must consist in ultimate choices and intentions, and the revealed law requires that our ultimate choice, intention, should terminate on the good of God and our neighbour, thus making the foundation of moral obligation simple, moral action simple, and all true morality to be summed up in one word--love. It is impossible, with our eye upon the revealed law, to make more than one foundation of moral obligation; and it is utterly inadmissible to subvert this foundation by any philosophisings whatever. This law knows but one end which moral agents are under obligation to seek, and sets at nought all so-called ultimate actions of will that do not terminate on the good of God and our neighbour. The ultimate choice with the choice of all the conditions and means of the highest well-being of God and the universe, is all that the revealed law recognizes as coming within the pale of its legislation. It requires nothing more and nothing less.

But there is another form of the complex theory of moral obligation that I must notice before I dismiss this subject. In the examination of it I shall be obliged to repeat some things which have been in substance said before. Indeed, there has been so much confusion upon the subject of the nature of virtue, or of the foundation of moral obligation, as to render it indispensable in the examination of the various false theories and in removing objections to the true one, frequently to repeat the same thought in different connections. This I have found to be unavoidable, if I would render the subject at all intelligible to the common reader.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE IX.

FOUNDATION OF OBLIGATION.

9. COMPLEX THEORY.

I PASS NOW to the consideration of another form of the theory that affirms the complexity of the foundation of moral obligation; complex, however, only in a certain sense.

This philosophy admits and maintains that the good, that is, the valuable to being, is the only ground of moral obligation, and that in every possible case the valuable to being, or the good, must be intended as an end, as a condition of the intention being virtuous. In this respect it maintains that the foundation of moral obligation is simple, a unit. But it also maintains that there are several ultimate goods or several ultimates or things which are intrinsically good or valuable in themselves, and are therefore to be chosen for their own sake, or as an ultimate end; that to choose either of these as an ultimate end, or for its own sake, is virtue.

It admits that happiness or blessedness is a good, and should be willed for its own sake, or as an ultimate end, but it maintains that virtue is an ultimate good; that right is an ultimate good; that the just and the true are ultimate goods; in short, that the realization of the ideas of the reason, or the carrying out into concrete existence any idea of the reason, is an ultimate good. For instance: there were in the Divine Mind from eternity certain ideas of the good or valuable; the right, the just, the beautiful, the true, the useful, the holy. The realization of these ideas of the divine reason, according to this theory, was the end which God aimed at or intended in creation; he aimed at their realization as ultimates or for their own sake, and regarded the concrete realization of every one of these ideas as a separate and ultimate good: and so certain as God is virtuous, so certain it is, says this theory, that an intention to realize these ideas for their own sake, or for the sake of the realization, is virtue. Therefore the intention on our part to realize these ideas for the sake of the realization is virtue. Then the foundation of moral obligation is complex in the sense that to will either the good or valuable, the right, the true, the just, the virtuous, the beautiful, the useful, &c., for its own sake, or as an ultimate end, is virtue; that there is more than one virtuous ultimate choice or intention. Thus any one of several distinct things may be intended as an ultimate end with equal propriety and with equal virtuousness. The soul may at one moment be wholly consecrated to one end, that is, to one ultimate good, and sometimes to another, that is, sometimes it may will one good, and sometimes another good, as an ultimate end, and still be equally virtuous.

In the discussion of this subject I will,

(1.) *State the exact question to be discussed.*

(2.) *Define the different senses of the term good.*

(3.) *Show in what sense of the term good it can be an ultimate.*

(4.) *That satisfaction or enjoyment is the only ultimate good.*

(1.) The exact question. It is this: In what does the supreme and ultimate good consist?

(2.) The different senses of the term good.

(*a.*) Good may be natural or moral. Natural good is synonymous with valuable. Moral good is synonymous with virtue. Moral good is in a certain sense a natural good, that is, it is valuable as a means of natural good; but the advocates of this theory affirm that moral good is valuable in itself.

(*b.*) Good may be absolute and relative. Absolute good is that which is intrinsically valuable. Relative good is that which is valuable as a means. It is not valuable in itself, but valuable because it sustains to absolute good the relation of a means to an end. Absolute good may also be a relative good, that is, it may tend to perpetuate and augment itself.

(*c.*) Good may also be ultimate. Ultimate good is that intrinsically valuable or absolute good in which all relative good, whether natural or moral, terminates. It is that absolute good to which all relative good sustains the relation of a means or condition.

(3.) In what sense of the term good it can be an ultimate.

(*a.*) Not in the sense of moral good or virtue. This has been so often shown that it needs not to be repeated here. I will only say that virtue belongs to intention. It is impossible that intention should be an ultimate. The thing intended must be the ultimate of the intention. We have seen that to make virtue an ultimate, the intention must terminate on itself, or on a quality of itself, which is absurd.

(*b.*) Good cannot be an ultimate in the sense of relative good. To suppose that it could, were to suppose a contradiction; for relative good is not intrinsically valuable, but only valuable on account of its relations.

(*c.*) Good can be an ultimate only in the sense of the natural and absolute, that is, that only can be an ultimate good which is naturally and intrinsically valuable to sentient being. And we shall soon inquire whether anything can be intrinsically valuable to them but enjoyment, mental satisfaction, or blessedness.

I come now to state the point upon which issue is taken, to wit:--

(4.) That enjoyment, blessedness, or mental satisfaction, is the only ultimate good.

(*a.*) It has been before remarked, and should be repeated here, that the intrinsically valuable must not only belong to, and be inseparable from, sentient beings, but that the ultimate or intrinsic absolute good of moral agents must consist in a state of mind. It must be something to be found in the field of consciousness. Nothing can be affirmed by a moral agent to be an intrinsic, absolute, ultimate good, but a state of mind. Take away mind, and what can be a good *per se*; or, what can be a good in any sense?

(*b.*) Again, it should be said that the ultimate and absolute good can not consist in a choice or in a voluntary state of mind. The thing chosen is, and must be, the ultimate of the choice. Choice can never be chosen as an ultimate end. Benevolence then, or the love required by the law, can never be the ultimate and absolute good. It is admitted that blessedness, enjoyment, mental satisfaction, is a good, an absolute and ultimate good. This is a first truth of reason. All men assume it. All men seek enjoyment either selfishly or disinterestedly, that is, they seek their own good supremely, or the general good of being. That it is the only absolute and ultimate good, is also a first truth. But for this there could be no activity--no motive to action--no object of choice. Enjoyment is in fact the ultimate good. It is in fact the result of existence and of action. It results to God from his existence, his attributes, his activity, and his virtue, by a law of necessity. His powers are so correlated that blessedness cannot but be the state of his mind, as resulting from the exercise of his attributes and the right activity of his will. Happiness, or enjoyment results, both naturally and governmentally, from obedience to law both physical and moral. This shows that government is not an end, but a means. It also shows that the end is blessedness, and the means obedience to law.

The ultimate and absolute good, in the sense of the intrinsically valuable, cannot be identical with moral law. Moral law, as we have seen, is an idea of the reason. Moral law and moral government, must propose some end to be secured by means of law. Law cannot be its own end. It cannot require the subject to seek itself, as an ultimate end. This were absurd. The moral law is nothing else than the reason's idea, or conception of that course of willing and acting, that is fit, proper, suitable to, and demanded by the nature, relations, necessities, and circumstances of moral agents. Their nature, relations, circumstances, and wants being perceived, the reason necessarily affirms, that they ought to propose to themselves a certain end, and to consecrate themselves to the promotion of this end, for its own sake, or for its own intrinsic value. This end cannot be law itself. The law is a simple and pure idea of the reason, and can never be in itself the supreme, intrinsic, absolute, and ultimate good.

Nor can obedience, or the course of acting or willing required by the law, be the ultimate end aimed at by the law or the lawgiver. The law requires action in reference to an end, or that an end should be willed; but the willing, and the end to be willed, cannot be identical. The action required, and the end to which it is to be directed, cannot be the same. To affirm that it can, is absurd. It is to affirm, that obedience to law is the ultimate end proposed by law or government. The obedience is one thing, the end to be secured by obedience, is and must be another. Obedience must be a means or condition; and that which law and obedience are intended to secure, is and must be the ultimate end of obedience. The law, or the lawgiver, aims to promote the highest good, or blessedness of the universe. This must be the end of moral law and moral government. Law and obedience must be the means or conditions of this end. It is absurd to deny this. To deny this is to deny the very nature of moral law, and to lose sight of the true and only end of moral government. Nothing can be moral law, and nothing can be moral government, that does not propose the highest good of moral beings as its ultimate end. But if this is the end of law, and the end of government, it must be the end to be aimed at, or intended, by the ruler and the subject. And this end must be the foundation of moral obligation. The end proposed to be secured, must be intrinsically valuable, or that would not be moral law that proposed to secure it. The end must be good or valuable, *per se*, or there can be no moral law requiring it to be sought or chosen as an ultimate end, nor any obligation to choose it as an ultimate end.

The sanctions of government or of law, in the widest sense of the term, must be the ultimate of obedience and the end of government. The sanctions of moral government must be the ultimate good and evil. That is, they must promise and threaten that which is, in its own nature, an ultimate good or evil. Virtue must consist in the impartial choice of that as an end which is proffered as the reward of virtue. This is, and must be, the ultimate good. Sin consists in choosing that which defeats or sets aside this end, or in selfishness.

But what is intended by the right, the just, the true, &c., being ultimate goods and ends to be chosen for their own sake? These may be objective or subjective. Objective right, truth, justice, &c., are mere ideas, and cannot be good or valuable in themselves. Subjective right, truth, justice, &c., are synonymous with righteousness, truthfulness, and justness. These are virtue. They consist in an active state of the will, and resolve themselves into choice, intention. But we have repeatedly seen that intention can neither be an end nor a good in itself, in the sense of intrinsically valuable.

Again: Constituted as moral agents are, it is a matter of consciousness that the concrete realization of the ideas of right, and truth, and justice, of beauty, of fitness, of moral order, and, in short, of all that class of ideas, is indispensable as the condition and means of their highest well-being, and that enjoyment or mental satisfaction is the result of realizing in the concrete those ideas. This enjoyment or satisfaction then is and must be the end or ultimate upon which the intention of God must have terminated, and upon which ours must terminate as an end or ultimate.

Again: The enjoyment resulting to God from the concrete realization of his own ideas must be infinite. He must therefore have intended it as the supreme good. It is in fact the ultimate good. It is in fact the supremely valuable.

Again: If there is more than one ultimate good, the mind must regard them all as one, or sometimes be consecrated to one and sometimes to another--sometimes wholly consecrated to the beautiful, sometimes to the just, and then again to the right, then to the useful, to the true, &c. But it may be asked, Of what value is the beautiful, aside from the enjoyment it affords to sentient existences? It meets a demand of our being, and hence affords satisfaction. But for this in what sense could it be regarded as good? The idea of the useful, again, cannot be an idea of an ultimate end, for utility implies that something is valuable in itself to which the useful sustains the relation of a means and is useful only for that reason.

Of what value is the true, the right, the just, &c., aside from the pleasure or mental satisfaction resulting from them to sentient existences? Of what value were all the rest of the universe, were there no sentient existences to enjoy it?

Suppose, again, that everything else in the universe existed just as it does, except mental satisfaction or enjoyment, and that there were absolutely no enjoyment of any kind in anything any more than there is in a block of granite, of what value would it all be? and to what, or to whom, would it be valuable? Mind, without susceptibility of enjoyment, could neither know nor be the subject of good nor evil, any more than a slab of marble. Truth in that case could no more be a good to mind than mind could be a good to truth; light would no more be a good to the eye, than the eye a good to light. Nothing in the universe could give or receive the least satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Neither natural nor moral fitness nor unfitness could excite the least emotion or mental satisfaction. A block of marble might just as well be the subject of good as anything else, upon such a supposition.

Again: It is obvious that all creation, where law is obeyed, tends to one end, and that end is happiness or enjoyment. This demonstrates that enjoyment was the end at which God aimed in creation.

Again: It is evident that God is endeavouring to realize all the other ideas of his reason for the sake of, and as a means of, realizing that of the valuable to being. This, as a matter of fact, is the result of realizing in the concrete all those ideas. This must then have been the end intended.

But again: The Bible knows of but one ultimate good. This, as has been said, the moral law has for ever settled. The highest well-being of God and the universe is the only end required by the law. Creation proposes but one end. Physical and moral government propose but one end. The Bible knows but one end, as we have just seen. The law and the gospel propose the good of being only as the end of virtuous intention. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself." Here is the whole duty of man. But here is nothing of choosing, willing, loving, truth, justice, right, utility, or beauty, as an ultimate end for their own sakes. The fact is, there are innumerable relative goods, or conditions, or means of enjoyment, but only one ultimate good. Disinterested benevolence to God and man is the whole of virtue, and every modification of virtue resolves itself in the last analysis into this. If this is so, well-being in the sense of enjoyment must be the only ultimate good. But well-being, in the complex sense of the term, is made up of enjoyment and the means and sources or conditions of enjoyment. Conformity to law universal, must be the condition and enjoyment; the ultimate end, strictly and properly speaking.

It is nonsense to object that, if enjoyment or mental satisfaction be the only ground of moral obligation, we should be indifferent as to the means. This objection assumes that in seeking an end for its intrinsic value, we must be indifferent as to the way in which we obtain that end. That is, whether it be obtained in a manner possible or impossible, right or wrong. It overlooks the fact that from the laws of our own being it is impossible for us to will the end without willing also the indispensable, and therefore the appropriate, means: and also that we cannot possibly regard any other conditions or means of the happiness of moral agents as possible, and therefore as appropriate or right, but holiness and universal conformity to the law of our being. Enjoyment or mental satisfaction results from having the different demands of our being met. One demand of the reason and conscience of a moral agent is that happiness should be conditionated upon holiness. It is therefore naturally impossible for a moral agent to be satisfied with the happiness or enjoyment of moral agents except upon the condition of their holiness.

But this class of philosophers insist that all the archetypes of the ideas of the reason are necessarily regarded by us as good in themselves. For example: I have the idea of beauty. I behold a rose. The perception of this archetype of the idea of beauty gives me instantaneous pleasure. Now it is said, that this archetype is necessarily regarded by me as a good. I have pleasure in the presence and perception of it, and as often as I call it to remembrance. This pleasure, it is said, demonstrates that it is a good to me; and this good is in the very nature of the object, and must be regarded as a good in itself. To this I answer, that the presence of the rose is a good to me, but not an ultimate good. It is only a means or source of pleasure or happiness to me. The rose is not a good in itself. If there were no eyes to see it and no olfactories to smell it, to whom could it be a good? But in what sense can it be a good except in the sense that it gives satisfaction to the beholder? The satisfaction, and not the rose, is and must be the ultimate good. But it is inquired, Do not I desire the rose for its own sake? I answer, Yes; you desire it for its own sake, but you do not, cannot choose it for its own sake, but to gratify the desire. The desires all terminate on their respective objects. The desire for food terminates on food; thirst terminates on drink, &c. These things are so correlated to these appetites that they are desired for their own sakes. But they are not and cannot be chosen for their own sakes or as an ultimate end. They are, and must be, regarded and chosen as the means of gratifying their respective desires. To choose them simply in obedience to the desire were selfishness. But the gratification is a good and a part of universal good. The reason, therefore, urges and demands that they should be chosen as a means of good to myself. When thus chosen in obedience to the law of the intelligence, and no more stress is laid upon the gratification than in proportion to its relative value, and when no stress is laid upon it simply because it is my own gratification, the choice is holy. The perception of the archetypes of the various ideas of the reason will, in most instances, produce enjoyment. These archetypes, or, which is the same thing, the concrete realization of these ideas, is regarded by the mind as a good, but not as an ultimate good. The ultimate good is the satisfaction derived from the perception of them.

The perception of moral or physical beauty gives me satisfaction. Now moral and physical beauty are regarded by me as good, but not as ultimate good. They are relative good only. Were it not for the pleasure they give me, I could not in any way connect with them the idea of good. Suppose no such thing as mental satisfaction existed, that neither the perception of virtue nor of natural beauty, nor of any thing else, could produce the least emotion, or feeling, or satisfaction of any kind. In this case, a rose would no more be regarded as a good, than the most deformed object in existence. All things would be equally indifferent to such a mind. There would be the idea and its archetype, both in existence and exactly answering to each other. But what then? The archetype of the perfection of beauty would no more be a good, to such a mind, than would the archetype of the perfection of deformity. The mental eye might perceive order, beauty, physical and moral, or any thing else; but these things would no more be a good to the intellect that perceived them than their opposites. The idea of good or of the valuable could not in such a case exist, consequently virtue, or moral beauty, could not exist. The idea of good, or of the valuable, must exist before virtue can exist. It is and must be the developement of the idea of the valuable, that developes the idea of moral obligation, of right and wrong, and consequently, that makes virtue possible. The mind must perceive an object of choice that is regarded as intrinsically valuable, before it can have the idea of moral obligation to choose it as an end. This object of choice cannot be virtue or moral beauty, for this would be to have the idea of virtue or of moral beauty before the idea of moral obligation, or of right and wrong. This were a contradiction. The mind must have the idea of some ultimate good, the choice of which would be virtue, or concerning which the reason affirms moral obligation, before the idea of virtue, or of right or wrong, can exist. The developement of the idea of the valuable, or of an ultimate good must precede the possibility of virtue or of the idea of virtue, of moral obligation, or of right and wrong. It is absurd to say that virtue is regarded as an ultimate good, when in fact the very idea of virtue does not and cannot exist until a good is presented, in view of which, the mind affirms moral obligation to will it for its own sake, and also affirms that the choice of it for that reason would be virtue.

The reason why virtue and moral excellence or worth, have been supposed to be a good in themselves, and intrinsically and absolutely valuable, is, that the mind necessarily regards them with satisfaction. They meet a demand of the reason and conscience; they are the archetypes of the ideas of the reason, and are therefore naturally and necessarily regarded with satisfaction, just as when we behold natural beauty, we necessarily enjoy it. We naturally experience a mental satisfaction in the contemplation of beauty, and this is true, whether the beauty be physical or moral. Both meet a demand of our nature, and therefore we experience satisfaction in their contemplation. Now it has been said, that this satisfaction is itself proof that we pronounced the beauty a good in itself. But ultimate good must, as we have said, consist in a state of mind. But neither physical nor moral beauty is a state of mind. Apart from the satisfaction produced by their contemplation, to whom or to what can they be a good? Take physical beauty for example, apart from every beholder, to whom or to what is it a good? Is it a good to itself? But, it cannot be a subject of good. It must be a good, only as, and because, it meets a demand of our being, and produces satisfaction in its contemplation. It is a relative good. The satisfaction experienced by contemplating it, is an ultimate good. It is only a condition of ultimate good.

So virtue or holiness is morally beautiful. Moral worth or excellence is morally beautiful. Beauty is an attribute or element of holiness, virtue, and of moral worth, or right character. But the beauty is not identical with holiness or moral worth, any more than the beauty of a rose, and the rose are identical. The rose is beautiful. Beauty is one of its attributes. So virtue is morally beautiful. Beauty is one of its attributes. But in neither case is the beauty a state of mind, and, therefore, it cannot be an ultimate good. The contemplation of either, and of both, naturally begets mental satisfaction, because of the relation of the archetype to the idea of our reason. We are so constituted, that beholding the archetypes of certain ideas of our reason, produces mental satisfaction. Not because we affirm the archetypes to be good in themselves; for often, as in the case of physical beauty, this cannot be, but because these archetypes meet a demand of our nature. They meet this demand, and thus produce satisfaction. This satisfaction is an ultimate good, but that which produces it is only a relative good. Apart from the satisfaction produced by the contemplation of moral worth, of what value can it be? Can the worthiness of good, or the moral beauty, be the end proposed by the lawgiver? Or must we not rather, seek to secure moral worth in moral agents, for the sake of the good in which it results? If neither the subject of moral excellence or worth, nor any one else, experienced the least satisfaction in contemplating it--if it did not so meet a demand of our being, or of any being, as to afford the least satisfaction to any sentient existence, to whom or to what would it be a good? If it meets a demand of the nature of a moral agent, it must produce satisfaction. It does meet a demand of our being, and therefore produces satisfaction to the intelligence, the conscience, the sensibility. It is therefore necessarily pronounced by us to be a good.

We are apt to say, that moral worth is an ultimate good; but it is only a relative good. It meets a demand of our being, and thus produces satisfaction. This satisfaction is the ultimate good of being. At the very moment we pronounce it a good in itself, it is only because we experience such a satisfaction in contemplating it. At the very time we erroneously say, that we consider it a good in itself, wholly independent of its results, we only say so, the more positively, because we are so gratified at the time, by thinking of it. It is its experienced results, that is the ground of the affirmation.

4. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that right character, moral worth, good desert, meritoriousness, cannot be, or consist in, a state of mind, and, therefore, it is impossible that it should be an ultimate good or intrinsically valuable. By right character, moral worth, good desert, meritoriousness, &c., as distinguished from virtue, we can mean nothing more than that it is fit and proper, and suitable to the nature and relation of things, that a virtuous person should be blessed. The intelligence is gratified when this character is perceived to exist. This perception produces intellectual satisfaction. This satisfaction is a good in itself. But that which produces this satisfaction, is in no proper sense a good in itself. Were it not for the fact that it meets a demand of the intelligence, and thus produces satisfaction, it could not so much as be thought of, as a good in itself, any more than anything else that is a pure conception of the reason, such, for instance, as a mathematical line.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE X.

FOUNDATION OF OBLIGATION.

V. POINT OUT THE INTRINSIC ABSURDITY OF THE VARIOUS CONFLICTING THEORIES.

The discussion under this head has been in a great measure anticipated, as we have proceeded in the examination of the theories to which we have attended. But before I dismiss this subject, I will, in accordance with a former suggestion, notice some more instances in which the conditions have been confounded with, and mistaken for, the ground of obligation, which has resulted in much confusion and absurdity. The instances which I shall mention are all to be found in the same author (Mahan's Moral Philosophy), whose rightarian views we have examined. He fully admits, and often affirms, that, strictly speaking, ultimate intentions alone are moral actions. That an ultimate intention must necessarily, and always, find the ground of its obligation exclusively in its object, and in nothing not intrinsic in its object. This he postulates and affirms, as critically as possible. Yet, strange to tell, he goes on to affirm the following, as exclusive grounds of obligation. For the sake of perspicuity I will state his various propositions without quoting them, as to do so would occupy too much space.

1. Strictly speaking, ultimate intentions alone are moral actions. (Ibid. pp. 55, 124.)

2. Ultimate intentions consist in choosing an object for its own sake, or for what is intrinsic in that object, and for no reason not intrinsic in it. (Ibid. pp. 117, 125.)

3. Ultimate intentions must find their reasons, or the grounds of obligation, exclusively in their objects. (Ibid. pp. 55, 56.)

4. The foundation of obligation must universally be intrinsic in the object of choice. (Ibid., pp. 56, 81, 85.) This is his fundamental position. Thus far we agree.

5. Foundation of obligation, is not only what is intrinsic, but also in the relations of its object. (Ibid. pp. 85, 142.) But this contradicts the last assertion.

6. All obligation is founded exclusively in the relations of our being to another. (Ibid., pp. 23, 143.) Here, a mere condition of obligation, to fulfil to those around us certain forms of duty, is confounded with, and even asserted to be, the sole ground of obligation. We have seen in a former lecture, that the various relations of life, are only conditions of certain forms of obligation, while the good connected with the performance of these duties, is the ground of all such forms of obligation. Here he again contradicts No. 4.

7. Again, he asserts that the affirmation of obligation by the moral faculty, is the ground of obligation. (Ibid. p. 23.) Here again a condition is asserted to be the ground of obligation. The affirmation of obligation by the reason is, no doubt, a *sine quà non* of the obligation, but it cannot be the ground of it. What, has the moral faculty no reason for affirming obligation to choose the good of being, but the affirmation itself? Is the affirmation of obligation to choose, identical with the object of that choice? Another contradiction of No. 4.

8. Again, he says, the foundation of obligation is found exclusively in the relation of choice to its object. (Ibid. pp. 79, 86.) Here again a condition is confounded with, and asserted to be, the exclusive ground of obligation. Contradiction again of No. 4.

9. Again, he says that the foundation of obligation is found exclusively in the character of the choice itself. (Ibid. pp. 76.) But the character of the choice is determined by the object on which it terminates. The nature of the object must create obligation to choose it for its own sake, or the choice of it is not right. Here, it is plain, that a condition is again asserted to be the universal ground of obligation. Were it not right to choose an object, for its own sake, the choice of it would have no right character, and there could be no obligation. But it is as absurd as possible to make the character of the choice the ground of the obligation. This also contradicts No. 4.

10. Again, he affirms, that the idea of duty is the exclusive ground of obligation. This theory we have before examined. Here it is plain, that a condition is made the exclusive ground of obligation. If we had not the idea of duty, we, of course, should not have the idea of obligation, for, in fact, these ideas are identical: but it is totally absurd to say that this idea is the ground of obligation. This also contradicts No. 4.

11. Again, he asserts, that the relation of intrinsic fitness, existing between choice and its object, is the exclusive ground of obligation. (Ibid. p. 86.) This theory we have examined, as that of the rightarian. All I need say here is, that this is another instance in which a condition is made the sole ground of obligation. Did not this relation exist, the obligation could not exist, but it is impossible, as has been shown, that the relation should be the ground of this obligation. This also contradicts No. 4. He says, again--

12. That obligation is sometimes founded, exclusively, in the moral character of the being to whom we are under obligation. (Ibid. p. 86.) To this theory we have alluded; I only remark here, that this is another instance of confounding a condition with the ground of certain forms of obligation. This we have seen in the preceding pages. This contradicts No. 4.

13. That the ground of obligation is found, partly in the nature of choice, partly in the nature of the object, and partly in the relation of fitness existing between choice and its object. (Ibid. pp. 106, 107, 108.) Here, again, a condition is made the universal ground of obligation. Were not choice what it is, and good what it is, and did not the relation of fitness exist between choice and its object, obligation could not exist. But, we have seen, that it is impossible that anything but the intrinsic nature of the good should be the ground of the obligation. This contradicts No. 4.

14. Again, he affirms, that the ground of obligation is identical with the reason, or consideration, in view of which the intellect affirms obligation: but this cannot be true. The vast majority of cases, in which we are conscious of affirming obligation, respect executive acts, or volitions, and in nearly all such cases the consideration in the immediate view of the mind, when it affirms the obligation, is some other than the ultimate reason, or ground of the obligation, and which is only a condition of obligation in that particular form. For example, the revealed will of God, the utility of the act, as preaching the gospel, or the rightness of the act, either of these may be, and often is, the reason immediately before the mind, and the reason thought of at the time, the question of duty is settled and the affirmation of obligation to perform an act of benevolence is made. But who does not know, and admit, that neither of the above reasons can be the ground of obligation to will or to do good? The writer who makes the assertion we are examining, has elsewhere and often affirmed that, in all acts of benevolence, or of willing the good of being, the intrinsic nature of the good is the ground of the obligation. It is absurd to deny this, as we have abundantly seen. The facts are these: we necessarily assume our obligation to will, and do good for its own sake. This is a necessarily-assumed and omnipresent truth with every moral agent. We go forth with this assumption in our minds; we therefore only need to know that any act, or course of action on our part, is demanded to promote the highest good; and we therefore, and in view thereof, affirm obligation to perform that act, or to pursue that course of action. Suppose a young man to be inquiring after the path of duty in regard to his future course of life; he seeks to know the will of God respecting it; he inquires after the probabilities of greater or less usefulness. If he can get clear light upon either of these points, he regards the question as settled. He has now ascertained what is right, and affirms his obligation accordingly. Now, should you ask him what had settled his convictions, and in view of what considerations he has affirmed his obligation, to preach the gospel, for example, he would naturally refer either to the will of God, to the utility of that course of life, or, perhaps, to the rightness of it. But would he, in thus doing, assign, or even suppose himself to assign, the fundamental reason or ground of the obligation? No, indeed, he cannot but know that the good to be secured by this course of life, is the ground of the obligation to pursue it; that but for the intrinsic value of the good, such a course of life would not be useful. But for the intrinsic value of the good, God would not will that he should pursue that course of life; that but for the intrinsic value of the good, such a course would not be right. God's willing that he should preach the gospel; the utility of this course of life, and of course its rightness, all depend upon the intrinsic value of the good, to which this course of life sustains the relation of a means. The will of God, the useful tendency, or the rightness of the course, might either or all of them be thought of as reasons in view of which the obligation was affirmed, while it is self-evident that neither of them can be the ground of the obligation. In regard to executive acts, or the use of means to secure good, we almost never decide what is duty by reference to, or in view of, the fundamental reason, or ground of obligation which invariably must be the intrinsic nature of the good, but only in view of a mere condition of the obligation. Whenever the will of God reveals the path of usefulness, it reveals the path of right and of duty, and is a condition of the obligation in the sense that, without such revelation, we should not know what course to pursue to secure the highest good. The utility of any course of executive acts is a condition of its rightness, and, of course, of obligation to pursue that course. The ultimate reason, or ground of obligation to will and do good, is, and must be, in the mind, and must have its influence in the decision of every question of duty; but this is not generally the reason thought of, when the affirmed obligation respects executive acts merely. I say, the intrinsic nature of the ultimate end, for the sake of which the executive acts are demanded, must be in the mind as the ground of the obligation, and as the condition of the affirmation of the obligation to put forth executive acts to secure that end, although this fundamental reason is not in the immediate view of the mind, as the object of conscious attentions at the time. We necessarily assume our obligation to will good for its own sake; all our inquiries after diverse forms of obligation, respect ways, and means, and conditions, of securing the highest good. Whatever reveals to us the best ways and means, reveals the path of duty. We always affirm those best ways and means to be the right course of action, and assign the utility, or the rightness, or the will of God, which has required, and thus revealed them, as the reasons in view of which we have decided upon the path of duty. But, in no such case do we ever intend to assign the ultimate reason, or ground, of the obligation; and if we did, we should be under an evident mistake. In every affirmation of obligation, we do, without noticing it, assume the first truths of reason--our own liberty or ability; that every event must have a cause; that the good of universal being ought to be chosen and promoted because of its intrinsic value; that whatever sustains to that good the relation of a necessary means, ought to be chosen for the sake of the good; that God's revealed will always discloses the best ways and means of securing the highest good, and therefore reveals universal law. These first truths are at the bottom of the mind in all affirmations of obligation, and are, universally, conditions of the affirmation of obligation. But these assumptions, or first truths, are not, in general, the truths immediately thought of when obligation to put forth executive acts is affirmed. It is, therefore, a great mistake to say that whatever consideration is in the immediate view of the mind at the time, is the ground of the obligation.

15. With respect to obligation to will the good of being, he asserts--

(1.) That happiness is the only ultimate good. (Ibid. pp. 114, 115.)

(2.) That all obligation to will good, in any form, is founded exclusively in the intrinsic value or nature of the good. (Ibid. p. 97.) To this I agree.

(3.) Again, he asserts repeatedly, that susceptibility of good is the sole ground of obligation to will good to a being. (Ibid. pp. 106, 107, 115, 116, 122.) Here, again, it is plain that a mere condition is asserted to be the universal ground of obligation to will good. Were there no susceptibility of good, we should be under no obligation to will good to a being, but susceptibility for good is of itself no better reason for willing good than evil to a being. If susceptibility were a ground of obligation, then a susceptibility of evil would be a ground of obligation to will evil. This has been abundantly shown. This contradicts Nos. 4 and 2.

(4.) Again: holiness, he asserts, is a ground of obligation to will good to its possessor. (Ibid. pp. 102, 107.) We have seen that holiness is only a condition of obligation, in the form of willing the actual enjoyment of good by a particular individual, while in every possible instance, the nature of the good, and not the character of the individual, is the ground of the obligation. This contradicts Nos. 4 and 2.

(5.) He affirms that holiness is never a ground of obligation to will good to any being; and that so far as willing the good of any being is concerned, our obligation is the same, whatever the character may be. (Ibid. p. 111.) This as flatly as possible contradicts what he elsewhere affirms. The several positions of this writer contradict his fundamental position, and also each other, as flatly as possible. They are but a tissue of absurdities.

Some writers have held that the moral perfection of moral agents is the great end of creation, and that to which all such agents ought to consecrate themselves, and of course that the intrinsic nature of moral perfection is the ground of obligation. To this I reply,

It is true that the mind of a moral agent cannot rest and be satisfied short of moral perfection. When that state is attained by any mind, so far as respects its own present state, that mind is satisfied, but the satisfaction, and not the moral perfection, is the ultimate good. Moral perfection results in happiness, or mental satisfaction, and this satisfaction is and must be the ultimate good.

Observe, I do not say that our own happiness is the great end at which we ought to aim, or that the intrinsic value of our own enjoyment is the ground of obligation. But I do say that the highest good, or blessedness of the universe, is the ultimate good, and its nature or intrinsic value is the ground of obligation.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XI.

SUMMING UP.

I HAVE NOW examined, I believe, all the various theories of the ground of obligation. I have still further to remark upon the practical influence of these various theories, for the purpose of showing the fundamental importance of a right understanding of this question. The question lies at the very foundation of all morality and religion. A mistake here is fatal to any consistent system either of moral philosophy or theology. But before I dismiss this part of the subject, I must sum up the foregoing discussion, and place, in a distinct light, the points of universal agreement among those who have agitated this question, and then state a few plain corrolaries that must follow from such premises. I think I may say that all parties will, and do, agree in the following particulars. These have been named before, but I briefly recapitulate in this summing up. The points of agreement, which I now need to mention, are only these--

1. Moral obligation respects moral actions only.

2. Involuntary states of mind are not, strictly speaking, moral actions.

3. Intentions alone are, strictly speaking, moral actions.

4. Still more strictly, ultimate intentions alone are moral actions.

5. An ultimate choice or intention is the choice of an object for its own sake, or for what is intrinsic in the nature of the object, and for nothing which is not intrinsic in such object.

6. The true foundation of obligation to choose an object of ultimate choice is that in the nature of the object, for the sake of which the reason affirms obligation to choose it.

7. Ultimate choice or intention is alone right or wrong, *per se*, and all executive acts are right or wrong as they proceed from a right or wrong ultimate intention.

Now, in the above premises we are agreed. It would seem that a moderate degree of logical consistency ought to make us at one in our conclusions. Let us proceed carefully, and see if we cannot detect the logical error that brings us to such diverse conclusions.

From the above premises it must follow--

1. That the utility of ultimate choice cannot be a foundation of obligation to choose, for this would be to transfer the ground of obligation from what is intrinsic in the object chosen to the useful tendency of the choice itself. As I have said, utility is a condition of obligation to put forth an executive act, but can never be a foundation of obligation, for the utility of the choice is not a reason found exclusively, or at all, in the object of choice.

2. From the above premises it also follows, that the moral character of the choice cannot be a foundation of obligation to choose, for this reason is not intrinsic in the object of choice. To affirm that the character of choice is the ground of obligation to choose, is to transfer the ground of obligation to choose, from the object chosen to the character of the choice itself; but this is a contradiction of the premises.

3. The relation of one being to another cannot be the ground of obligation to will good to that other, for the ground of obligation to will good to another must be the intrinsic nature of the good, and not the relations of one being to another. Relations may be conditions of obligation to seek to promote the good of particular individuals; but in every case the nature of the good is the ground of the obligation.

4. Neither the relation of utility, nor that of moral fitness or right, as existing between choice and its object, can be a ground of obligation, for both these relations depend, for their very existence, upon the intrinsic importance of the object of choice; and besides, neither of these relations is intrinsic in the object of choice, which, according to the premises, it must be to be a ground of obligation.

5. The relative importance or value of an object of choice, can never be a ground of obligation to choose that object, for its relative importance is not intrinsic in the object. The relative importance, or value, of an object may be a condition of obligation to choose it, as a condition of securing an intrinsically valuable object, to which it sustains the relation of a means, but it is a contradiction of the premises to affirm that the relations of an object can be a ground of obligation to choose that object.

6. The idea of duty cannot be a ground of obligation; this idea is a condition, but never a foundation, of obligation, for this idea is not intrinsic in the object which we affirm it our duty to choose.

7. The perception of certain relations existing between individuals cannot be a ground, although it is a condition of obligation, to fulfil to them certain duties. Neither the relation itself nor the perception of the relation, is intrinsic in that which we affirm ourselves to be under obligation to will or do to them; of course, neither of them can be a ground of obligation.

8. The affirmation of obligation by the reason, cannot be a ground, though it is a condition of obligation. The obligation is affirmed, upon the ground of the intrinsic importance of the object, and not in view of the affirmation itself.

9. The sovereign will of God, is never the foundation, though it often is a condition, of certain forms of obligation. Did we know the intrinsic or relative value of an object, we should be under obligation to choose it, whether God required it or not.

The revealed will of God is always a condition of obligation, whenever such revelation is indispensable to our understanding the intrinsic or relative importance of any object of choice. The will of God is not intrinsic in the object, which he commands us to will, and of course cannot, according to the premises, be a ground of obligation.

10. The moral excellence of a being can never be a foundation of obligation to will his good, for his character is not intrinsic in the good we ought to will to him. The intrinsic value of that good must be the ground of the obligation, and his good character only a condition of obligation to will his enjoyment of good in particular.

11. Good character can never be a ground of obligation to choose anything which is not itself; for the reasons of ultimate choice must, according to the premises, be found exclusively in the object of choice. Therefore, if character is a ground of obligation to put forth an ultimate choice, it must be the object of that choice.

12. Right can never be a ground of obligation, unless right be itself the object which we are under obligation to choose for its own sake.

13. Susceptibility for good can never be a ground, though it is a condition, of obligation to will good to a being. The susceptibility is not intrinsic in the good which we ought to will, and therefore cannot be a ground of obligation.

14. It also follows from the foregoing premises that no one thing can be a ground of obligation to choose any other thing, as an ultimate; for the reasons for choosing anything, as an ultimate, must be found in itself, and in nothing extraneous to itself.

15. From the admitted fact, that none but ultimate choice or intention is right or wrong *per se*, and that all executive volitions, or acts, derive their character from the ultimate intention to which they owe their existence, it follows:--

(*a*.) That if executive volitions are put forth with the intention to secure an intrinsically valuable end, they are right; otherwise, they are wrong.

(*b*.) It also follows, that obligation to put forth executive acts is conditioned, not founded, upon the assumed utility of such acts. Again--

(*c*.) It also follows, of course, that all outward acts are right or wrong, as they proceed from a right or wrong intention.

(*d*.) It also follows that the rightness of any executive volition or outward act depends upon the supposed and intended utility of that volition, or act. Then utility must be assumed as a condition of obligation to put them forth, and, of course, their intended utility is a condition of their being right.

(*e*.) It also follows that, whenever we decide it to be duty to put forth any outward act whatever, irrespective of its supposed utility, and because we think it right, we deceive ourselves, for it is impossible that outward acts or volitions, which from their nature are always executive, should be either obligatory or right, irrespective of their assumed utility, or tendency to promote an intrinsically valuable end.

(*f*.) Not only must all such acts be supposed to have this tendency, but they must proceed from an intention, to secure the end for its own sake, as conditions of their being right.

(*g*.) It follows also, that it is a gross error to affirm the rightness of an executive act, as a reason for putting it forth, even assuming that its tendency is to do evil rather than good. With this assumption no executive act can possibly be right. When God has required certain executive acts, we know that they do tend to secure the highest good, and that, if put forth to secure that good, they are right. But in no case, where God has not revealed the path of duty, as it respects executive acts, or courses of life, are we to decide upon such questions in view of the rightness, irrespective of the good tendency of such acts or courses of life; for their rightness depends upon their assumed good tendency.

Objections.--1. But to this doctrine it has been objected, that it amounts to the papal dogma, that the end sanctifies the means. I will give the objection and my reply.

2. That if the highest good, or well-being of God and of the universe, be the sole foundation of moral obligation, it follows that we are not under obligation to will anything except this end, with the necessary conditions and means thereof. That everything but this end, which we are bound to will, must be willed as a means to this end, or because of its tendency to promote this end. And this, it is said, is the doctrine of utility.

To this I answer--

The doctrine of utility is, that the foundation of the obligation to will both the end and the means is the tendency of the willing to promote the end. But this is absurd. The doctrine of these discourses is not, as utilitarians say, that the foundation of the obligation to will the end or the means is the tendency of the willing to promote that end, but that the foundation of the obligation to will both the end and the means, is the intrinsic value of end. And the condition of the obligation to will the means is the perceived tendency of the means to promote the end.

Again, the objection that this doctrine is identical with that of the utilitarian is urged in the following form:--

"The theory of Professor Finney, in its logical consequences, necessarily lands us in the doctrine of utility, and can lead to no other results. The affirmation of obligation, as all admit, pertains exclusively to the intelligence. The intelligence, according to Professor Finney, esteems nothing whatever as worthy of regard for its own sake, but happiness, or the good of being. Nothing else is esteemed by it, for its own sake, but exclusively as 'a condition or a means to this end.' Now, if the intelligence does not regard an intention for any other reason than as a condition or a means, in other words, if for no other reason does it care whether such acts do or do not exist at all, how can it require or prohibit such acts for any other reason? If the intelligence does require or prohibit intentions for no other reasons than as a condition or a means of happiness, this is the doctrine of utility, as maintained by all its advocates." (Mahan's Moral Philosophy, pp. 98, 99.)

To this I reply, 1. That I do not hold that the intelligence demands the choice of an ultimate end, as a condition or a means of securing this end, but exactly the reverse of this. I hold that the intelligence does "care" whether ultimate choice or intention exists, for an entirely different reason, than as a condition or means of securing the end chosen. My doctrine is, and this objector has often asserted the same, that the intelligence demands the choice of an ultimate end for its own sake, and not because the choice tends to secure the end. What does this objector mean? Only so far back as the next page he says, in a distinct head:--"The advocates of this (his own) theory agree with Professor Finney in the doctrine that the good of being is an ultimate reason for ultimate intentions of a certain class, to wit, all intentions included in the words, willing the good of being." (Ibid. p. 97.) Thus he expressly asserts that I hold, and that he agrees with me, that the good of being is an ultimate reason for all ultimate intentions included in the words, willing the good of being. Now, what a marvel, that on the next page, he should state as an objection, that I hold that the reason does not demand the choice of the good of being for its own sake, but only as a condition of securing the good. We agree that an ultimate reason, is a ground of obligation, and that the nature of the good renders it obligatory to choose it for its own sake; and yet this objector strangely assumes, and asserts, that the nature of the good does not impose obligation to choose it for its own sake, and that there is no reason for choosing it, but either the rightness or the utility of the choice itself. This is passing strange. Why the choice is neither right nor useful, only as the end chosen is intrinsically valuable, and for this value demands choice. He says, "Whenever an object is present to the mind, which, on account of what is intrinsic in the object itself, necessitates the will to act, two or more distinct and opposite acts are always possible relatively to such object. That act, and that act only can be right, which corresponds with the apprehended intrinsic character of the object." (Ibid. p. 98.)

Now, just fifteen lines below, he states that there is no reason whatever for choosing an object, but the intrinsic nature or the utility of the choice itself. Marvellous. What, almost at the same breath, affirm that no choice, but that which consists in choosing an object for its own sake, can be right, and yet that no object should be chosen for its own sake, and that the intelligence can assign no reason whatever, for the choice of an object, except the rightness or utility of the choice itself. Now, he insists, that if I deny that the rightness of the choice is the ground of the obligation to choose the good of being, I must hold that the utility of the choice is the ground of the obligation, since, as he says, there can be no other reasons for the choice. Thus I am, he thinks, convicted of utilitarianism!!

But he still says, (Ibid. pp. 100, 101.) "In consistency with the fundamental principles of this theory, we can never account for the difference which he himself makes, and must make, between ultimate intentions and subordinate executive volitions. Both alike, as we have seen above, are, according to his theory, esteemed and regarded by the intelligence, for no other reasons than as a condition or a means of happiness. Yet he asserts that the obligation to put forth ultimate intentions is affirmed without any reference whatever to their being apprehended as a condition or a means of happiness; while the affirmation of obligation to put forth executive acts is conditioned wholly upon their being perceived to be such a condition or means. Now how can the intelligence make any such difference between objects esteemed and regarded, as far as anything intrinsic in the objects themselves is concerned, as absolutely alike?" (Ibid. pp. 100, 101.)

To this I reply, that the forms of obligation to put forth an ultimate and an executive act, are widely different. The intelligence demands that the good be chosen for its own sake, and this choice is not to be put forth as an executive act, or with design, to secure its object. Obligation to put forth ultimate choice is, therefore, not conditioned upon the supposed utility of the choice. But an executive act is to be put forth with design to secure its ends, and therefore obligation to put forth such acts is conditioned upon their supposed utility, or tendency to secure their end. There is, then, a plain difference between obligation to put forth ultimate and executive acts. What difficulty is there, then, in reconciling this distinction with my views, stated in these lectures?

3. It is said "that if the sole foundation of moral obligation be the highest good of universal being, all obligation pertaining to God would respect his susceptibilities and the means necessary to this result. When we have willed God's highest well-being with the means necessary to that result, we have fulfilled all our duty to him."

To this I reply; certainly, when we have willed the highest well-being of God and of the universe with the necessary conditions and means thereof, we have done our whole duty to him: for this is loving him with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Willing the highest well-being of God, and of the universe, implies worship, obedience, and the performance of every duty, as executive acts. The necessary conditions of the highest well-being of the universe are, that every moral being should be perfectly virtuous, and that every demand of the intelligence and of the whole being of God and of the universe of creatures be perfectly met, so that universal mind shall be in a state of perfect and universal satisfaction. To will this is all that the law of God does or can require.

4. It is objected, "That if this be the sole foundation of moral obligation, it follows, that if all the good now in existence were connected with sin, and all the misery connected with holiness, we should be just as well satisfied as we now are."

I answer: this objection is based upon an impossible supposition, and therefore good for nothing. That happiness should be connected with sin, and holiness with misery, is impossible, without a reversal of the powers and laws of moral agency. If our being were so changed that happiness were naturally connected with sin, and misery with holiness, there would, of necessity, be a corresponding change in the law of nature, or of moral law: in which case, we should be as well satisfied as we now are. But no such change is possible, and the supposition is inadmissible. But it has been demanded,--

"Why does not our constitution demand happiness irrespective of holiness? and why is holiness as a condition of actual blessedness an unalterable demand of our intelligence? Why can neither be satisfied with mere happiness, irrespective of the conditions on which it exists, as far as moral agents are concerned? Simply and exclusively, because both alike regard something else for its own sake besides happiness." (Ibid. p. 104.)

The exact point of this argument is this: our nature demands that holiness should exist in connection with happiness, and sin with misery: now, does not this fact prove that we necessarily regard holiness as valuable in itself, or as an object to be chosen for its own sake? I answer, no. It only proves that holiness is regarded as right in itself, and therefore as the fit condition and means of happiness. But it does not prove, that we regard holiness as an object to be chosen for its own sake, or as an ultimate, for this would involve an absurdity. Holiness, or righteousness, is only the moral quality of choice. It is impossible that the quality of a choice should be the object of the choice. Besides, this quality of righteousness, or holiness, is created by the fact, that the choice terminates on some intrinsically valuable thing besides the choice itself. Thus, if our reason did affirm that holiness ought to be chosen for its own sake, it would affirm an absurdity and a contradiction.

Should it be still asked, why our nature affirms that that which is right in itself is the fit condition of happiness, I answer, certainly not because we necessarily regard holiness, or that which is right in itself, as an object of ultimate choice or intention, for this, as we have just seen, involves an absurdity. The true and only answer to the question just supposed is, that such is our nature, as constituted by the Creator, that it necessarily affirms as it does, and no other reason need or can be given. The difficulty with the objector is, that he confounds right with good, and insists that what is right in itself is as really an object of ultimate choice, as that which is a good in itself. But this cannot be true. What is right? Why, according to this objector, it is the relation of intrinsic fitness that exists between choice and an object intrinsically worthy of choice. This relation of fitness, or rightness, is not and cannot be the object of the choice. The intrinsic nature or value of the object creates this relation of rightness or fitness between the choice and the object. But this rightness is not, cannot be, an object of ultimate choice. When will writers cease to confound what is right in itself with what is a good in itself, and cease to regard the intrinsically right, and the intrinsically valuable, as equally objects of ultimate choice? The thing is impossible and absurd.

5. But it is said, that a moral agent may sometimes be under obligation to will evil instead of good to others. I answer:--

It can never be the duty of a moral agent to will evil to any being for its own sake, or as an ultimate end. The character and governmental relations of a being may be such that it may be duty to will his punishment to promote the public good. But in this case good is the end willed, and misery only a means. So it may be the duty of a moral agent to will the temporal misery of even a holy being to promote the public interests. Such was the case with the sufferings of Christ. The Father willed his temporary misery to promote the public good. But in all cases when it is duty to will misery, it is only as a means or condition of good to the public, or to the individual, and not as an ultimate end.

6. It has been said, "I find an unanswerable argument against this theory, also, in the relations of the universal intelligence to the moral government of God. All men do, as a matter of fact, reason from the connection between holiness and happiness, and sin and misery, under that government, to the moral character of God. In the scriptures, also, the same principle is continually appealed to. If the connection was a necessary one, and not dependent upon the divine will, it would present no more evidence of the divine rectitude, than the principle that every event has a cause, and all that is said in the scriptures about God's establishing this connection, would be false. Virtue and vice are in their own nature absolute, and would be what they now are, did not the connection under consideration exist." (Ibid. p. 109.)

(1.) This objection is based upon the absurd assumption, that moral law would remain the same, though the nature of moral agents were so changed that benevolence should naturally and necessarily produce misery, and selfishness produce happiness. But this is absurd. Moral law is, and must be, the law of nature. If the natures of moral agents were changed, there must of necessity be a corresponding change of the law. Virtue and vice are fixed and unchangeable only because moral agency is so.

(2.) The objection assumes that moral agents might have been so created as to affirm their obligation to be benevolent, though it were a fact that benevolence is necessarily connected with misery, and selfishness with happiness. But such a reversal of the nature would necessarily either destroy moral agency, and consequently moral law, or it would reverse the nature of virtue and vice. This objection overlooks, and indeed contradicts, the nature, both of moral agency and moral law.

(3.) We infer the goodness of God from the present constitution of things, not because God could possibly have created moral agents, and imposed on them the duty of benevolence, although benevolence had been necessarily connected with misery, and selfishness with happiness; for no such thing is, or was, possible. But we infer his benevolence from the fact, that he has created moral agents, and subjected them to moral law, and thus procured an indefinite amount of good, when he might have abstained from such a work. His choice was between creating moral agents and not creating, and not between creating moral agents with a nature such as they now have, or creating them moral agents, and putting them under the same law they now have, but with a nature the reverse of what they now have. This last were absurd, and naturally impossible. Yet this objection is based upon the assumption that it was possible.

7. It is said, that if any moral act can be conceived of which has not the element of willing the good of being in it, this theory is false. As an instance of such an act, it is insisted that revealed veracity as really imposes obligation to treat a veracious being as worthy of confidence, as susceptibility for happiness imposes obligation to will the happiness of such a being.

To this I reply,--

1. That it is a contradiction to say, that veracity should be the ground of an obligation to choose anything whatever but the veracity itself as an ultimate object, or for its own sake; for, be it remembered, the identical object, whose nature and intrinsic value imposes obligation, must be the object chosen for its own sake. This veracity imposes obligation to--what? Choose his veracity for its own sake? Is this what he is worthy of? O no, he is worthy of confidence. Then to treat him as worthy of confidence is not to will his veracity for its own sake, but to confide in him. But why confide in him? Let us hear this author himself answer this question:--

"There are forms of real good to moral agents, obligation to confer which rests exclusively upon moral character. That I should, for example, be regarded and treated by moral agents around me as worthy of confidence, is one of the fundamental necessities of my nature. On what condition or grounds can I require them to render me this good? Not on the ground that it is a good in itself to me. Such fact makes no appeal whatever to the conscience relatively to the good of which I am speaking. There is one and only one consideration that can, by any possibility, reach the conscience on this subject, to wit, revealed trust-worthiness. No claim to confidence can be sustained on any other ground whatever." (Ibid. pp. 107, 108.)

Indeed, but how perfectly manifest is it that here a condition is confounded with, or rather mistaken for, the ground of obligation. This writer started with the assertion that confiding in a being had not "the element of willing good in it." But here he asserts that confidence is a good to him, which we are bound to confer, and asserts that the ground of the obligation to confer this good, is not the intrinsic value of the good, but his revealed veracity. Here then, it is admitted, that to confide in a being has "the element of willing good in it." So the objection with which he started is given up, so far as to admit that this confidence is only a particular form of "good willing," and the only question remaining here is, whether the nature of the good, or the revealed veracity, is the ground of the obligation "to confer this form of good." This question has been answered already. Why "confer" good rather than evil upon him? Why, because good is good and evil is evil. The intrinsic value of the good is the ground, and his veracity only a condition, of obligation to will his particular and actual enjoyment of good. He says, "no claim to confidence can be sustained on any other ground than that of revealed veracity." I answer, that no such claim can be sustained except upon condition of revealed veracity. But if this confidence is the conferring of a good upon the individual, it is absurd to say that we are bound to confer this good, not because it is of value to him, but solely because of his veracity. Thus, this objector has replied to his own objection.

But let us put this objection in the strongest form, and suppose it to be asserted that revealed veracity always necessitates an act of confidence, or its opposite, and that we necessarily affirm obligation to put forth an act of confidence in revealed veracity, entirely irrespective of this confidence, or this veracity, sustaining any relation whatever to the good of any being in existence. Let us examine this. We often overlook the assumptions and certain knowledges which are in our own minds, and upon which we make certain affirmations. For example, in every effort we affirm ourselves under obligation to make, to secure the good of being, we assume our moral agency and the intrinsic value of the good to being; and generally these assumptions are not thought of, when we make such affirmations of obligation. But they are in the mind: their presence then, is the condition of our making the affirmation of obligation, although they are not noticed, nor thought of at the time. Now let us see if the affirmation of obligation to put forth an act of confidence, in view of revealed truth or revealed veracity, is not conditioned upon the assumption that the revealed truth or veracity, and consequently confidence in it, does sustain some relation to, and is a condition of, the highest good of being. Suppose, for example, that I assume that a truth, or a veracity, sustains no possible relation to the good of any being in existence, and that I regard the truth or the veracity revealed, as relating wholly and only, to complete abstractions, sustaining no relation whatever to the good or ill of any being; would such a truth, or such a veracity, either necessitate action, when revealed to the mind, or would the intellect affirm obligation to act in view of it? I say, no. Nor could the intelligence so much as conceive of obligation to act in this case. It could neither see nor assume any possible reason for action. The mind in this case must be, and remain, in a state of entire indifference to such a truth and such veracity. Although the fact may be overlooked, in the sense of not thought of, yet it is a fact, that obligation to confide in truth and in revealed veracity is affirmed by reason of the assumption which lies in the intellect, as a first truth, that to confide in, or to be influenced by, truth and veracity, is a condition of the highest good of being, and the value of the good is assumed as the ground, and the relation of the truth and the veracity, and of the confidence as the condition of the obligation. Faith, or confidence in an act, as distinguished from an attribute, of benevolence, is a subordinate and not an ultimate choice. God has so constituted the mind of moral agents, that they know, by a necessary law of the intelligence, that truth is a demand of their intellectual, as really as food is of their physical nature; that truth is the natural aliment of the mind, and that conformity of heart and life to it is the indispensable condition of our highest well-being. With this intuitive knowledge in the mind, it naturally affirms its obligations to confide in revealed veracity and truth. But suppose the mind to be entirely destitute of the conception that truth, or confidence in truth, sustained any relation whatever to the good of any being;--suppose truth was to the mind a mere abstraction, with no practical relations, any more than a point in space, or a mathematical line; it seems plain that no conception of obligation to confide in it, or to act in view of it, could possibly exist in this case. If this is so, it follows that obligation to confide in truth, or in revealed veracity, is conditioned upon its assumed relations to the good of being. And if this is so, the good to which truth sustains the relation of a means, must be the ground, and the relation only the condition, of the obligation.

But to silence all debate, the objector appeals to the universal consciousness:--

"I now adduce against the theory of Professor Finney, and in favour of the opposite theory, the direct and positive testimony of universal consciousness. Let us suppose, for example, that the character of God, as possessed of absolute omniscience, and veracity, is before the mind, on the one hand, and his capacity for infinite happiness, on the other. I put it to the consciousness of every intelligent being, whether God's character for knowledge and veracity does not present reasons just as ultimate for esteeming and treating him as worthy, instead of unworthy of confidence, as his susceptibilities for happiness do for willing his blessedness, instead of putting forth contradictory acts?"-- *Moral Philosophy*, p. 106.

Yes, I answer. But why does not this objector see that susceptibility for happiness is not the ground, but only a condition, of obligation to will the happiness of a being. Susceptibility for happiness, is in itself, no better reason for willing happiness, than susceptibility for misery is for willing misery. It is the nature of happiness that constitutes the ground, while susceptibility for happiness is only a condition of the obligation to will it, to any being. Without the susceptibility happiness were impossible, and hence there could be no obligation. But, the susceptibility existing, we are, upon this condition, under obligation to will the happiness of such a being for its own sake. The writer who makes this objection, has repeatedly fallen into the strange error of assuming and affirming that susceptibility for happiness is a ground of obligation to will happiness, and here he reiterates the assertion, and lays great stress upon it, and appeals to the universal consciousness in support of the proposition, that "revealed veracity presents reasons just as ultimate, for esteeming and treating a veracious being as worthy of confidence, as susceptibilities for good do for willing good." Yes, I say again: but neither of these presents ultimate reasons, and, of course, neither of them is a ground of obligation. Why does not this writer see that, according to his own most solemn definition of an ultimate act, this esteeming and treating a veracious being as worthy of confidence, cannot be ultimate acts? According to his own repeated showing, if veracity be a ground of obligation, that obligation must be to choose veracity for its own sake. But he says, the obligation is to esteem and treat him as worthy of confidence, and that this is "a real good which we are bound to render to him." What, the whole point and force of the objection is that this esteeming and treating are moral acts, that have no relation to the good of any being. This is strange. But stranger still, his veracity is not only a condition, but the ground, of obligation to render this good to him. We are to will his good, or to do him good, or to render to him the good which our confidence is to him, not because it is of any value to him, but because he is truthful.

It is perfectly plain that vast confusion reigns in the mind of that writer upon this subject, and that this objection is only a reiteration of the theory that moral excellence is a ground of obligation, which we have seen to be false.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XII.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

VI. LASTLY, SHOW THE PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF THE VARIOUS THEORIES.

It has already been observed that this is a highly practical question, and one of surpassing interest and importance. I have gone through the discussion and examination of the several principal theories, for the purpose of preparing the way to expose the practical results of those various theories, and to show that they legitimately result in some of the most soul-destroying errors that cripple the church and curse the world. I have slightly touched already upon this subject, but so slightly, however, as to forbid its being left until we have looked more stedfastly, and thoroughly, into it.

1. *I will begin with the theory that regards the sovereign will of God as the foundation of moral obligation.*

One legitimate and necessary result of this theory is, a totally erroneous conception both of the character of God, and of the nature and design of his government. If God's will is the foundation of moral obligation, it follows that he is an arbitrary sovereign. He is not under law himself, and he has no rule by which to regulate his conduct, nor by which either himself or any other being can judge of his moral character. Indeed, unless he is subject to law, or is a subject of moral obligation, he has and can have, no moral character; for moral character always and necessarily implies moral law and moral obligation. If God's will is not itself under the law of his infinite reason, or, in other words, if it is not conformed to the law imposed upon it by his intelligence, then his will is and must be arbitrary in the worst sense, that is, in the sense of having no regard to reason, or to the nature and relations of moral agents. But if his will is under the law of his reason, if he acts from principle, or has good and benevolent reasons for his conduct, then his will is not the foundation of moral obligation, but those reasons that lie revealed in the divine intelligence, in view of which it affirms moral obligation, or that he ought to will in conformity with those reasons. In other words, if the intrinsic value of his own well-being and that of the universe be the foundation of moral obligation; if his reason affirms his obligation to choose this as his ultimate end, and to consecrate his infinite energies to the realization of it; and if his will is conformed to this law, it follows,--

(1.) That his will is not the foundation of moral obligation.

(2.) That he has infinitely good and wise reasons for what he wills, says, and does.

(3.) That he is not arbitrary, but always acts in conformity with right principles, and for reasons that will, when universally known, compel the respect and even admiration of every intelligent being in the universe.

(4.) That he has a moral character, and is infinitely virtuous.

(5.) That he must respect himself.

(6.) That he must possess a happiness intelligent in kind, and infinite in degree.

(7.) That creation, providential and moral government, are the necessary means to an infinitely wise and good end, and that existing evils are only unavoidably incidental to this infinitely wise and benevolent arrangement, and, although great, are indefinitely the less of two evils. That is, they are an evil indefinitely less than no creation and no government would have been, or than a different arrangement and government would have been. It is conceivable, that a plan of administration might have been adopted that would have prevented the present evils; but if we admit that God has been governed by reason in the selection of the end he has in view, and in the use of means for its accomplishment, it will follow that the evils are less than would have existed under any other plan of administration; or at least, that the present system, with all its evils, is the best that infinite wisdom and love could adopt.

(8). These incidental evils, therefore, do not at all detract from the evidence of the wisdom and goodness of God; for in all these things he is not acting from caprice, or malice, or an arbitrary sovereignty, but is acting in conformity with the law of his infinite intelligence, and of course has infinitely good and weighty reasons for what he does and suffers to be done--reasons so good and so weighty, that he could not do otherwise without violating the law of his own intelligence, and therefore committing infinite sin.

(9.) It follows also that there is ground for perfect confidence, love, and submission to his divine will in all things. That is: if his will is not arbitrary, but conformed to the law of his infinite intelligence, then it is obligatory, as our rule of action, because it reveals infallibly what is in accordance with infinite intelligence. We may always be entirely safe in obeying all the divine requirements, and in submitting to all his dispensations, however mysterious, being assured that they are perfectly wise and good. Not only are we safe in doing so, but we are under infinite obligation to do so; not because his arbitrary will imposes obligation, but because it reveals to us infallibly the end we ought to choose, and the indispensable means of securing it. His will is law, not in the sense of its originating and imposing obligation of its own arbitrary sovereignty, but in the sense of its being a revelation of both the end we ought to seek, and the means by which the end can be secured. Indeed this is the only proper idea of law. It does not in any case of itself impose obligation, but is only a revelation of obligation. Law is a condition, but not the foundation of obligation. The will of God is a condition of obligation, only so far as it is indispensable to our knowledge of the end we ought to seek, and the means by which this end is to be secured. Where these are known, there is obligation, whether God has revealed his will or not.

The foregoing, and many other important truths, little less important than those already mentioned, and too numerous to be now distinctly noticed, follow from the fact that the good of being, and not the arbitrary will of God, is the foundation of moral obligation. But no one of them is or can be true, if his will be the foundation of obligation. Nor can any one, who consistently holds or believes that his will is the foundation of obligation, hold or believe any of the foregoing truths, nor indeed hold or believe any truth of the law or gospel. Nay, he cannot, if he be at all consistent, have even a correct conception of one truth of God's moral government. Let us see if he can.

(1.) Can he believe that God's will is wise and good, unless he admits and believes that it is subject to the law of his intelligence. Certainly he cannot; and to affirm that he can is a palpable contradiction. But if he admits that the divine will is governed by the law of the divine intelligence, this is denying that his will is the foundation of moral obligation. If he consistently holds that the divine will is the foundation of moral obligation, he must either deny that his will is any evidence of what is wise and good, or maintain the absurdity, that whatever God wills is wise and good, simply for the reason that God wills it, that if he willed the directly opposite of what he does, it would be equally wise and good. But this is an absurdity palpable enough to confound any one who has reason and moral agency.

(2.) If he consistently holds and believes that God's sovereign will is the foundation of moral obligation, he cannot regard him as having any moral character, for the reason, that there is no standard by which to judge of his willing and acting; for, by the supposition, he has no intelligent rule of action, and, therefore, can have no moral character, as he is not a moral agent, and can himself have no idea of the moral character of his own actions; for, in fact, upon the supposition in question, they have none. Any one, therefore, who holds that God is not a subject of moral law, imposed on him by his own reason, but, on the contrary, that his sovereign will is the foundation of moral obligation, must, if consistent, deny that he has moral character; and he must deny that God is an intelligent being, or else admit that he is infinitely wicked for not conforming his will to the law of his intelligence; and for not being guided by his infinite reason, instead of setting up an arbitrary sovereignty of will.

(3.) He who holds that God's sovereign will is the foundation of moral obligation, instead of being a revelation of obligation, if he be at all consistent, can neither have nor assign any good reason either for confidence in him, or submission to him. If God has no good and wise reasons for what he commands, why should we obey him? If he has no good and wise reasons for what he does, why should we submit to him?

Will it be answered, that if we refuse, we do it at our peril, and, therefore, it is wise to do so, even if he has no good reasons for what he does and requires? To this I answer that it is impossible, upon the supposition in question, either to obey or submit to God with the heart. If we can see no good reasons, but, on the other hand, are assured there are no good and wise reasons for the divine commands and conduct, it is rendered for ever naturally impossible, from the laws of our nature, to render anything more than feigned obedience and submission. Whenever we do not understand the reason for a divine requirement, or of a dispensation of divine Providence, the condition of heart-obedience to the one and submission to the other, is the assumption, that he has good and wise reasons for both. But assume the contrary, to wit, that he has no good and wise reasons for either, and you render heart-obedience, confidence, and submission impossible. It is perfectly plain, therefore, that he who consistently holds the theory in question, can neither conceive rightly of God, nor of anything respecting his law, gospel, or government, moral or providential. It is impossible for him to have an intelligent piety. His religion, if he have any, must be sheer superstition, inasmuch as he neither knows the true God, nor the true reason why he should love, believe, obey, or submit to him. In short, he neither knows, nor, if consistent, can know, anything of the nature of true religion, and has not so much as a right conception of what constitutes virtue.

But do not understand me as affirming, that none who profess to hold the theory in question have any true knowledge of God, or any true religion. No, they are happily so purely theorists on this subject, and so happily inconsistent with themselves, as to have, after all, a practical judgment in favour of the truth. They do not see the logical consequences of their theory, and of course do not embrace them, and this happy inconsistency is an indispensable condition of their salvation. There is no end to the absurdities to which this theory legitimately conducts us, as might be abundantly shown. But enough has been said, I trust, to put you on your guard against entertaining fundamentally false notions of God and of his government, and, consequently, of what constitutes true love, faith, obedience, and submission to him.

(4.) Another pernicious consequence of this theory is, that those who hold it will of course give false directions to inquiring sinners. Indeed, if they be ministers, the whole strain of their instructions must be false. They must, if consistent, not only represent God to their hearers as an absolute and arbitrary sovereign, but they must represent religion as consisting in submission to arbitrary sovereignty. If sinners inquire what they must do to be saved, such teachers must answer in substance, that they must cast themselves on the sovereignty of a God whose law is solely an expression of his arbitrary will, and whose every requirement and purpose is founded in his arbitrary sovereignty. This is the God whom they must love, in whom they must believe, and whom they must serve with a willing mind. How infinitely different such instructions are from those that would be given by one who knew the truth. Such an one would represent God to an inquirer as infinitely reasonable in all his requirements, and in all his ways. He would represent the sovereignty of God as consisting, not in arbitrary will, but in benevolence or love, directed by infinite knowledge in the promotion of the highest good of being. He would represent his law, not as the expression of his arbitrary will, but as having its foundation in the self-existent nature of God, and in the nature of moral agents; as being the very rule which is agreeable to the nature and relations of moral agents; that its requisitions are not arbitrary, but that the very thing, and only that, is required which is in the nature of things indispensable to the highest well-being of moral agents; that God's will does not originate obligation by any arbitrary fiat, but, on the contrary, that he requires what he does, because it is obligatory in the nature of things; that his requirement does not create right, but that he requires only that which is naturally and of necessity right. These and many such like things would irresistibly commend the character of God to the human intelligence, as worthy to be trusted, and as a being to whom submission is infallibly safe and infinitely reasonable.

But let the advocates of the theory under consideration but consistently press this theory upon the human intelligence, and the more they do so, the less reason can it perceive either for submitting to, or for trusting in, God. The fact is, the idea of arbitrary sovereignty is shocking and revolting, not only to the human heart, whether unregenerate or regenerate, but also to the human intelligence. Religion, based upon such a view of God's character and government, must be sheer superstition or gross fanaticism.

2. *I will next glance at the legitimate results of the theory of the selfish school.*

This theory teaches that our own interest is the foundation of moral obligation. In conversing with a distinguished defender of this philosophy, I requested the theorist to define moral obligation, and this was the definition given: "It is the obligation of a moral agent to seek his own happiness." Upon the practical bearing of this theory I remark,--

(1.) It tends directly and inevitably to the confirmation and despotism of sin in the soul. All sin, as we shall hereafter see, resolves itself into a spirit of self-seeking, or into a disposition to seek good to self, and upon condition of its relations to self, and not impartially and disinterestedly. This philosophy represents this spirit of self-seeking as virtue, and only requires that in our efforts to secure our own happiness, we should not interfere with the rights of others in seeking theirs. But here it may be asked, when these philosophers insist that virtue consists in willing our own happiness, and that, in seeking it, we are bound to have respect to the right and happiness of others, do they mean that we are to have a positive, or merely a negative regard to the rights and happiness of others? If they mean that we are to have a positive regard to others' rights and happiness, what is that but giving up their theory, and holding the true one, to wit, that the happiness of each one shall be esteemed according to its intrinsic value, for its own sake? That is, that we should be disinterestedly benevolent? But if they mean that we are to regard our neighbour's happiness negatively, that is, merely in not hindering it, what is this but the most absurd thing conceivable? What! I need not care positively for my neighbour's happiness, I need not will it as a good in itself, and for its own value, and yet I must take care not to hinder it. But why? Why, because it is intrinsically as valuable as my own. Now, if this is assigning any good reason why I ought not to hinder it, it is just because it is assigning a good reason why I ought positively and disinterestedly to will it; which is the same thing as the true theory. But if this is not a sufficient reason to impose obligation, positively and disinterestedly, to will it, it can never impose obligation to avoid hindering it, and I may then pursue my own happiness in my own way without the slightest regard to that of any other.

(2.) If this theory be true, sinful and holy beings are precisely alike, so far as ultimate intention is concerned, in which we have seen all moral character consists. They have precisely the same end in view, and the difference lies exclusively in the means they make use of to promote their own happiness. That sinners are seeking their own happiness, is a truth of consciousness to them. If moral agents are under obligation to seek their own happiness as the supreme end of life, it follows, that holy beings do so. So that holy and sinful beings are precisely alike, so far as the end for which they live is concerned; the only difference being, as has been observed, in the different means they make use of to promote this end. But observe, no reason can be assigned, in accordance with this philosophy, why they use different means, only that they differ in judgment in respect to them; for, let it be remembered, that this philosophy denies that we are bound to have a positive and disinterested regard to our neighbour's interest; and, of course, no benevolent considerations prevent the holy from using the same means as do the wicked. Where, therefore, is the difference in their character, although they do use this diversity of means? I say again, there is none. If this difference be not ascribed to disinterested benevolence in one, and to selfishness in the other, there really is and can be no difference in character between them. According to this theory nothing is right in itself, but the intention to promote my own happiness; and anything is right or wrong as it is intended to promote this result or otherwise. For let it be borne in mind that, if moral obligation respects strictly the ultimate intention only, it follows that ultimate intention alone is right or wrong in itself, and all other things are right or wrong as they proceed from a right or wrong ultimate intention. This must be true. Further, if my own happiness be the foundation of my moral obligation, it follows that this is the ultimate end at which I ought to aim, and that nothing is right or wrong in itself, in me, but this intention or its opposite; and furthermore, that everything else must be right or wrong in me as it proceeds from this, or from an opposite intention. I may do, and upon the supposition of the truth of this theory, I am bound to do, whatever will, in my estimation, promote my own happiness, and that, not because of its intrinsic value as a part of universal good, but because it is my own. To seek it as a part of universal happiness, and not because it is my own, would be to act on the true theory, or the theory of disinterested benevolence; which this theory denies.

(3.) Upon this theory I am not to love God supremely, and my neighbour as myself. If I love God and my neighbour, it is to be only as a means of promoting my own happiness, which is not loving them, but loving myself, supremely.

(4.) This theory teaches radical error in respect both to the character and government of God; and the consistent defenders of it cannot but hold fundamentally false views in respect to what constitutes holiness or virtue, either in God or man. They do not and cannot know the difference between virtue and vice. In short, all their views of religion cannot but be radically false and absurd.

(5.) The teachers of this theory must fatally mislead all who consistently follow out their instructions. In preaching they must, if consistent, appeal wholly to hope and fear, instead of addressing the heart through the intelligence. All their instructions must tend to confirm selfishness. All the motives they present, if consistent, tend only to stir up a zeal within them to secure their own happiness. If they pray, it will only be to implore the help of God to accomplish their selfish ends.

Indeed, it is impossible that this theory should not blind its advocates to the fundamental truths of morality and religion, and it is hardly conceivable that one could more efficiently serve the devil than by the inculcation of such a philosophy as this.

3. *Let us in the next place look into the natural and, if its advocates are consistent, necessary results of utilitarianism.*

This theory, you know, teaches that the utility of an action or of a choice, renders it obligatory. That is, I am bound to will good, not for the intrinsic value of the good; but because willing good tends to produce good--to choose an end, not because of the intrinsic value of the end, but because the willing of it tends to secure it. The absurdity of this theory has been sufficiently exposed. It only remains to notice its legitimate practical results.

(1.) It naturally, and, I may say, necessarily diverts the attention from that in which all morality consists, namely, the ultimate intention. Indeed, it seems that the abettors of this scheme must have in mind only outward action, or at most executive volitions, when they assert, that the tendency of an action is the reason of the obligation to put it forth. It seems impossible that they should assert that the reason for choosing an ultimate end should or could be the tendency of choice to secure it. This is so palpable a contradiction, that it is difficult to believe that they have ultimate intention in mind when they make the assertion. An ultimate end is ever chosen for its intrinsic value, and not because choice tends to secure it. How, then, is it possible for them to hold that the tendency of choice to secure an ultimate end is the reason of an obligation to make that choice? But if they have not their eye upon ultimate intention, when they speak of moral obligation, they are discoursing of that which is strictly without the pale of morality. I said in a former lecture, that the obligation to put forth volitions or outward actions to secure an ultimate end, must be conditionated upon the perceived tendency of such volitions and actions to secure that end, but while this tendency is the condition of the obligation to executive volition, or outward action, the obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of the end to secure which such volitions tend. So that utilitarianism gives a radically false account of the reason of moral obligation. A consistent utilitarian therefore cannot conceive rightly of the nature of morality or virtue. He cannot consistently hold that virtue consists in willing the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an ultimate end or for its own sake, but must, on the contrary, confine his ideas of moral obligation to volitions and outward actions, in which there is strictly no morality, and withal assign an entirely false reason for these, to wit, their tendency to secure an end, rather than the value of the end which they tend to secure.

This is the proper place to speak of the doctrine of expediency, a doctrine strenuously maintained by utilitarians, and as strenuously opposed by rightarians. It is this, that whatever is expedient is right, for the reason, that the expediency of an action or measure is the foundation of the obligation to put forth that action, or adopt that measure. It is easy to see that this is just equivalent to saying, that the utility of an action or measure is the reason of the obligation to put forth that action or adopt that measure. But, as we have seen, utility, tendency, expediency, is only a condition of the obligation, to put forth outward action or executive volition, but never the foundation of the obligation,--that always being the intrinsic value of the end to which the volition, action, or measure, sustains the relation of a means. I do not wonder that rightarians object to this, although I do wonder at the reason which, if consistent, they must assign for this obligation, to wit, that any action or volition, (ultimate intention excepted,) can be right or wrong in itself, irrespective of its expediency or utility. This is absurd enough, and flatly contradicts the doctrine of rightarians themselves, that moral obligation strictly belongs only to ultimate intention. If moral obligation belongs only to ultimate intention, then nothing but ultimate intention can be right or wrong in itself. And every thing else, that is, all executive volitions and outward actions must be right or wrong, (in the only sense in which moral character can be predicated of them,) as they proceed from a right or wrong ultimate intention. This is the only form in which rightarians can consistently admit the doctrine of expediency, viz., that it relates exclusively to executive volitions and outward actions. And this they can admit only upon the assumption, that executive volitions and outward actions have strictly no moral character in themselves, but are right or wrong only as, and because, they proceed necessarily from a right or wrong ultimate intention. All schools that hold this doctrine, to wit, that moral obligation respects the ultimate intention only, must, if consistent, deny that any thing can be either right or wrong *per se*, but ultimate intention. Further, they must maintain, that utility, expediency, or tendency to promote the ultimate end upon which ultimate intention terminates, is always a condition of the obligation to put forth those volitions and actions that sustain to this end the relation of means. And still further, they must maintain, that the obligation to use those means must be founded in the value of the end, and not in the tendency of the means to secure it; for unless the end be intrinsically valuable, the tendency of means to secure it can impose no obligation to use them. Tendency, utility, expediency, then, are only conditions of the obligation to use any given means, but never the foundation of obligation. An action or executive volition is not obligatory, as utilitarians say, because, and for the reason, that it is useful or expedient, but merely upon condition that it is so. The obligation in respect to outward action is always founded in the value of the end to which this action sustains the relation of a means, and the obligation is conditionated upon the perceived tendency of the means to secure that end. Expediency can never have respect to the choice of an ultimate end, or to that in which moral character consists, to wit, ultimate intention. The end is to be chosen for its own sake. Ultimate intention is right or wrong in itself, and no questions of utility, expediency, or tendency, have any thing to do with the obligation to put forth ultimate intention, there being only one ultimate reason for this, namely, the intrinsic value of the end itself. It is true, then, that whatever is expedient is right, not for that reason, but only upon that condition. The inquiry then, is it expedient? in respect to outward action, is always proper; for upon this condition does obligation to outward action turn. But in respect to ultimate intention, or the choice of an ultimate end, an inquiry into the expediency of this choice or intention is never proper, the obligation being founded alone upon the perceived and intrinsic value of the end, and the obligation being without any condition whatever, except the possession of the powers of moral agency, with the perception of the end upon which intention ought to terminate, namely, the good of universal being. But the mistake of the utilitarian, that expediency is the foundation of moral obligation, is fundamental, for, in fact, it cannot be so in any case whatever. I have said, and here repeat, that all schools that hold that moral obligation respects ultimate intention only, must, if consistent, maintain that perceived utility, expediency, &c., is a condition of obligation to put forth any outward action, or, which is the same thing, to use any means to secure the end of benevolence. Therefore, in practice or in daily life, the true doctrine of expediency must of necessity have a place. The railers against expediency, therefore, know not what they say nor whereof they affirm. It is, however, impossible to proceed in practice upon the utilitarian philosophy. This teaches that the tendency of an action to secure good, and not the intrinsic value of the good, is the foundation of the obligation to put forth that action. But this is too absurd for practice. For, unless the intrinsic value of the end be assumed as the foundation of the obligation to choose it, it is impossible to affirm obligation to put forth an action to secure that end. The folly and the danger of utilitarianism is, that it overlooks the true foundation of moral obligation, and consequently the true nature of virtue or holiness. A consistent utilitarian cannot conceive rightly of either.

The teachings of a consistent utilitarian must of necessity abound with pernicious error. Instead of representing virtue as consisting in disinterested benevolence, or in the consecration of the soul to the highest good of being in general, for its own sake, it must represent it as consisting wholly in using means to promote good:--that is, as consisting wholly in executing volitions and outward actions, which, strictly speaking, have no moral character in them. Thus consistent utilitarianism inculcates fundamentally false ideas of the nature of virtue. Of course it must teach equally erroneous ideas respecting the character of God--the spirit and the meaning of his law--the nature of repentance--of sin--of regeneration--and, in short, of every practical doctrine of the Bible.

LECTURE XIII.

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF DIFFERENT THEORIES.

4. *Practical bearings and tendency of rightarianism.*

It will be recollected that this philosophy teaches that right is the foundation of moral obligation. With its advocates, virtue consists in willing the right for the sake of the right, instead of willing the good for the sake of the good, or, more strictly, in willing the good for the sake of the right, and not for the sake of the good; or, as we have seen, the foundation of obligation consists in the relation of intrinsic fitness existing between the choice and the good. The right is the ultimate end to be aimed at in all things, instead of the highest good of being for its own sake. From such a theory the following consequences must flow. I speak only of consistent rightarianism.

(1.) The law of benevolence undeniably requires the good of being to be willed for its own sake. But this theory is directly opposed to this, and maintains that the good should be chosen because it is right, and not because of the nature of the good. It overlooks the fact, that the choice of the good would not be right, did not the nature of the good create the obligation to choose it for its own sake, and consequently originate the relation of fitness or rightness between the choice and the good.

But if the rightarian theory is true, there is a law of right entirely distinct from, and opposed to, the law of love or benevolence. The advocates of this theory often assume, perhaps unwittingly, the existence of such a law. They speak of multitudes of things as being right or wrong in themselves, entirely independent of the law of benevolence. Nay, they go so far as to affirm it conceivable that doing right might necessarily tend to, and result in, universal misery; and that, in such a case, we should be under obligation to do right, or will right, or intend right, although universal misery should be the necessary result. This assumes and affirms that right has no necessary relation to willing the highest good of being for its own sake, or, what is the same thing, that the law of right is not only distinct from the law of benevolence, but is directly opposed to it; that a moral agent may be under obligation to will as an ultimate end that which he knows will and must, by a law of necessity, promote and secure universal misery. Rightarians sternly maintain that right would be right, and that virtue would be virtue, although this result were a necessary consequence. What is this but maintaining that moral law may require moral agents to set their hearts upon and consecrate themselves to that which is necessarily subversive of the well-being of the entire universe? And what is this but assuming that that may be moral law that requires a course of willing and acting entirely inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral agents? Thus virtue and benevolence not only may be different but opposite things; of course, according to this, benevolence may be sin. This is not only opposed to our reason, but a more capital or mischievous error in morals or philosophy can hardly be conceived.

Nothing is or can be right, as an ultimate choice, but benevolence. Nothing is or can be moral law but that which requires that course of willing and acting that tends to secure the highest well-being of God and the universe. Nothing can be moral law but that which requires that the highest well-being of God and of the universe should be chosen as an ultimate end. If benevolence is right, this must be self-evident. Rightarianism overlooks and misrepresents the very nature of moral law. Let any one contemplate the grossness of the absurdity that maintains, that moral law may require a course of willing that necessarily results in universal and perfect misery. What then, it may be asked, has moral law to do with the nature and relations of moral agents, except to mock, insult, and trample them under foot? Moral law is, and must be, the law of nature, that is, suited to the nature and relations of moral agents. But can that law be suited to the nature and relations of moral agents that requires a course of action necessarily resulting in universal misery? Rightarianism then, not only overlooks, but flatly contradicts, the very nature of moral law, and sets up a law of right in direct opposition to the law of nature.

(2.) This philosophy tends naturally to fanaticism. Conceiving as it does of right as distinct from, and often opposed to, benevolence, it scoffs or rails at the idea of inquiring what the highest good evidently demands. It insists that such and such things are right or wrong in themselves, entirely irrespective of what the highest good demands. Having thus in mind a law of right distinct from, and perhaps, opposed to benevolence, what frightful conduct may not this philosophy lead to? This is indeed the law of fanaticism. The tendency of this philosophy is illustrated in the spirit of many reformers, who are bitterly contending for the right, which, after all, is to do nobody any good.

(3.) This philosophy teaches a false morality and a false religion. It exalts right above God, and represents virtue as consisting in the love of right instead of the love of God. It exhorts men to will the right for the sake of the right, instead of the good of being for the sake of the good, or for the sake of being. It teaches us to inquire, How shall I do right? instead of, How shall I do good? What is right? instead of, What will most promote the good of the universe? Now that which is most promotive of the highest good of being, is right. To intend the highest well-being of God and of the universe, is right. To use the necessary means to promote this end, is right; and whatever in the use of means or in outward action is right, is so for this reason, namely, that it is designed to promote the highest well-being of God and of the universe. To ascertain, then, what is right, we must inquire, not into a mere abstraction, but what is intended. Or if we would know what is duty, or what would be right in us, we must understand that to intend the highest well-being of the universe as an end, is right and duty; and that in practice every thing is duty or right that is honestly intended to secure this. Thus and thus only can we ascertain what is right in intention, and what is right in the outward life. But rightarianism points out an opposite course. It says: Will the right for the sake of the right, that is, as an end; and in respect to means, inquire not what is manifestly for the highest good of being, for with this you have nothing to do; your business is to will the right for the sake of the right. If you inquire how you are to know what is right, it does not direct you to the law of benevolence as the only standard, but it directs you to an abstract idea of right, as an ultimate rule, having no regard to the law of benevolence or love. It tells you that right is right, because it is right; and not that right is conformity to the law of benevolence, and right for this reason. The truth is that subjective right, or right in practice, is only a quality of disinterested benevolence. But the philosophy in question denies this, and holds that, so far from being a quality of benevolence, it must consist in willing the good for the sake of the right. Now certainly such teaching is radically false, and subversive of all sound morality and true religion.

(4.) As we have formerly seen, this philosophy does not represent virtue as consisting in the love of God, or of Christ, or our neighbour. Consistency must require the abettors of this scheme to give fundamentally false instructions to inquiring sinners. Instead of representing God and all holy beings as devoted to the public good, and instead of exhorting sinners to love God and their neighbour, this philosophy must represent God and holy beings as consecrated to right for the sake of the right; and must exhort sinners, who ask what they shall do to be saved, to will the right for the sake of the right, to love the right, to deify right, and fall down and worship it. There is much of this false morality and religion in the world and in the church. Infidels are great sticklers for this religion, and often exhibit as much of it as do some rightarian professors of religion. It is a severe, stern, loveless, Godless, Christless philosophy, and nothing but happy inconsistency prevents its advocates from manifesting it in this light to the world. I have already, in a former lecture, shown that this theory is identical with that which represents the idea of duty as the foundation of moral obligation, and that it gives the same instructions to inquiring sinners. It exhorts them to resolve to do duty, to resolve to serve the Lord, to make up their minds at all times to do right, to resolve to give their hearts to God, to resolve to conform in all things to right, &c. The absurdity and danger of such instructions were sufficiently exposed in the lecture referred to. (See Lecture VIII. 8-Ed.) The law of right, when conceived of as distinct from, or opposed to, the law of benevolence, is a perfect strait-jacket, an iron collar, a snare of death.

This philosophy represents all war, all slavery, and many things as wrong *per se*, without insisting upon such a definition of those things as necessarily implies selfishness. Any thing whatever is wrong in itself that includes and implies selfishness, and nothing else is or can be. All war waged for selfish purposes is wrong *per se*. But war waged for benevolent purposes, or war required by the law of benevolence, and engaged in with a benevolent design, is neither wrong in itself, nor wrong in any proper sense. All holding men in bondage from selfish motives is wrong in itself, but holding men in bondage in obedience to the law of benevolence is not wrong but right. And so it is with every thing else. Therefore, where it is insisted that all war and all slavery, or any thing else is wrong in itself, such a definition of things must be insisted on as necessarily implies selfishness. But consistent rightarianism will insist that all war, all slavery, and all of many other things, is wrong in itself, without regard to its being a violation of the law of benevolence. This is consistent with such philosophy, but it is most false and absurd in fact. Indeed, any philosophy that assumes the existence of a law of right distinct from, and possibly opposed to, the law of benevolence, must teach many doctrines at war with both reason and revelation. It sets men in chase of a philosophical abstraction as the supreme end of life, instead of the concrete reality of the highest well-being of God and the universe. It preys upon the human soul, and turns into solid iron all the tender sensibilities of our being. Do but contemplate a human being supremely devoted to an abstraction, as the end of human life. He wills the right for the sake of the right. Or, more strictly, he wills the good of being, not from any regard to being, but because of the relation of intrinsic fitness or rightness existing between choice and its object. For this he lives, and moves, and has his being. What sort of religion is this? I wish not to be understood as holding, or insinuating, that professed rightarians universally, or even generally, pursue their theory to its legitimate boundary, and that they manifest the spirit that it naturally begets. No. I am most happy in acknowledging that with many, and perhaps with most of them, it is so purely a theory, that they are not greatly influenced by it in practice. Many of them I regard as the excellent of the earth, and I am happy to count them among my dearest and most valued friends. But I speak of the philosophy, with its natural results when embraced, not merely as a theory, but when adopted by the heart as the rule of life. It is only in such cases that its natural and legitimate fruits appear. Only let it be borne in mind that right is conformity to moral law, that moral law is the law of nature, or the law founded in the nature and relations of moral agents, the law that requires just that course of willing and action that tends naturally to secure the highest well-being of all moral agents, that requires this course of willing and acting for the sake of the end in which it naturally and governmentally results--and requires that this end shall be aimed at or intended by all moral agents as the supreme good and the only ultimate end of life;--I say, only let these truths be borne in mind, and you will never talk of a right, or a virtue, or a law, obedience to which necessarily results in universal misery; nor will you conceive that such a thing is possible.

5. *The philosophy that comes next under review is that which teaches that the divine goodness, or moral excellence, is the foundation of moral obligation.*

The practical tendency of this philosophy is to inculcate and develope a false idea of what constitutes virtue. It inevitably leads its advocates to regard religion as consisting in a mere feeling of complacency in God. It overlooks, and, if consistent, must overlook the fact that all true morality and religion consist in benevolence, or in willing the highest well-being of God and the universe as an ultimate end. It must represent true religion either as a phenomenon of the sensibility, or as consisting in willing the goodness or benevolence of God as an end; either of which is radical error. This scheme does not, and cannot, rightly represent either the character of God, or the nature and spirit of his law and government. In teaching, it presents the benevolence of God, not as an inducement to benevolence in us, that is, not as a means of leading us to consider and adopt the same end of life to which God is consecrated, but as being the end to which we are to consecrate ourselves. It holds forth the goodness of God, not for the sake of setting the great end he has in view strongly before us, and inducing us to become like him in consecrating ourselves to the same end, to wit, the highest good of being; but it absurdly insists that his goodness is the foundation of our obligation, which is the same thing as to insist that we are to make his goodness the ultimate end of life, instead of that end at which God aims, and aiming at which constitutes his virtue. Instead of representing the benevolence of God as clearly revealing our obligation to be benevolent, it represents his benevolence as being the foundation of obligation. Obligation to what? Not to will good, certainly; for it is a gross contradiction, as we have repeatedly seen, to say that I am under obligation to will good to God, as an ultimate end, or for its own sake, yet not for this reason, but because God is good. This philosophy, if consistent, must present the goodness of God as a means of awakening emotions of complacency in God, and not for the purpose of making us benevolent, for it does not regard religion as consisting in benevolence, but in a love to God for his goodness, which can be nothing else than a feeling of complacency. But this is radical error. The practical bearings of this theory are well illustrated in the arguments used to support it, as stated and refuted when examining its claims in a former lecture. The fact is, it misrepresents the character, law, and government of God, and, of necessity, the nature of true religion. It harps perpetually on the goodness of God as the sole reason for loving him, which demonstrates that benevolence does not, and consistently cannot, enter into its idea of virtue or true religion.

There is, no doubt, a vast amount of spurious, selfish religion in the world growing out of this philosophy. Many love God because they regard him as loving them, as being their benefactor and particular friend. They are grateful for favours bestowed on self. But they forget the philosophy and theology of Christ, who said; "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? Do not even sinners love those that love them?" They seem to have no idea of a religion of disinterested benevolence. Many of those who hold this view regard religion as consisting in involuntary emotions and affections, and seem disposed to love God in proportion as they imagine him to regard them as his especial favourites. They regard his fancied partiality to them as an instance of particular goodness in him. They want to feel emotions of complacency in God, in view of his particular regard to them, rather than to sympathize with his universal benevolence.

6. *The next theory to be noticed is that which teaches that moral order is the foundation of moral obligation.*

The practical objection to this theory is, that it presents a totally wrong end as the great object of life. According to the teachings of this school, moral order is that intrinsically valuable end at which all moral agents ought to aim, and to which they are bound to consecrate themselves. If by moral order the highest good of being is intended, this philosophy is only another name for the true one. But if, as I suppose is the fact, by moral order no such thing as the highest good of God and the universe is intended, then the theory is false, and cannot teach other than pernicious error. It must misrepresent God, his law and government, and of course must hold radically false views in respect to the nature of holiness and sin. It holds up an abstraction as the end of life, and exalts moral order above all that is called God. It teaches that men ought to love moral order with all the heart, and with all the soul. But the theory is sheer nonsense, as was shown in its place. Its practical bearing is only to bewilder and confuse the mind. The idea that benevolence is true religion, can have no practical influence on a mind that has consistently embraced this theory of moral order. Any philosophy that obscures this idea of benevolence, and confuses the mind in respect to the true end of life, is fatal to virtue and to salvation.

Again: The theory must overlook or deny the fact that moral obligation respects the ultimate intention; for it seems impossible that any one possessing reason can suppose, that moral order can be the end to which moral beings ought to consecrate themselves. The absurdity of the theory itself was sufficiently exposed in a former lecture. Its practical bearings and tendency are only to introduce confusion into all our ideas of moral law and moral government.

7. *We next come to the theory that moral obligation is founded in the nature and relations of moral agents.*

The first objection to this theory is, that it confounds the conditions of moral obligation with its foundation. The nature and relations of moral beings are certainly conditions of their obligation to will each other's good. But it is absolutely childish to affirm that the obligation to will each other's good is not founded in the value of the good, but in the nature and relations of moral beings. But for the intrinsic value of their good, their nature and relations would be no reason at all why they should will good rather than evil to each other. To represent the nature and relations of moral agents as the foundation of moral obligation, is to mystify and misrepresent the whole subject of moral law, moral government, moral obligation, the nature of sin and holiness, and produce confusion in all our thoughts on moral subjects. What but grossest error can find a lodgment in that mind that consistently regards the nature and relations of moral beings as the foundation of moral obligation? If this be the true theory, then the nature and relations of moral agents is the ultimate end to which moral agents are bound to consecrate themselves. Their nature and relations is the intrinsically valuable end which we are bound to choose for its own sake. This is absurd. But if this philosophy misrepresents the foundation of moral obligation, it can consistently teach absolutely nothing but error on the whole subject of morals and religion. If it mistakes the end to be intended by moral agents, it errs on the fundamental principle of all morals and religion. As all true morality and true religion consist exclusively in willing the right end, if this end be mistaken, the error is fatal. It is, then, no light thing to hold that moral obligation is founded in the nature and relations of moral beings. Such statements are a great deal worse than nonsense--they are radical error on the most important subject in the world. What consistency can there be in the views of one who holds this theory? What ideas must he have of moral law, and of everything else connected with practical theology? Instead of willing the highest good of God and of being, he must hold himself under obligation to will the nature and relations of moral beings as an ultimate end.

8. *The next theory in order is that which teaches that the idea of duty is the foundation of moral obligation.*

But as I sufficiently exposed the tendency and practical bearings of this theory in a former lecture, I will not repeat here, but pass to the consideration of another theory.

9. *The complexity of the foundation of moral obligation.*

In respect to the practical bearings of this theory, I remark,--

(1.) The reason that induces choice is the real object chosen. If, for example, the value of an object induce the choice of that object, the valuable is the real object chosen. If the rightness of a choice of an object induce choice, then the right is the real object chosen. If the virtuousness of an object induce choice, then virtue is the real object chosen.

(2.) Whatever really influences the mind in choosing must be an object chosen. Thus if the mind have various reasons for a choice, it will choose various ends or objects.

(3.) If the foundation of moral obligation be not a unit, moral action or intention cannot be simple. If anything else than the intrinsically valuable to being is, or can be, the foundation of moral obligation, then this thing, whatever it is, is to be chosen for its own sake. If right, justice, truth, virtue, or anything else is to be chosen as an end, then just so much regard must be had to them, as their nature and importance demand. If the good or valuable to being be an ultimate good, and truth, and justice, and virtue are also to be chosen each for its own sake, here we meet with this difficulty, namely, that the good or valuable is one end to be chosen, and right another, and virtue another, and truth another, and justice another, and the beautiful another, and so on. Now if this be so, moral obligation cannot be a unit, nor can moral action be simple. If there be more ultimate considerations than one that ought to have influence in deciding choice, the choice is not right, unless each consideration that ought to have weight, really has the influence due to it in deciding choice. If each consideration has not its due regard, the choice certainly is not what it ought to be. In other words, all the things that ought to be chosen for their own sakes are not chosen. Indeed, it is self-evident that, if there is complexity in the ultimate end or end to be chosen, there must be the same complexity in the choice, or the choice is not what it ought to be; and if several considerations ought to influence ultimate choice, then there are so many distinct ultimate ends. If this is so, then each of them must have its due regard in every case of virtuous intention. But who then could ever tell whether he allowed to each exactly the relative influence it ought to have? This would confound and stultify the whole subject of moral obligation. This theory virtually and flatly contradicts the law of God and the repeated declaration that love to God and our neighbour is the whole of virtue. What! does God say that all the law is fulfilled in one word--love, that is, love to God and our neighbour? and shall a Christian philosopher overlook this, and insist that we ought to love not only God and our neighbour, but to will the right, and the true, and the just, and the beautiful, and multitudes of such like things for their own sake? The law of God makes and know only one ultimate end, and shall this philosophy be allowed to confuse us by teaching that there are many ultimate ends, that we ought to will each for its own sake?

10. *Lastly, I come to the consideration of the practical bearings of what I regard as the true theory of the foundation of moral obligation, namely, that the intrinsic nature and value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe is the sole foundation of moral obligation.*

Upon this philosophy I remark--

1. That if this be true, the whole subject of moral obligation is perfectly simple and intelligible; so plain, indeed, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein."

(1.) Upon this theory, moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate end.

(2.) This end is a clear, simple unit.

(3.) It is necessarily known to every moral agent.

(4.) The choice of this end is the whole of virtue.

(5.) It is impossible to sin while this end is sincerely intended with all the heart and with all the soul.

(6.) Upon this theory, every moral agent knows in every possible instance what is right, and can never mistake his real duty.

We may state it thus--

His duty is to will this end with all the known conditions and means thereof. Intending this end with a single eye, and doing what appears to him, with all the light he can obtain, to be in the highest degree calculated to secure this end, he really does his duty. If in this case he is mistaken in regard to what is the best means of securing this end, still, with a benevolent intention, he does not sin. He has done right, for he has intended as he ought, and acted outwardly as he thought was the path of duty, under the best light he could obtain. This, then, was his duty. He did not mistake his duty; because it was duty to intend as he intended, and under the circumstances, to act as he acted. How else should he have acted?

(7.) This ultimate intention is right, and nothing else is right, more or less.

(8.) Right and wrong respect ultimate intention only, and are always the same. Right can be predicated only of good will, and wrong only of selfishness. These are fixed and permanent. If a moral agent can know what end he aims at or lives for, he can know, and cannot but know, at all times, whether he is right or wrong. All that upon this theory a moral agent needs to be certain of is, whether he lives for the right end, and this, if at all honest, or if dishonest, he really cannot but know. If he would ask, what is right or what is duty at any time, he need not wait for a reply. It is right for him to intend the highest good of being as an end. If he honestly does this, he cannot mistake his duty, for in doing this he really performs the whole of duty. With this honest intention, it is impossible that he should not use the means to promote this end, according to the best light he has; and this is right. A single eye to the highest good of God and the universe, is the whole of morality, strictly considered; and, upon this theory, moral law, moral government, moral obligation, virtue, vice, and the whole subject of morals and religion are the perfection of simplicity. If this theory be true, no honest mind ever mistook the path of duty. To intend the highest good of being is right and is duty. No mind is honest that is not steadily pursuing this end. But in the honest pursuit of this end there can be no sin, no mistaking the path of duty. That is and must be the path of duty that really appears to a benevolent mind to be so. That is, it must be his duty to act in conformity with his honest convictions. This is duty, this is right. So, upon this theory, no one who is truly honest in pursuing the highest good of being, ever did or can mistake his duty in any such sense as to commit sin. I have spoken with great plainness, and perhaps with some severity, of the several systems of error, as I cannot but regard them upon the most fundamental and important of subjects; not certainly from any want of love to those who hold them, but from a concern, long cherished and growing upon me, for the honour of truth and for the good of being. Should any of you ever take the trouble to look into this subject, in its length and breadth, and read the various systems, and take the trouble to trace out their practical results, as actually developed in the opinions and practices of men, you certainly would not be at a loss to account for the theological and philosophical fogs that so bewilder the world. How can it be otherwise, while such confusion of opinion prevails upon the fundamental question of morals and religion?

How is it, that there is so much profession and so little real practical benevolence in the world? Multitudes of professed Christians seem to have no conception that benevolence constitutes true religion; that nothing else does; and that selfishness is sin, and totally incompatible with religion. They live on in their self-indulgences, and dream of heaven. This could not be, if the true idea of religion, as consisting in sympathy with the benevolence of God, was fully developed in their minds.

I need not dwell upon the practical bearings of the other theories, which I have examined; what I have said may suffice, as an illustration of the importance of being well-established in this fundamental truth. It is affecting to see what conceptions multitudes entertain in regard to the real spirit and meaning of the law and gospel of God, and, consequently, of the nature of holiness.

In dismissing this subject, I would remark, that any system of moral philosophy that does not correctly define a moral action, and the real ground of obligation, must be fundamentally defective. Nay, if consistent, it must be highly pernicious and dangerous. But let moral action be clearly and correctly defined, let the true ground of obligation be clearly and correctly stated; and let both these be kept constantly in view, and such a system would be of incalculable value. It would be throughout intelligible, and force conviction upon every intelligent reader. But I am not aware that any such system exists. So far as I know, they are all faulty, either in their definition of a moral action, and do not fasten the eye upon the ultimate intention, and keep it there as being the seat of moral character, and that from which the character of all our actions is derived; or they soon forget this, and treat mere executive acts as right or wrong, without reference to the ultimate intention. I believe they have all failed in not clearly defining the true ground of obligation, and, consequently, are faulty in their definition of virtue. It is truly wonderful, that those who hold with President Edwards, that virtue consists in disinterested benevolence, should also insist that right is the ground of obligation. This is a contradiction. If right be the true ground of obligation, then benevolence can never be right. Benevolence consists in willing the good of being for the sake of the good; in consecration to the good of being in general, for its own sake. But if right be the ground of obligation, it is universally duty to will right instead of the good of being as an end.

According to this theory, benevolence is sin. It is consecration to the wrong end. Nay, if any other theory than the one I have endeavoured to maintain be the true one, then disinterested benevolence is sin. But if the benevolence theory be the true one, then conformity to every other theory is sin. It is undeniable, that virtue must belong to the ultimate intention or choice of the end of life. The character must be as the end is for which a moral agent lives. The inquiry, then, must be fundamental, What is the right end of life? A mistake here is fatal to virtue.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XIV.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

I. IN WHAT SENSE OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW CANNOT BE PARTIAL.

In discussing this question I must--

1. Show what constitutes obedience to moral law.

2. That obedience cannot be partial in the sense that the subject ever does, or can, partly obey, and partly disobey, at the same time.

1. *What constitutes obedience to moral law.*

We have seen in former lectures, that disinterested benevolence is all that the spirit of moral law requires, that is, that the love which it requires to God and our neighbour is good-willing, willing the highest good, or well-being of God, and of being in general, as an end, or for its own sake; that this willing is a consecration of all the powers, so far as they are under the control of the will, to this end. Entire consecration to this end must of course constitute obedience to the moral law. The next question is: Can consecration to this end be real, and yet partial in the sense of not being entire, for the time being? This conducts us to the second proposition, namely,--

2. *That obedience cannot be partial in the sense that the subject ever does, or can, partly obey, and partly disobey, at the same time.*

That is, consecration, to be real, must be, for the time being, entire and universal. It will be seen, that this discussion respects the simplicity of moral action, that is whether the choices of the will that have any degree of conformity to moral law, are always, and necessarily, wholly conformed, or wholly disconformed to it. There are two distinct branches to this inquiry.

(1.) The one is, Can the will at the same time make opposite choices? Can it choose the highest good of being as an ultimate end, and at the same time choose any other ultimate end, or make any choices whatever, inconsistent with this ultimate choice?

(2.) The second branch of this inquiry respects the strength or intensity of the choice. Suppose but one ultimate choice can exist at the same time, may not that choice be less efficient and intense than it ought to be?

Let us take up these two inquires in their order.

(1.) Can the will at the same time choose opposite and conflicting ultimate ends? While one ultimate end is chosen can the will choose anything inconsistent with this end? In reply to the first branch of this inquiry I observe,--

(*a.*) That the choice of an ultimate end is, and must be, the supreme preference of the mind. Sin is the supreme preference of self-gratification. Holiness is the supreme preference of the good of being. Can then two supreme preferences co-exist in the same mind? It is plainly impossible to make opposite choices at the same time, that is, to choose opposite and conflicting ultimate ends.

(*b.*) All intelligent choice, as has been formerly shown, must respect ends or means. Choice is synonymous with intention. If there is a choice or intention, of necessity something must be chosen or intended. This something must be chosen for its own sake, or as an end, or for the sake of something else to which it sustains the relation of a means. To deny this were to deny that the choice is intelligent. But we are speaking of no other than intelligent choice, or the choice of a moral agent.

(*c.*) This conducts us to the inevitable conclusion--that no choice whatever can be made inconsistent with the present choice of an ultimate end. The mind cannot choose one ultimate end, and choose at the same time another ultimate end. But if this cannot be, it is plain that it cannot choose one ultimate end, and at the same time, while in the exercise of that choice, choose the means to secure some other ultimate end, which other end is not chosen. But if all choice must necessarily respect ends or means, and if the mind can choose but one ultimate end at a time, it follows that, while in the exercise of one choice, or while in the choice of one ultimate end, the mind cannot choose, for the time being, anything inconsistent with that choice. The mind, in the choice of an ultimate end, is shut up to the necessity of willing the means to accomplish that end; and before it can possibly will means to secure any other ultimate end, it must change its choice of an end. If, for example, the soul choose the highest will-being of God and the universe as an ultimate end, it cannot while it continues to choose that end, use or choose the means to effect any other end. It cannot, while this choice continues, choose self-gratification, or anything else, as an ultimate end, nor can it put forth any volition whatever known to be inconsistent with this end. Nay, it can put forth no intelligent volition whatever that is not designed to secure this end. The only possible choice inconsistent with this end is the choice of another ultimate end. When this is done, other means can be used or chosen, and not before. This, then, is plain, to wit, that obedience to moral law cannot be partial, in the sense either that the mind can choose two opposite ultimate ends at the same time, or that it can choose one ultimate end, and at the same time use or choose means to secure any other ultimate end. It "cannot serve God and mammon." It cannot will the good of being as an ultimate end, and at the same time will self-gratification as an ultimate end. In other words, it cannot be selfish and benevolent at the same time. It cannot choose as an ultimate end the highest good of being, and at the same time choose to gratify self as an ultimate end. Until self-gratification is chosen as an end, the mind cannot will the means of self-gratification. This disposes of the first branch of the inquiry.

(2.) The second branch of the inquiry respects the strength or intensity of the choice.

May not the choice of an end be real and yet have less than the required strength or intensity? The inquiry resolves itself into this: can the mind honestly intend or choose an ultimate end, and yet not choose it with all the strength or intensity which is required, or with which it ought to choose it? Now what degree of strength is demanded? By what criterion is this question to be settled? It cannot be that the degree of intensity required is equal to the real value of the end chosen, for this is infinite. The value of the highest well-being of God and the universe is infinite. But a finite being cannot be under obligation to exert infinite strength. The law requires him only to exert his own strength. But does he, or may he, not choose the right end, but with less than all his strength? All his strength lies in his will; the question, therefore, is, may he not will it honestly, and yet at the same time withhold a part of the strength of his will? No one can presume that the choice can be acceptable unless it be honest. Can it be honest, and yet less intense and energetic than it ought to be?

We have seen in a former lecture that the perception of an end is a condition of moral obligation to choose that end. I now remark that, as light in respect to the end is the condition of the obligation, so the degree of obligation cannot exceed the degree of light. That is, the mind must apprehend the valuable as a condition of the obligation to will it. The degree of the obligation must be just equal to the mind's honest estimate of the value of the end. The degree of the obligation must vary as the light varies. This is the doctrine of the Bible and of reason. If this is so, it follows that the mind is honest when, and only when, it devotes its strength to the end in view, with an intensity just proportioned to its present light, or estimate of the value of that end.

We have seen that the mind cannot will anything inconsistent with a present ultimate choice. If, therefore, the end is not chosen with an energy and intensity equal to the present light, it cannot be because a part of the strength is employed in some other choice. If all the strength is not given to this object, it must be because some part of it is voluntarily withholden. That is, I choose the end, but not with all my strength, or I choose the end, but choose not to choose it with all my strength. Is this an honest choice, provided the end appears to me to be worthy of all my strength? Certainly it is not honest.

But again: it is absurd to affirm that I choose an ultimate end, and yet do not consecrate to it all my strength. The choice of any ultimate end implies that that is the thing, and the only thing, for which we live and act; that we aim at, and live for nothing else, for the time being. Now what is intended by the assertion, that I may honestly choose an ultimate end, and yet with less strength or intensity than I ought? Is it intended that I can honestly choose an ultimate end, and yet not at every moment keep my will upon the strain, and will at every moment with the utmost possible intensity? If this be the meaning, I grant that it may be so. But I at the same time contend, that the law of God does not require that the will, or any other faculty, should be at every moment upon the strain, and the whole strength exerted at every moment. If it does, it is manifest that even Christ did not obey it. I insist that the moral law requires nothing more than honesty of intention, and assumes that honesty of intention will and must secure just that degree of intensity which, from time to time, the mind in its best judgment sees to be demanded. The Bible everywhere assumes that sincerity or honesty of intention is moral perfection; that it is obedience to the law. The terms sincerity and perfection in scripture language are synonymous. Uprightness, sincerity, holiness, honesty, perfection, are words of the same meaning in Bible language.

2. Again: it seems to be intuitively certain that if the mind chooses its ultimate end, it must in the very act of choice consecrate all its time, and strength, and being, to that end; and at every moment, while the choice remains, choose and act with an intensity in precise conformity with its ability and the best light it has. The intensity of the choice, and the strenuousness of its efforts to secure the end chosen, must, if the intention be sincere, correspond with the view which the soul has of the importance of the end chosen. It does not seem possible that the choice or intention should be real and honest unless this is so. To will at every moment with the utmost strength and intensity is not only impossible, but, were it possible to do so, could not be in accordance with the soul's convictions of duty. The irresistible judgment of the mind is, that the intensity of its action should not exceed the bound of endurance; that the energies of both soul and body should be so husbanded, as to be able to accomplish the most good upon the whole, and not in a given moment.

But to return to the question:--does the law of God require simply uprightness of intention? or does it require not only uprightness, but also a certain degree of intensity in the intention? Is it satisfied with simple sincerity or uprightness of intention, or does it require that the highest possible intensity of choice shall exist at every moment? When it requires that we should love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength, does it mean that all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, shall be consecrated to this end, and be used up, from moment to moment, and from hour to hour, according to the best judgment which the mind can form of the necessity and expediency of strenuousness of effort? or does it mean that all the faculties of soul and body shall be at every moment on the strain to the uttermost? Does it mean that the whole being is to be consecrated to, and used up for, God with the best economy of which the soul is capable? or does it require that the whole being be not only consecrated to God, but be used up without any regard to economy, and without the soul's exercising any judgment or discretion in the case? In other words, is the law of God the law of reason, or of folly? Is it intelligible and just in its demands? or is it perfectly unintelligible and unjust? Is it a law suited to the nature, relations, and circumstances, of moral agents? or has it no regard to them? If it has no regard to either, is it, can it be, moral law, and impose moral obligation? It seems to me that the law of God requires that all our power, and strength, and being, be honestly and continually consecrated to God, and held, not in a state of the utmost tension, but that the strength shall be expended and employed in exact accordance with the mind's honest judgment of what is at every moment the best economy for God. If this be not the meaning and the spirit of the law, it cannot be law, for it could be neither intelligible nor just. Nothing else can be a law of nature. What! does, or can the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, and with all thy strength," require that every particle of my strength, and every faculty of my being, shall be in a state of the utmost possible tension? How long could my strength hold out, or my being last, under such a pressure as this? What reason, or justice, or utility, or equity, or wisdom, could there be in such a commandment as this? Would this be suited to my nature and relations? That the law does not require the constant and most intense action of the will, I argue for the following reasons:--

1. No creature in heaven or earth could possibly know whether he ever for a single moment obeyed it. How could he know that no more tension could possibly be endured?

2. Such a requirement would be unreasonable, inasmuch as such a state of mind would be unendurable.

3. Such a state of constant tension and strain of the faculties could be of no possible use.

4. It would be uneconomical. More good could be effected by a husbanding of the strength.

5. Christ certainly obeyed the moral law, and yet nothing is more evident than that his faculties were not always on the strain.

6. Every one knows that the intensity of the will's action depends and must depend upon the clearness with which the value of the object chosen is perceived. It is perfectly absurd to suppose that the will should, or possibly can act at all times with the same degree of intensity. As the mind's apprehensions of truth vary, the intensity of the will's action must vary, or it does not act rationally, and consequently not virtuously. The intensity of the actions of the will, ought to vary as light varies, and if it does not, the mind is not honest. If honest, it must vary as light and ability vary.

That an intention cannot be right and honest in kind and deficient in the degree of intensity, I argue--

1. From the fact that it is absurd to talk of an intention right in kind, while it is deficient in intensity. What does rightness in kind mean? Does it mean simply that the intention terminates on the proper object? But is this the right kind of intention, when only the proper object is chosen, while there is a voluntary withholding of the required energy of choice? Is this, can this, be an honest intention? If so, what is meant by an honest intention? Is it honest, can it be honest, voluntarily to withhold from God and the universe what we perceive to be their due? and what we are conscious we might render? It is a contradiction to call this honest. In what sense then may, or can, an intention be acceptable in kind, while deficient in degree? Certainly in no sense, unless known and voluntary dishonesty can be acceptable. But again let me ask, what is intended by an intention being deficient in degree of intensity? If this deficiency be a sinful deficiency, it must be a known deficiency. That is, the subject of it must know at the time that his intention is in point of intensity less than it ought to be, or that he wills with less energy than he ought; or, in other words, that the energy of the choice does not equal, or is not agreeable to, his own estimate of the value of the end chosen. But this implies an absurdity. Suppose I choose an end, that is, I choose a thing solely on account of its own intrinsic value. It is for its value that I choose it. I choose it for its value, but not according to its value. My perception of its value led me to choose it; and yet, while I choose it for that reason, I voluntarily withhold that degree of intensity which I know is demanded by my own estimate of the value of the thing which I choose! This is a manifest absurdity and contradiction. If I choose a thing for its value, this implies that I choose it according to my estimate of its value. Happiness, for example, is a good in itself. Now, suppose I will its existence impartially, that is, solely on account of its intrinsic value; now, does not this imply that every degree of happiness must be willed according to its real or relative value? Can I will it impartially, for its own sake, for and only for its intrinsic value, and yet not prefer a greater to a less amount of happiness? This is impossible. Willing it on account of its intrinsic value implies willing it according to my estimate of its intrinsic value. So, it must be that an intention cannot be sincere, honest, and acceptable in kind, while it is sinfully deficient in degree. I will introduce here with some alteration and addition what I have elsewhere stated upon this subject. I quote from my letter in the Oberlin Evangelist upon the following proposition:--

Moral character is always wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time.

"I must again remind you of that in which moral character consists, and occupy a few moments in repeating what I have already said, that moral character belongs solely to the ultimate intention of the mind, or to choice, as distinguished from volition. The law of God requires supreme disinterested benevolence; and all holiness, in the last analysis, resolves itself into some modification of supreme, disinterested benevolence, or good-willing. Benevolence, or good-willing, is synonymous with good-intending, or intending good. Now, the true spirit of the requirement of the moral law is this--that every moral being shall choose every interest according to its value as perceived by the mind. This is holiness. It is exercising supreme love or good-will to God, and equal love or good-will to our neighbour."

This is a choice or intention, as distinguished from a volition. It is also an ultimate intention, as distinguished from a proximate intention.

Choice is the selection of an ultimate end. Volition is produced by choice, and is the effort of the will to accomplish the end chosen. An ultimate object of choice, is that which is intended or chosen for its own sake, or as an ultimate end, and not something chosen or intended as a means to accomplish some other and higher end. A proximate end is that which is chosen or intended, not as an ultimate end, but as a means to an ultimate end. If I choose an end, I, of course, put forth those volitions which are requisite to the accomplishment of that end. Holiness, or virtue, consists in the supreme ultimate intention, choice, or willing of the highest well-being of God and the highest good of his kingdom. Nothing else than this is virtue or holiness.

As holiness consists in ultimate intention, so does sin. And as holiness consists in choosing the highest well-being of God and the good of the universe, for its own sake, or as the supreme ultimate end of pursuit; so sin consists in willing, with a supreme choice or intention, self-gratification and self-interest. Preferring a less to a greater good, because it is our own, is selfishness. All selfishness consists in a supreme ultimate intention. By an ultimate intention, as I have said, is intended that which is chosen for its own sake as an end, and not as a means to some other end. Whenever a moral being prefers or chooses his own gratification, or his own interest, in preference to a higher good, because it is his own, he chooses it as an end, for its own sake, and as an ultimate end; not designing it as a means of promoting any other and higher end, nor because it is a part of universal good. Every sin, then, consists in an act of will. It consists in preferring self-gratification, or self-interest, to the authority of God, the glory of God, and the good of the universe. It is, therefore, and must be, a supreme ultimate choice, or intention.

Sin and holiness, then, both consist in supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices, or intentions, and cannot, by any possibility, co-exist.

But for the sake of entering more at large into the discussion of this question, I will--

1. Examine a little in detail the philosophy of the question, and--

2. Bring the philosophy into the light of the Bible.

And in discussing the philosophy of the question, I would observe, that five suppositions may be made, and so far as I can see, only five, in respect to this subject.

1. It may be supposed, that selfishness and benevolence can co-exist in the same mind.

2. It may be supposed, that the same act or choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives which induce it.

3. It may be supposed, that an act or choice may be right, or holy in kind, but deficient in intensity or degree. Or--

4. That the will, or heart, may be right, while the affections, or emotions, are wrong. Or--

5. That there may be a ruling, latent, actually existing, holy preference, or intention, co-existing with opposing volitions.

Now, unless one of these suppositions is true, it must follow that moral character is either wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time.

And now to the examination.

1. It may be supposed, that selfishness and benevolence can co-exist in the same mind.

It has been shown that selfishness and benevolence are supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices, or intentions. They cannot, therefore, by any possibility, co-exist in the same mind.

2. The next supposition is, that the same act or choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives. On this let me say:--

(1.) Motives are objective or subjective. An objective motive is that thing external to the mind that induces choice or intention. Subjective motive is the intention itself.

(2.) Character, therefore, does not belong to the objective motive, or to that thing which the mind chooses; but moral character is confined to the subjective motive, which is synonymous with choice or intention. Thus we say a man is to be judged by his motives, meaning that his character is as his intention is. Multitudes of objective motives or considerations, may have concurred directly or indirectly in their influence, to induce choice or intention; but the intention or subjective motive is always necessarily simple and indivisible. In other words, moral character consists in the choice of an ultimate end, and this end is to be chosen for its own sake, else it is not an ultimate end. If the end chosen be the highest well-being of God and the good of the universe--if it be the willing or intending to promote and treat every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, it is a right, a holy motive, or intention. If it be anything else, it is sinful. Now, whatever complexity there may have been in the considerations that led the way to this choice or intention, it is self-evident that the intention must be one, simple, and indivisible.

(3.) Whatever complexity there might have been in those considerations that prepared the way to the settling down upon this intention, the mind in a virtuous choice has, and can have, but one ultimate reason for its choice, and that is the intrinsic value of the thing chosen. The highest well-being of God, the good of the universe, and every good according to its perceived relative value, must be chosen for one, and only one reason, and that is the intrinsic value of the good which is chosen for its own sake. If chosen for any other reason, the choice is not virtuous. It is absurd to say, that a thing is good and valuable in itself, but may be rightly chosen, not for that but for some other reason--that God's highest well-being and the happiness of the universe are an infinite good in themselves, but are not to be chosen for that reason, and on their own account, but for some other reason. Holiness, then, must always consist in singleness of eye or intention. It must consist in the supreme disinterested choice, willing, or intending the good of God and of the universe, for its own sake. In this intention there cannot be any complexity. If there were, it would not be holy, but sinful. It is, therefore, sheer nonsense to say, that one and the same choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity of motive. For that motive in which moral character consists, is the supreme ultimate intention, or choice. This choice, or intention, must consist in the choice of a thing as an end, and for its own sake. The supposition, then, that the same choice or intention may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives, is wholly inadmissible.

If it be still urged, that the intention or subjective motive may be complex--that several things may be included in the intention, and be aimed at by the mind--and that it may, therefore, be partly holy and partly sinful--I reply:--

(4.) If by this it be meant that several things may be aimed at or intended by the mind at the same time, I inquire what things?--It is true, that the supreme, disinterested choice of the highest good of being, may include the intention to use all the necessary means. It may also include the intention to promote every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value. These are all properly included in one intention; but this implies no such complexity in the subjective motive, as to include both sin and holiness.

(5.) If by complexity of intention is meant, that it may be partly disinterestedly benevolent, and partly selfish, which it must be to be partly holy and partly sinful, I reply, that this supposition is absurd. It has been shown that selfishness and benevolence consist in supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices or intentions. To suppose, then, that an intention can be both holy and sinful, is to suppose that it may include two supreme, opposite, and ultimate choices or intentions, at the same time; in other words, that I may supremely and disinterestedly intend to regard and promote every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, for its own sake; and at the same time, may supremely regard my own self-interest and self-gratification, and in some things supremely intend to promote my selfish interests, in opposition to the interests of the universe and the commands of God. But this is naturally impossible. An ultimate intention, then, may be complex in the sense, that it may include the design to promote every perceived interest, according to its relative value; but it cannot, by any possibility, be complex in the sense that it includes selfishness and benevolence, or holiness and sin.

3. The third supposition is, that holiness may be right, or pure in kind, but deficient in degree. On this, I remark:--

(1.) We have seen that moral character consists in the ultimate intention.

(2.) The supposition, therefore, must be, that the intention may be right, or pure in kind, but deficient in the degree of its strength.

(3.) Our intention is to be tried by the law of God, both in respect to its kind and degree.

(4.) The law of God requires us to will, or intend the promotion of every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, for its own sake; in other words, that all our powers shall be supremely and disinterestedly devoted to the glory of God, and the good of the universe.

(5.) This cannot mean, that any faculty shall at every moment be kept upon the strain, or in a state of utmost tension, for this would be inconsistent with natural ability. It would be to require a natural impossibility, and therefore be unjust.

(6.) It cannot mean that at all times, and on all subjects, the same degree of exertion shall be made; for the best possible discharge of duty does not always require the same degree or intensity of mental or corporeal exertion.

(7.) The law cannot, justly or possibly, require more, than that the whole being shall be consecrated to God--that we shall fully and honestly will or intend the promotion of every interest, according to its perceived relative value, and according to the extent of our ability.

(8.) Now the strength or intensity of the intention must, and ought, of necessity, to depend upon the degree of our knowledge or light in regard to any object of choice. If our obligation is not to be graduated by the light we possess, then it would follow, that we may be under obligation to exceed our natural ability, which cannot be.

(9.) The importance which we attach to objects of choice, and consequently the degree of ardour or intenseness of the intention, must depend upon the clearness or obscurity of our views, of the real or relative value of the objects of choice.

(10.) Our obligation cannot be measured by the views which God has of the importance of those objects of choice. It is a well-settled and generally-admitted truth, that increased light increases responsibility, or moral obligation. No creature is bound to will any thing with the intenseness or degree of strength with which God wills it, for the plain reason, that no creature sees its importance or real value, as He does. If our obligation were to be graduated by God's knowledge of the real value of objects, we could never obey the moral law, either in this world or the world to come, nor could any being but God ever, by any possibility, meet its demands.

(11.) Nor can our obligation be measured by the views or knowledge which angels may have of the intrinsic or relative value of the glory of God, the worth of souls, and the good of the universe.

(12.) Nor can the obligation of a heathen be measured by the knowledge and light of a Christian.

(13.) Nor the obligation of a child by the knowledge of a man.

(14.) The fact is, that the obligation of every moral being must be graduated by his knowledge.

(15.) If, therefore, his intention be equal in its intensity to his views or knowledge of the real or relative value of different objects, it is right. It is up to the full measure of his obligation; and if his own honest judgment is not to be made the measure of his obligation, then his obligation can exceed what he is able to know; which contradicts the true nature of moral law, and is, therefore, false.

(16.) If conscious honesty of intention, both as it respects the kind and degree of intention, according to the degree of light possessed, be not entire obedience to moral law, then there is no being in heaven or earth, who can know himself to be entirely obedient; for all that any being can possibly know upon this subject is, that he honestly wills or intends, in accordance with the dictates of his reason, or the judgment which he has of the real or relative value of the object chosen.

(17.) If something more than this can be required, then a law can be binding farther than it is prescribed, or so published that it may be known, which is contradictory to natural justice, and absurd.

(18.) No moral being can possibly blame or charge himself with any default, when he is conscious of honestly intending, willing, or choosing, and acting, according to the best light he has; for in this case he obeys the law, as he understands it, and, of course, cannot conceive himself to be condemned by the law.

(19.) Good-willing, or intending is, in respect to God, to be at all times supreme, and in respect to other beings, it is to be in proportion to the relative value of their happiness, as perceived by the mind. This is always to be the intention. The volitions, or efforts of the will to promote these objects, may vary, and ought to vary indefinitely in their intensity, in proportion to the particular duty to which, for the time being, we are called.

(20.) But further, we have seen that virtue consists in willing every good according to its perceived relative value, and that nothing short of this is virtue. But this is perfect virtue for the time being. In other words, virtue and moral perfection, in respect to a given act, or state of the will, are synonymous terms. Virtue is holiness. Holiness is uprightness. Uprightness is that which is just what, under the circumstances, it should be; and nothing else is virtue, holiness, or uprightness. Virtue, holiness, uprightness, moral perfection--when we apply these terms to any given state of the will--are synonymous. To talk, therefore, of a virtue, holiness, uprightness, justice--right in kind, but deficient in degree--is to talk sheer nonsense. It is the same absurdity as to talk of sinful holiness, an unjust justice, a wrong rightness, an impure purity, an imperfect perfection, a disobedient obedience.

(21.) The fact is, virtue, holiness, uprightness, &c., signify a definite thing, and never anything else than conformity to the law of God. That which is not entirely conformed to the law of God is not holiness. This must be true in philosophy, and the Bible affirms the same thing. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The spirit of this text as clearly and as fully assumes and affirms the doctrine under consideration, as if it had been uttered with that design alone.

(22.) God has no right to call that holy which is defective in degree.

(23.) Unless every perceived interest is, for the time being, willed or intended according to its relative value, there is no virtue. Where this intention exists, there can be no sin.

4. The next supposition is, that the will, or heart, may be right, while the affections or emotions are wrong. Upon this I remark:

(1.) That this supposition overlooks the very thing in which moral character consists. It has been shown that moral character consists in the supreme ultimate intention of the mind, and that this supreme, disinterested benevolence, good-willing, or intention, is the whole of virtue. Now this intention originates volitions. It directs the attention of the mind, and, therefore, produces thoughts, emotions, or affections. It also, through volition, produces bodily action. But moral character does not lie in outward actions, the movements of the arm, nor in the volition that moves the muscles; for that volition terminates upon the action itself. I will to move my arm, and my arm must move by a law of necessity. Moral character belongs solely to the intention that produced the volition, that moved the muscles, to the performance of the outward act. So intention produces the volition that directs the attention of the mind to a given object. Attention, by a natural necessity, produces thought, affection, or emotion. Now thought, affection, or emotion, are all connected with volition, by a natural necessity; that is--if the attention is directed to an object, corresponding thoughts and emotions must exist, as a matter of course. Moral character no more lies in emotion, than in outward action. It does not lie in thought, or attention. It does not lie in the specific volition that directed the attention; but in that intention, or design of the mind, that produced the volition, which directed the attention, which, again, produced the thought, which, again, produced the emotion. Now the supposition, that the intention may be right, while the emotions or feelings of the mind may be wrong, is the same as to say, that outward action may be wrong, while the intention is right. The fact is, that moral character is, and must be, as the intention is. If any feeling or outward action is inconsistent with the existing ultimate intention, it must be so in spite of the agent. But if any outward action or state of feeling exists, in opposition to the intention or choice of the mind, it cannot, by any possibility, have moral character. Whatever is beyond the control of a moral agent, he cannot be responsible for. Whatever he cannot control by intention, he cannot control at all. Everything for which he can possibly be responsible, resolves itself into his intentions. His whole character, therefore, is, and must be, as his intention is. If, therefore, temptations, from whatever quarter they may come, produce emotions within him inconsistent with his intention, and which he cannot control, he cannot be responsible for them.

(2.) As a matter of fact, although emotions, contrary to his intentions, may, by circumstances beyond his control, be brought to exist in his mind; yet, by willing to divert the attention of the mind from the objects that produce them, they can ordinarily be banished from the mind. If this is done as soon as in the nature of the case it can be, there is no sin. If it is not done as soon as in the nature of the case it can be, then it is absolutely certain that the intention is not what it ought to be. The intention is to devote the whole being to the service of God and the good of the universe, and of course to avoid every thought, affection, and emotion, inconsistent with this. While this intention exists, it is certain that if any object be thrust upon the attention which excites thoughts and emotions inconsistent with our supreme ultimate intention, the attention of the mind will be instantly diverted from those objects, and the hated emotion hushed, if this is possible. For, while the intention exists, corresponding volitions must exist. There cannot, therefore, be a right state of heart or intention, while the emotions, or affections, of the mind are sinful. For emotions are in themselves in no case sinful, and when they exist against the will, through the force of temptation, the soul is not responsible for their existence. And, as I said, the supposition overlooks that in which moral character consists, and makes it to consist in that over which the law does not properly legislate; for love, or benevolence, is the fulfilling of the law.

But here it may be said, that the law not only requires benevolence, or good-willing, but requires a certain kind of emotions, just as it requires the performance of certain outward actions, and that therefore there may be a right intention where there is a deficiency, either in kind or degree, of right emotion: To this I answer:--

Outward actions are required of men, only because they are connected with intention, by a natural necessity. And no outward action is ever required of us, unless it can be produced by intending and aiming to do it. If the effect does not follow our honest endeavours, because of any antagonistic influence, opposed to our exertions, which we cannot overcome, we have, by our intention, complied with the spirit of the law, and are not to blame that the outward effect does not take place. Just so with emotions. All we have power to do, is, to direct the attention of the mind to those objects calculated to secure a given state of emotion. If, from any exhaustion of the sensibility, or from any other cause beyond our control, the emotions do not arise which the consideration of that subject is calculated to produce, we are no more responsible for the absence or weakness of the emotion, than we should be for the want of power or weakness of motion in our muscles, when we willed to move them, provided that weakness was involuntary and beyond our control. The fact is, we cannot be blameworthy for not feeling or doing that which we cannot do or feel by intending it. If the intention then is what it ought to be for the time being, nothing can be morally wrong.

5. The last supposition is, that a latent preference, or right intention, may co-exist with opposing or sinful volitions. Upon this I remark:--

That I have formerly supposed that this could be true, but am now convinced that it cannot be true; for the following reasons:

(1.) Observe, the supposition is, that the intention or ruling preference may be right--may really exist as an active and virtuous state of mind, while, at the same time, volition may exist inconsistent with it.

(2.) Now what is a right intention? I answer: Nothing short of this--willing, choosing, or intending the highest good of God and of the universe, and to promote this at every moment, to the extent of our ability. In other words--right intention is supreme, disinterested benevolence. Now what are the elements which enter into this right intention?

(*a*.) The choice or willing of every interest according to its perceived intrinsic value.

(*b.*) To devote our entire being, now and for ever, to this end. This is right intention. Now the question is, can this intention co-exist with a volition inconsistent with it? Volition implies the choice of something, for some reason. If it be the choice of whatever can promote this supremely benevolent end, and for that reason, the volition is consistent with the intention; but if it be the choice of something perceived to be inconsistent with this end, and for a selfish reason, then the volition is inconsistent with the supposed intention. But the question is, do the volition and intention co-exist? According to the supposition, the will chooses, or wills, something, for a selfish reason, or something perceived to be inconsistent with supreme, disinterested benevolence. Now it is plainly impossible, that this choice can take place while the opposite intention exists. For this selfish volition is, according to the supposition, sinful or selfish; that is, something is chosen for its own sake, which is inconsistent with disinterested benevolence. But here the intention is ultimate. It terminates upon the object chosen for its own sake. To suppose, then, that benevolence still remains in exercise, and that a volition co-exists with it that is sinful, involves the absurdity of supposing, that selfishness and benevolence can co-exist in the same mind, or that the will can choose, or will, with a supreme preference or choice, two opposites at the same time. This is plainly impossible. Suppose I intend to go to the city of New York as soon as I possibly can. Now, if, on my way, I will to loiter needlessly a moment, I necessarily relinquish one indispensable element of my intention. In willing to loiter, or turn aside to some other object for a day, or an hour, I must, of necessity, relinquish the intention of going as soon as I possibly can. I may not design finally to relinquish my journey, but I must of necessity relinquish the intention of going as soon as I can. Now, virtue consists in intending to do all the good I possibly can, or in willing the glory of God and the good of the universe, and intending to promote them to the extent of my ability. Nothing short of this is virtue. If at any time, I will something perceived to be inconsistent with this intention, I must, for the time being, relinquish the intention, as it must indispensably exist in my mind, in order to be virtue. I may not come to the resolution, that I will never serve God any more, but I must of necessity relinquish, for the time being, the intention of doing my utmost to glorify God, if at any time I put forth a selfish volition. For a selfish volition implies a selfish intention. I cannot put forth a volition intended to secure an end until I have chosen the end. Therefore, a holy intention cannot co-exist with a selfish volition.

It must be, therefore, that in every sinful choice, the will of a holy being must necessarily drop the exercise of supreme, benevolent intention, and pass into an opposite state of choice; that is, the agent must cease, for the time being, to exercise benevolence, and make a selfish choice. For, be it understood, that volition is the choice of a means to an end; and of course a selfish volition implies a selfish choice of an end.

Having briefly examined the several suppositions that can be made in regard to the mixed character of actions, I will now answer a few objections; after which, I will bring this philosophy, as briefly as possible, into the light of the Bible.

Objection. Does a Christian cease to be a Christian, whenever he commits a sin? I answer:

1. Whenever he sins, he must, for the time being, cease to be holy. This is self-evident.

2. Whenever he sins, he must be condemned. He must incur the penalty of the law of God. If he does not, it must be because the law of God is abrogated. But if the law of God be abrogated, he has no rule of duty; consequently, can neither be holy nor sinful. If it be said that the precept is still binding upon him, but that, with respect to the Christian, the penalty is for ever set aside, or abrogated, I reply--that to abrogate the penalty is to repeal the precept; for a precept without penalty is no law. It is only counsel or advice. The Christian, therefore, is justified no longer than he obeys, and must be condemned when he disobeys; or Antinomianism is true.

3. When the Christian sins, he must repent, and "do his first works," or he will perish.

4. Until he repents he cannot be forgiven. In these respects, then, the sinning Christian and the unconverted sinner are upon precisely the same ground.

5. In two important respects the sinning Christian differs widely from the unconverted sinner:

(1.) In his relations to God. A Christian is a child of God. A sinning Christian is a disobedient child of God. An unconverted sinner is a child of the devil. A Christian sustains a covenant relation to God; such a covenant relation as to secure to him that discipline which tends to reclaim and bring him back, if he wanders away from God. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psa 89:30-34.

(2.) The sinning Christian differs from the unconverted man, in the state of his sensibility. In whatever way it takes place, every Christian knows that the state of his sensibility in respect to the things of God, has undergone a great change. Now it is true, that moral character does not lie in the sensibility, nor in the will's obeying the sensibility. Nevertheless our consciousness teaches us, that our feelings have great power in promoting wrong choice on the one hand, and in removing obstacles to right choice on the other. In every Christian's mind there is, therefore, a foundation laid for appeals to the sensibilities of the soul, that gives truth a decided advantage over the will. And multitudes of things in the experience of every Christian, give truth a more decided advantage over his will, through the intelligence, than is the case with unconverted sinners.

Obj. Can a man be born again, and then be unborn? I answer:

1. If there were anything impossible in this, then perseverance would be no virtue.

2. None will maintain, that there is anything naturally impossible in this, except it be those who hold to physical regeneration.

3. If regeneration consist in a change in the ruling preference of the mind, or in the ultimate intention, as we shall see it does, it is plain, that an individual can be born again, and afterwards cease to be virtuous.

4. That a Christian is able to apostatize, is evident, from the many warnings addressed to Christians in the Bible.

5. A Christian may certainly fall into sin and unbelief, and afterwards be renewed, both to repentance and faith.

Obj. Can there be no such thing as weak faith, weak love, and weak repentance? I answer:

1. If you mean comparatively weak, I say, yes. But if you mean weak, in such a sense as to be sinful, I say, no. Faith, repentance, love, and every Christian grace, properly so called, does and must consist in an act of will, and resolve itself into some modification of supreme, disinterested benevolence. I shall, in a future lecture, have occasion to show the philosophical nature of faith. Let it suffice here to say, that faith necessarily depends upon the clearness or obscurity of the intellectual apprehensions of truth. Faith, to be real or virtuous, must embrace whatever of truth is apprehended by the intelligence for the time being.

2. Various causes may operate to divert the intelligence from the objects of faith, or to cause the mind to perceive but few of them, and those in comparative obscurity.

3. Faith may be weak, and will certainly necessarily be weak in such cases, in proportion to the obscurity of the views. And yet, if the will or heart confides so far as it apprehends the truth, which it must do to be virtuous at all, faith cannot be weak in such a sense as to be sinful; for if a man confides so far as he apprehends or perceives the truth, so far as faith is concerned he is doing his whole duty.

4. Faith may be weak in the sense, that it often intermits and gives place to unbelief. Faith is confidence, and unbelief is the withholding of confidence. It is the rejection of truth perceived. Faith is the reception of truth perceived. Faith and unbelief, then, are opposite states of choice, and can by no possibility co-exist.

5. Faith may be weak in respect to its objects. The disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ knew so little of him, were so filled with ignorance and the prejudices of education, as to have very weak faith in respect to the Messiahship, power, and divinity of their Master. He speaks of them as having but little confidence, and yet it does not appear that they did not implicitly trust him, so far as they understood him. And although through ignorance, their faith was weak, yet there is no evidence, that when they had any faith at all they did not confide in whatever of truth they apprehended.

Obj. But did not the disciples pray, "Increase our faith?" I answer,--

Yes. And by this they must have intended to pray for instruction; for what else could they mean? Unless a man means this, when he prays for faith, he does not know what he prays for. Christ produces faith by enlightening the mind. When we pray for faith we pray for light. And faith, to be real faith at all, must be equal to the light we have. If apprehended truth be not implicitly received and confided in, there is no faith, but unbelief. If it be, faith is what it ought to be, wholly unmixed with sin.

Obj. But did not one say to our Lord, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief;" thus implying, that he was in the exercise both of faith and unbelief at the same time? I answer, yes, but--

1. This was not inspiration.

2. It is not certain that he had any faith at all.

3. If he had, and prayed understandingly, he meant nothing more than to ask for an increase of faith, or for such a degree of light as to remove his doubts in respect to the divine power of Christ.

Obj. Again, it is objected that this philosophy contradicts Christian experience. To this I reply,

That it is absurd to appeal from reason and the Bible to empirical consciousness which must be the appeal in this case. Reason and the Bible plainly attest the truth of the theory here advocated. What experience is then to be appealed to, to set their testimony aside? Why, Christian experience, it is replied. But what is Christian experience? How shall we learn what it is? Why surely by appealing to reason and the Bible. But these declare that if a man offend in one point, he does and must for the time being violate the spirit of the whole law. Nothing is or can be more express than is the testimony of both reason and revelation upon this subject. Here, then, we have the unequivocal decision of the only court of competent jurisdiction in the case, and shall we befool ourselves by appealing from this tribunal to the court of empirical consciousness? Of what does that take cognizance? Why, of what actually passes in the mind; that is, of its mental states. These we are conscious of as facts. But we call these states Christian experience. How do we ascertain that they are in accordance with the law and gospel of God? Why only by an appeal to reason and the Bible. Here, then, we are driven back to the court from which we had before appealed, whose judgment is always the same.

Obj. But it is said, this theory seems to be true in philosophy, that is, the intelligence seems to affirm it, but it is not true in fact.

Answer: If the intelligence affirms it, it must be true, or reason deceives us. But if the reason deceives in this, it may also in other things. If it fails us here, it fails us on the most important of all questions. If reason gives false testimony, we can never know truth from error upon any moral subject. We certainly can never know what religion is or is not, if the testimony of reason can be set aside. If the reason cannot be safely appealed to, how are we to know what the Bible means? for it is the faculty by which we get at the truth of the oracles of God?

These are the principal objections to the philosophical view I have taken of the simplicity of moral action, that occur to my mind. I will now briefly advert to the consistency of this philosophy with the scriptures.

1. The Bible every where seems to assume the simplicity of moral action. Christ expressly informed his disciples, that they could not serve God and mammon. Now by this he did not mean, that a man could not serve God at one time and mammon at another; but that he could not serve both at the same time. The philosophy that makes it possible for persons to be partly holy and partly sinful at the same time, does make it possible to serve God and mammon at the same time, and thus flatly contradicts the assertion of our Saviour.

2. James has expressly settled this philosophy, by saying, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Here he must mean to assert, that one sin involves a breach of the whole spirit of the law, and is, therefore, inconsistent with any degree of holiness existing with it. Also, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt-water and fresh," Jam 3:11-12. In this passage he clearly affirms the simplicity of moral action; for by the "the same place" he evidently means, the same time, and what he says is equivalent to saying, that a man cannot be holy and sinful at the same time.

3. Christ has expressly taught, that nothing is regeneration, or virtue, but entire obedience, or the renunciation of all selfishness. "Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

4. The manner in which the precepts and threatenings of the Bible are usually given, show that nothing is regarded as obedience, or virtue, but doing exactly that which God commands.

5. The common philosophy, that maintains the co-existence of both sin and holiness in the mind, at the same time, is virtually Antinomianism. It is a rejection of the law of God as the standard of duty. It maintains, that something is holiness which is less than supreme disinterested benevolence, or the devotion, for the time, of the whole being to God. Now any philosophy that makes regeneration, or holiness, consist in any thing less than just that measure of obedience which the law of God requires, is Antinomianism. It is a letting down, a rejection of the law of God.

6. The very idea of sin and holiness co-existing in the same mind, is an absurd philosophy, contrary to scripture and common sense. It is an overlooking of that in which holiness consists. Holiness is obedience to the law of God, and nothing else is. By obedience, I mean entire obedience, or just that which the law requires. Any thing else than that which the law requires is not obedience and is not holiness. To maintain that it is, is to abrogate the law.

I might go to great lengths in the examination of scripture testimony, but it cannot be necessary, or in these lectures expedient. I must close this lecture, with a few inferences and remarks.

1. It has been supposed by some, that the simplicity of moral action, has been resorted to as a theory, by the advocates of entire sanctification in this life, as the only consistent method of carrying out their principle. To this I reply:--

(1.) That this theory is held in common, both by those who hold and those who deny the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life.

(2.) The truth of the doctrine of entire sanctification does not depend at all upon this philosophical theory for its support; but may be established by Bible testimony, whatever the philosophy of holiness may be.

2. Growth in grace consists in two things:--

(1.) In the stability or permanency of holy, ultimate intention.

(2.) In intensity or strength. As knowledge increases, Christians will naturally grow in grace, in both these respects.

3. The theory of the mixed character of moral actions, is an eminently dangerous theory, as it leads its advocates to suppose, that in their acts of rebellion there is something holy, or, more strictly, that there is some holiness in them, while they are in the known commission of sin.

It is dangerous, because it leads its advocates to place the standard of conversion, or regeneration, exceedingly low; to make regeneration, repentance, true love to God, faith, &c., consistent with the known or conscious commission of present sin. This must be a highly dangerous philosophy. The fact is, that regeneration, or holiness, under any form, is quite another thing than it is supposed to be, by those who maintain the philosophy of the mixed character of moral action.

4. There can scarcely be a more dangerous error than to say, that while we are conscious of present sin, we are or can be in a state acceptable to God.

5. The false philosophy of many leads them to adopt a phraseology inconsistent with truth; and to speak as if they were guilty of present sin, when in fact they are not, but are in a state of acceptance with God.

6. It is erroneous to say that Christians sin in their most holy exercises, and it is as injurious and dangerous as it is false. The fact is, holiness is holiness, and it is really nonsense to speak of a holiness that consists with sin.

7. The tendency of this philosophy is to quiet in their delusions those whose consciences accuse them of present sin, as if this could be true, and they, notwithstanding, in a state of acceptance with God.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XV.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

I. IN WHAT SENSE OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW CAN BE PARTIAL.

II. THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD ACCEPTS NOTHING AS VIRTUE BUT OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

I. IN WHAT SENSE OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW CAN BE PARTIAL.

In discussing this subject I must--

1. *Remind you of the sense in which it has been shown that obedience cannot be partial; and--*

2. *Show the sense in which it can be partial.*

1. *In what sense we have seen that obedience to Moral Law cannot be partial.*

(1.) Not in the sense that a moral agent can at the same time be selfish and benevolent. That is, a moral agent cannot choose as an ultimate end the highest well-being of God and of the universe, and, at the same time choose an opposite end, namely his own gratification. In other words, he cannot love God supremely and his neighbour as himself, and at the same time love himself supremely, and prefer his own gratification to the good of God and his neighbour. These two things, we have seen, cannot be.

(2.) We have seen, that a moral agent cannot honestly choose the well-being of God and the universe, as an ultimate end, that is, for and on account of its intrinsic value, and yet withhold the degree of intensity of choice, which he sees the value of the end demands, and which he is able to render. In other words, he cannot be honest in knowingly and intentionally withholding from God and man their dues. That is, he cannot be honestly dishonest.

(3.) We have seen, that honesty of intention implies the esteeming and treating of every being and thing, known to the mind according to its nature and relations, and every interest, according to its estimated relative importance, and our ability to promote it.

(4.) We have seen that neither of the following suppositions can be true.

(*a.*) It cannot be true, that an act or choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives that induce it.

(*b.*) It cannot be true, that the will or heart may be right, while the emotions and affections are wrong, in the sense of sinful.

(*c.*) It cannot be true, that a ruling, latent, but actually existing, holy preference or intention, may co-exist with opposing volitions.

These things, we have seen, cannot be; and, therefore, that the following is true, to wit, that obedience to moral law cannot be partial, in the sense that a moral agent can partly obey, and partly disobey, at the same time; that he cannot be both holy and unholy in the same act; that he cannot at the same time serve both God and mammon. This certainly is the doctrine both of natural and revealed theology. This summing up of what was taught in the last lecture, conducts us to the second inquiry, namely,--

2. *In what sense obedience to moral law can be partial.*

And here I would observe, that the only sense in which obedience to moral law can be partial is, that obedience may be intermittent. That is, the subject may sometimes obey, and at other times disobey. He may at one time be selfish, or will his own gratification, because it is his own, and without regard to the well-being of God and his neighbour, and at another time will the highest well-being of God and the universe, as an end, and his own good only in proportion to its relative value. These are opposite choices, or ultimate intentions. The one is holy; the other is sinful. One is obedience, entire obedience, to the law of God; the other is disobedience, entire disobedience, to that law. These, for aught we can see, may succeed each other an indefinite number of times, but co-exist they plainly cannot.

II. *The government of God accepts nothing as virtue but obedience to the law of God.*

But it may be asked, Why state this proposition? Was this truth ever called in question? I answer, that the truth of this proposition, though apparently so self-evident, that to raise the question may reasonably excite astonishment, is generally denied. Indeed, probably nine-tenths of the nominal church deny it. They tenaciously hold sentiments that are entirely contrary to it, and amount to a direct denial of it. They maintain that there is much true virtue in the world, and yet that there is no one who ever for a moment obeys the law of God; that all Christians are virtuous, and that they are truly religious, and yet not one on earth obeys the moral law of God; in short, that God accepts as virtue that which, in every instance, comes short of obedience to his law. And yet it is generally asserted in their articles of faith, that obedience to moral law is the only proper evidence of a change of heart. With this sentiment in their creed, they will brand as a heretic, or as a hypocrite, any one who professes to obey the law; and maintain that men may be, and act pious, and eminently so, who do not obey the law of God. This sentiment, which every one knows to be generally held by those who are styled orthodox Christians, must assume that there is some rule of right, or of duty, besides the moral law; or that virtue, or true religion, does not imply obedience to any law. In this discussion I shall,--

1. *Attempt to show that there can be no rule of right or duty but the moral law; and,*

2. *That nothing can be virtue, or true religion, but obedience to this law, and that the government of God acknowledges nothing else as virtue or true religion.*

1. *There can be no rule of duty but the moral law.* (See Lecture II, Exclusiveness.)

Upon this proposition I remark,--

(1.) That the moral law, as we have seen, is nothing else than the law of nature, or that rule of action which is founded, not in the will of God, but in the nature and relations of moral agents. It prescribes the course of action which is agreeable or suitable to our nature and relations. It is unalterably right to act in conformity with our nature and relations. To deny this, is palpably absurd and contradictory. But if this is right, nothing else can be right. If this course is obligatory upon us, by virtue of our nature and relations, no other course can possibly be obligatory upon us. To act in conformity with our nature and relations, must be right, and nothing, either more or less, can be right. If these are not truths of intuition, then there are no such truths.

(2.) God has never proclaimed any other rule of duty, and should he do it, it could not be obligatory. The moral law did not originate in his arbitrary will. He did not create it, nor can he alter it, or introduce any other rule of right among moral agents. Can God make anything else right than to love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves? Surely not. Some have strangely dreamed that the law of faith has superseded the moral law. But we shall see that moral law is not made void, but is established by the law of faith. True faith, from its very nature, always implies love or obedience to the moral law; and love or obedience to the moral law always implies faith. As has been said on a former occasion, no being can create law. Nothing is, or can be, obligatory on a moral agent, but the course of conduct suited to his nature and relations. No being can set aside the obligation to do this. Nor can any being render anything more than this obligatory. Indeed, there cannot possibly be any other rule of duty than the moral law. There can be no other standard with which to compare our actions, and in the light of which to decide their moral character. This brings us to the consideration of the second proposition, namely,--

2. *That nothing can be virtue or true religion but obedience to the moral law.*

By this two things are intended:--

(1.) That every modification of true virtue is only obedience to moral law.

(2.) That nothing can be virtue, but just that which the moral law requires.

That every modification of true virtue is only obedience to moral law, will appear, if we consider,--

(*a.*) That virtue is identical with true religion:

(*b.*) That true religion cannot properly consist in anything else, than the love to God and man, enjoined by the moral law:

(*c.*) That the Bible expressly recognizes love as the fulfilling of the law, and as expressly denies, that anything else is acceptable to God.

"Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13)

Love is repeatedly recognized in the Bible, not only as constituting true religion, but as being the whole of religion. Every form of true religion is only a form of love or benevolence.

Repentance consists in the turning of the soul from a state of selfishness to benevolence, from disobedience to God's law, to obedience to it.

Faith is the receiving of, or confiding in, embracing, loving, truth and the God of truth. It is only a modification of love to God and Christ. Every Christian grace or virtue, as we shall more fully see when we come to consider them in detail, is only a modification of love. God is love. Every modification of virtue and holiness in God is only love, or the state of mind which moral law requires alike of him and of us. Benevolence is the whole of virtue in God, and in all holy beings. Justice, truthfulness, and every moral attribute, is only benevolence viewed in particular relations.

Nothing can be virtue that is not just what the moral law demands. That is, nothing short of what it requires can be, in any proper sense, virtue.

A common idea seems to be, that a kind of obedience is rendered to God by Christians which is true religion, and which, on Christ's account, is accepted of God, which after all comes indefinitely short of full or entire obedience at any moment; that the gospel has somehow brought men, that is, Christians, into such relations, that God really accepts from them an imperfect obedience, something far below what his law requires; that Christians are accepted and justified while they render at best but a partial obedience, and while they sin more or less at every moment. Now this appears to me, to be as radical an error as can well be taught. The subject naturally branches out into two distinct inquiries:--

(1.) Is it possible for a moral agent partly to obey, and partly to disobey, the moral law at the same time?

(2.) Can God in any sense, justify one who does not yield a present and full obedience to the moral law?

The first of these questions has been fully discussed in the preceding lecture. We think that it has been shown, that obedience to the moral law cannot be partial, in the sense that the subject can partly obey, and partly disobey, at the same time.

We will now attend to the second question, namely,--

Can God, in any sense, justify one who does not yield a present and full obedience to the moral law? Or, in other words, Can he accept anything as virtue or obedience, which is not, for the time being, full obedience, or all that the law requires?

The term justification is used in two senses.

(*a.*) In the sense of pronouncing the subject blameless:

(*b.*) In the sense of pardon, acceptance, and treating one who has sinned, as if he had not sinned.

It is in this last sense, that the advocates of this theory hold, that Christians are justified, that is, that they are pardoned, and accepted, and treated as just, though at every moment sinning, by coming short of rendering that obedience which the moral law demands. They do not pretend that they are justified at any moment by the law, for *that* at every moment condemns them for present sin; but that they are justified by grace, not in the sense that they are made really and personally righteous by grace, but that grace pardons and accepts, and in this sense justifies them when they are in the present commission of an indefinite amount of sin; that grace accounts them righteous while, in fact, they are continually sinning; that they are fully pardoned and acquitted, while at the same moment committing sin, by coming entirely and perpetually short of the obedience which, under the circumstances, the law of God requires. While voluntarily withholding full obedience, their partial obedience is accepted, and the sin of withholding full obedience is forgiven. God accepts what the sinner has a mind to give, and forgives what he voluntarily withholds. This is no caricature. It is, if I understand them, precisely what many hold. In considering this subject, I wish to propose for discussion the following inquiries, as of fundamental importance.

(1.) If a present partial obedience can be accepted, how great a part may be withholden and we be accepted?

(2.) If we are forgiven, while voluntarily withholding a part of that which would constitute full obedience, are we not forgiven sin of which we do not repent, and forgiven, while in the act of committing the sin for which we are forgiven?

(3.) What good can result to the sinner, to God, or to the universe from forgiving impenitence, or sin which is persisted in?

(4.) Has God a right to pardon present sin, and of course sin unrepented of?

(5.) Have we a right to ask him to forgive present sin, while unrepented of?

(6.) Must not confession of present sin, and of course sin unrepented of, be base hypocrisy?

(7.) Does the Bible recognize or proclaim the pardon of sin, under such circumstances?

(8.) Does the Bible recognize any justification in sin?

(9.) Can there be such a thing as partial repentance of sin? That is, does not repentance imply present full obedience to the law of God?

(10.) Must not that be a gross error, that represents God as pardoning and justifying a sinner in the present voluntary commission of sin?

(11.) Can there be any other than a voluntary sin?

(12.) Must not present sin be sin unrepented of?

Let us now attend to these questions in their order.

(1.) How much sin may we commit, or how much may we, at every moment, come short of full obedience to the law of God, and yet be accepted and justified?

This must be an inquiry of infinite importance. If we may wilfully withhold a part of our hearts from God, and yet be accepted, how great a part may we withhold? If we may love God with less than all our hearts, and our neighbour less than ourselves, and be accepted, how much less than supreme love to God, and equal love to our neighbour, will be accepted?

Shall we be told, that the least degree of true love to God and our neighbour will be accepted? But what is true love to God and our neighbour? This is the point of inquiry. Is that true love which is not what is required? If the least degree of love to God will be accepted, then we may love ourselves more than we love God, and yet be accepted. We may love God a little, and ourselves much, and still be in a state of acceptance with God. We may love God a little, and our neighbour a little, and ourselves more than we love God and all our neighbours, and yet be in a justified state. Or shall we be told that God must be loved supremely? But what is intended by this? Is supreme love a loving with all the heart? But this is full and not partial obedience; yet the latter is the thing about which we are inquiring. Or is supreme love, not love with all the heart, but simply a higher degree of love than we exercise toward any other being? But how much greater must it be? Barely a little? How are we to measure it? In what scale are we to weigh, or by what standard are we to measure, our love, so as to know whether we love God a little more than any other being? But how much are we to love our neighbour, in order to our being accepted? If we may love him a little less than ourselves, how much less, and still be justified? These are certainly questions of vital importance. But such questions look like trifling. Yet why should they? If the theory I am examining be true, these questions must not only be asked, but they must admit of a satisfactory answer. The advocates of the theory in question are bound to answer them. And if they cannot, it is only because their theory is false. Is it possible that their theory should be true, and yet no one be able to answer such vital questions as these just proposed? If a partial obedience can be accepted, it is a momentous question, how partial, or how complete must that obedience be? I say again, that this is a question of agonizing interest. God forbid that we should be left in the dark here.

But let us look at the second question.

(2.) If we are forgiven while voluntarily withholding a part of that which would constitute full obedience, are we not forgiven sin of which we do not repent, and forgiven while in the act of committing the sin for which we are forgiven?

The theory in question is that Christians never, at any time, in this world, yield a full obedience to the divine law; that they always withhold a part of their hearts from the Lord, and yet, while in the very act of committing this abominable sin of voluntarily defrauding God and their neighbour, God accepts their persons and their services, fully forgives and justifies them. What is this, but pardoning present and pertinacious rebellion! Receiving to favour a God-defrauding wretch! Forgiving a sin unrepented of and detestably persevered in? Yes, this must be, if it be true that Christians are justified without present full obedience. That surely must be a doctrine of devils, that represents God as receiving to favour a rebel who has one hand filled with weapons against his throne.

(3.) But what good can result to God, or the sinner, or to the universe, by thus pardoning and justifying an unsanctified soul? Can God be honoured by such a proceeding? Will the holy universe respect, fear, and honour God for such a proceeding? Does it, can it, commend itself to the intelligence of the universe?

Will pardon and justification save the sinner, while he yet continues to withhold a part, at least, of his heart from God, while he still cleaves to a part of his sins? Can heaven be edified, or hell confounded, and its cavils silenced, by such a method of justification?

(4.) But again: Has God a right to pardon sin unrepented of?

Some may feel shocked at the question, and may insist that this is a question which we have no right to agitate. But let me inquire: Has God, as a moral governor, a right to act arbitrarily? Is there not some course of conduct which is suitable to him? Has he not given us intelligence on purpose that we may be able to see and judge of the propriety of his public acts? Does he not invite and require scrutiny? Why has he required an atonement for sin, and why has he required repentance at all? Who does not know that no executive magistrate has a right to pardon sin unrepented of? The lowest terms upon which any ruler can exercise mercy, are repentance, or, which is the same thing, a return to obedience. Who ever heard, in any government, of a rebel's being pardoned, while he only renounced a part of his rebellion? To pardon him while any part of his rebellion is persevered in, were to sanction by a public act that which is lacking in his repentance. It were to pronounce a public justification of his refusal to render full obedience.

(5.) But have we a right to ask forgiveness while we persevere in the sin of withholding a part of our heart from him?

God has no right to forgive us, and we have no right to desire him to forgive us, while we keep back any part of the condition of forgiveness. While we persist in defrauding God and our neighbour, we cannot profess penitence and ask forgiveness without gross hypocrisy. And shall God forgive us while we cannot, without hypocrisy, even profess repentance? To ask for pardon, while we do not repent and cease from sin, is a gross insult to God.

(6.) But does the Bible recognize the pardon of present sin, and while unrepented of?

Let the passage be found, if it can be, where sin is represented as pardoned or pardonable, unless repented of and fully forsaken. No such passage can be found. The opposite of this always stands revealed expressly or impliedly, on every page of divine inspiration.

(7.) Does the Bible anywhere recognize a justification in sin?

Where is such a passage to be found? Does not the law condemn sin, in every degree of it? Does it not unalterably condemn the sinner in whose heart the vile abomination is found? If a soul can sin, and yet not be condemned, then it must be because the law is abrogated, for surely, if the law still remains in force, it must condemn all sin. James most unequivocally teaches this: "If any man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." What is this, but asserting, that if there could be a partial obedience, it would be unavailing, since the law would condemn for any degree of sin; that partial obedience, did it exist, would not be regarded as acceptable obedience at all? The doctrine, that a partial obedience, in the sense that the law is not at any time fully obeyed, is accepted of God, is sheer antinomianism. What! a sinner justified while indulging in rebellion against God!

But it has been generally held in the church, that a sinner must intend fully to obey the law, as a condition of justification; that, in his purpose and intention, he must forsake all sin; that nothing short of perfection of aim or intention can be accepted of God. Now, what is intended by this language? We have seen in former lectures, that moral character belongs properly only to the intention. If, then, perfection of intention be an indispensable condition of justification, what is this, but an admission, after all, that full present obedience is a condition of justification? But this is what we hold, and they deny. What then can they mean? It is of importance to ascertain what is intended by the assertion, repeated by them thousands of times, that a sinner cannot be justified but upon condition, that he fully purposes and intends to abandon all sin, and to live without sin; unless he seriously intends to render full obedience to all the commands of God. Intends to obey the law! What constitutes obedience to the law? Why, love, good-willing, good-intending. Intending to obey the law is intending to intend, willing to will, choosing to choose! This is absurd!

What then is the state of mind which is, and must be, the condition of justification? Not merely an intention to obey, for this is only an intending to intend, but intending what the law requires to be intended, to wit, the highest well-being of God and of the universe. Fully intending this, and not fully intending to intend this, is the condition of justification. But fully intending this is full present obedience to the law.

But again: it is absurd to say that a man can intend fully to obey the law, unless he actually fully intends what the law requires him to intend. The law requires him fully to intend the highest well-being of God and of the universe. And unless he intends this, it is absurd to say that he can intend full obedience to the law; that he intends to live without sin. The supposition is, that he is now sinning, that is, for nothing else is sin, voluntarily withholding from God and man their due. He chooses, wills, and intends this, and yet the supposition is, that at the same time he chooses, wills, intends, fully to obey the law. What is this but the ridiculous assertion, that he at the same time intends full obedience to the law, and intends not fully to obey, but only to obey in part, voluntarily withholding from God and man their dues.

But again, to the question, can man be justified while sin remains in him? Surely he cannot, either upon legal or gospel principles, unless the law be repealed. That he cannot be justified by the law, while there is a particle of sin in him, is too plain to need proof. But can he be pardoned and accepted, and then justified, in the gospel sense, while sin, any degree of sin, remains in him? Certainly not. For the law, unless it be repealed, and antinomianism be true, continues to condemn him while there is any degree of sin in him. It is a contradiction to say, that he can both be pardoned, and at the same time condemned. But if he is all the time coming short of full obedience, there never is a moment in which the law is not uttering its curses against him. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The fact is, there never has been, and there never can be, any such thing as sin without condemnation. "Beloved, if our own heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart;" that, is, he much more condemns us. "But if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." God cannot repeal the law. It is not founded in his arbitrary will. It is as unalterable and unrepealable as his own nature. God can never repeal nor alter it. He can, for Christ's sake, dispense with the execution of the penalty, when the subject has returned to full present obedience to the precept, but in no other case, and upon no other possible conditions. To affirm that he can, is to affirm that God can alter the immutable and eternal principles of moral law and moral government.

(8.) The next inquiry is, can there be such a thing as a partial repentance of sin? That is, does not true repentance imply a return to present full obedience to the law of God?

In considering this question, I will state, briefly--

(i.) What repentance is not.

(ii.) What it is.

(iii.) What is not implied in it.

(iv.) What is.

I shall in this place only state these points briefly, leaving their full consideration to their appropriate place in this course of instruction.

(i.) What repentance is not.

(*a.*) It is not a phenomenon of the intelligence. It does not consist in conviction of sin, nor in any intellectual views of sin whatever.

(*b.*) It is not a phenomenon of the sensibility. It does not consist in a feeling of regret, or remorse, or of sorrow of any kind or degree. It is not a feeling of any kind.

(ii.) What it is.

The primary signification of the word rendered repentance is, to reflect, to think again, but more particularly to change the mind in conformity with a second thought, or in accordance with a more rational and intelligent view of the subject. To repent is to change the choice, purpose, intention. It is to choose a new end,--to begin a new life,--to turn from self-seeking to seeking the highest good of being,--to turn from selfishness to disinterested benevolence,--from a state of disobedience to a state of obedience.

(iii.) What is not implied in it.

(*a.*) It does not imply the remembrance of all past sin. This would be implied if repentance consisted, as some seem to suppose, in sorrowing over every particular sin. But as repentance consists in returning or turning to God, from the spirit of self-seeking and self-pleasing to the spirit of seeking the highest well-being of God and the universe, no such thing as the remembrance of all past sin is implied in it.

(*b.*) It does not imply a continual sorrowing for past sin; for past sin is not, cannot be, ought not to be, the subject of continual thought.

(iv.) What is implied in it.

(*a.*) An understanding of the nature of sin, as consisting in the spirit of self-seeking, or in selfishness. This is implied, as a condition upon which repentance can be exercised, but it does not constitute repentance. Repentance is the voluntary turning which follows the intellectual illumination or understanding of the nature of sin.

(*b.*) A turning from this state to a state of consecration to God and the good of the universe.

(*c.*) Sorrow for past sin when it is remembered. This, and the following particulars, are implied in repentance as necessarily following from it.

(*d.*) Universal, outward reformation.

(*e.*) Emotions of hatred of sin.

(*f.*) Emotions of self-loathing on account of sin.

Certainly, if repentance means and implies anything, it does imply a thorough reformation of heart and life. A reformation of heart consists in turning from selfishness to benevolence. We have seen in a former lecture, that selfishness and benevolence cannot co-exist, at the same time, in the same mind. They are the supreme choice of opposite ends. These ends cannot both be chosen at the same time. To talk of partial repentance as a possible thing is to talk nonsense. It is to overlook the very nature of repentance. What! a man both turn away from, and hold on to sin at the same time? Serve God and mammon at one and the same time! It is impossible. This impossibility is affirmed both by reason and by Christ.

(9.) The ninth inquiry is; must not that be a gross error that represents God as pardoning and justifying a sinner in the present wilful commission of sin? I answer, yes,--

(i.) Because it is antinomianism, than which there is scarcely any form of error more God-dishonouring.

(ii.) Because it represents God as doing what he has no right to do, and, therefore, as doing what he cannot do, without sinning himself.

(iii.) Because it represents Christ as the minister of sin, and as justifying his people in their sins, instead of saving them from their sins.

(iv.) Because it represents God as making void, instead of establishing the law through faith.

(v.) Because it is a prolific source of delusion, leading multitudes to think themselves justified, while living in known sin. But perhaps it will be objected, that the sin of those who render but a partial obedience, and whom God pardons and accepts, is not a voluntary sin. This leads to the tenth inquiry:--

(10.) Can there be any other than voluntary sin?

What is sin? Sin is a transgression of the law. The law requires benevolence, good-willing. Sin is not a mere negation, or a not willing, but consists in willing self-gratification. It is a willing contrary to the commandment of God. Sin, as well as holiness, consists in choosing, willing, intending. Sin must be voluntary; that is, it must be intelligent and voluntary. It consists in willing, and it is nonsense to deny that sin is voluntary. The fact is, there is either no sin, or there is voluntary sin. Benevolence is willing the good of being in general, as an end, and, of course, implies the rejection of self-gratification, as an end. So sin is the choice of self-gratification, as an end, and necessarily implies the rejection of the good of being in general, as an end. Sin and holiness, naturally and necessarily, exclude each other. They are eternal opposites and antagonists. Neither can consist with the presence of the other in the heart. They consist in the active state of the will, and there can be no sin or holiness that does not consist in choice.

(11.) Must not present sin be sin unrepented of?

Yes, it is impossible for one to repent of present sin. To affirm that present sin is repented of, is to affirm a contradiction. It is overlooking both the nature of sin, and the nature of repentance. Sin is selfish willing; repentance is turning from selfish to benevolent willing. These two states of will, as has just been said, cannot possibly co-exist. Whoever, then, is at present falling short of full obedience to the law of God, is voluntarily sinning against God, and is impenitent. It is nonsense to say, that he is partly penitent and partly impenitent; that he is penitent so far as he obeys, and impenitent so far as he disobeys. This really seems to be the loose idea of many, that a man can be partly penitent, and partly impenitent at the same time. This idea, doubtless, is founded on the mistake, that repentance consists in sorrow for sin, or is a phenomenon of the sensibility. But we have seen that repentance consists in a change of ultimate intention,--a change in the choice of an end,--a turning from selfishness to supreme disinterested benevolence. It is, therefore, plainly impossible for one to be partly penitent, and partly impenitent at the same time; inasmuch as penitence and impenitence consist in supreme opposite choices.

So then it is plain, that nothing is accepted as virtue under the government of God, but present full obedience to his law.

REMARKS.

1. If what has been said is true, we see that the church has fallen into a great and ruinous mistake, in supposing that a state of present sinlessness is a very rare, if not an impossible, attainment in this life. If the doctrine of this lecture be true, it follows that the very beginning of true religion in the soul, implies the renunciation of all sin. Sin ceases where holiness begins. Now, how great and ruinous must that error be, that teaches us to hope for heaven, while living in conscious sin; to look upon a sinless state, as not to be expected in this world; that it is a dangerous error to expect to stop sinning, even for an hour or a moment, in this world; and yet to hope for heaven! And how unreasonable must that state of mind be, that can brand as heretics those who teach, that God justifies no one, but upon condition of present sinlessness!*(see below)

2. How great and ruinous the error, that justification is conditionated upon a faith that does not purify the heart of the believer; that one may be in a state of justification who lives in the constant commission of more or less sin. This error has slain more souls, I fear, than all the universalism that ever cursed the world.

3. We see that, if a righteous man forsake his righteousness, and die in his sin, he must sink to hell.

4. We see, that whenever a Christian sins he comes under condemnation, and must repent and do his first works, or be lost.

*Their present sinlessness is not the ground, but only a *sine quà non*, of gospel justification.--See Lecture LVI, subject, "Justification."

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XVI.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

I. *I will state briefly what constitutes obedience.*

II. *What is not implied in it.*

I. *What constitutes obedience to moral law.*

We have seen, that all the law requires is summarily expressed in the single word, *love*; that this word is synonymous with benevolence; that benevolence consists in the choice of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, as an end, or for its own sake; that this choice is an ultimate intention. In short, we have seen, that good-will to being in general is obedience to the moral law. Now the question before us is, what is not implied in this good-will, or in this benevolent ultimate intention? I will here introduce, with some alteration, what I have formerly said upon this subject.

Since the law of God, as revealed in the Bible, is the standard, and the only standard, by which the question in regard to what is not, and what is, implied in entire sanctification, is to be decided, it is of fundamental importance, that we understand what is, and what is not, implied in entire obedience to this law. It must be apparent to all, that this inquiry is of prime importance. To settle this question is one of the main things to be attended to in this discussion. The doctrine of the entire sanctification of believers in this life can never be satisfactorily settled until it is understood. And it cannot be understood, until it is known what is, and what is not, implied in it. Our judgment of our own state, or of the state of others, can never be relied upon, till these inquiries are settled. Nothing is more clear than that, in the present vague unsettled views of the church upon this question, no individual could set up a claim of having attained this state, without being a stumbling-block to the church. Christ was perfect, and yet so erroneous were the notions of the Jews, in regard to what constituted perfection, that they thought him possessed with a devil, instead of being holy, as he claimed to be. It certainly is impossible, that a person should profess to render entire obedience to the moral law, without being a stumbling-block to himself and to others, unless he and they clearly understand what is not, and what is, implied in it. I will state then, what is not implied in entire obedience to the moral law, as I understand it. The law, as epitomized by Christ, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself,"--I understand to lay down the whole duty of man to God, and to his fellow creatures. Now, the questions are, what is not, and what is, implied in perfect obedience to this law? Vague notions, in regard to the proper answer to be given to these questions, seem to me to have been the origin of much error. To settle these questions, it is indispensable that we have distinctly before our minds just rules of legal interpretation. I will, therefore, lay down some first principles, in regard to the interpretation of law, in the light of which, I think, we may safely proceed to settle these questions.

RULE 1. Whatever is inconsistent with natural justice is not, and cannot be, moral law.

2. Whatever is inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is contrary to natural justice, and, therefore, cannot be moral law.

3. That which requires more than man has natural ability to perform, is inconsistent with his nature and relations, and, therefore, is inconsistent with natural justice, and, of course, is not moral law.

4. Moral law, then, must always be so understood and interpreted, as to consist with the nature of the subjects, and their relations to each other and to the lawgiver. Any interpretation that makes the law to require more than is consistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is the same as to declare that it is not law. No authority in heaven or on earth can make that law, or obligatory upon moral agents, which is inconsistent with their nature and relations.

5. Moral law must always be so interpreted as to cover the whole ground of natural right or justice. It must be so understood and explained, as to require all that is right in itself, and, therefore, immutably and unalterably right.

6. Moral law must be so interpreted, as not to require any thing more than is consistent with natural justice, or with the nature and relations of moral beings.

7. Moral law is never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attributes, or strength, or perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess. Take for illustration the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now the simple meaning of this commandment seems to be, that we are to regard and treat every person and interest according to its relative value. We are not to understand this commandment as expressly or by implication, requiring us to know, in all cases, the exact relative value of every person and thing in the universe; for this would imply our possession of the attribute of omniscience. No mind, short of an omniscient one, can have this knowledge. The commandment, then, must be so understood, as only to require us to judge with candour of the relative value of different interests, and to treat them according to their value, and our ability to promote their good, so far as we understand it. I repeat the rule, therefore; moral law is never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attribute, or any strength and perfection of attributes, which the subject does not possess.

8. Moral law is never to be so interpreted as to require that which is naturally impossible in our circumstances. Example:--The first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c., is not to be so interpreted, as to require us to make God the constant and sole object of our attention, thought, and affection; for this would not only be plainly impossible in our circumstances, but manifestly contrary to our duty.

9. Moral law is never to be so interpreted as to make one requirement inconsistent with another. Example: if the first commandment be so interpreted as to require us to make God the only object of thought, affection, and attention, then we cannot obey the second commandment which requires us to love our neighbour. And if the first commandment is to be so understood, that every faculty and power is to be directed solely and exclusively, to the contemplation and love of God, then love to all other beings is prohibited, and the second commandment is set aside. I repeat the rule, therefore; commandments are not to be so interpreted, as to conflict with each other.

10. A law requiring perpetual benevolence must be so construed, as to consist with, and require, all the appropriate and essential modifications of this principle, under every circumstance; such as justice, mercy, anger at sin and sinners, and a special and complacent regard to those who are virtuous.

11. Moral law must be so interpreted, as that its claims shall always be restricted to the voluntary powers, in such a sense, that the right action of the will shall be regarded as fulfilling the spirit of the law, whether the desired outward action, or inward emotion, follow or not. If there be a willing mind, that is, if the will or heart is right, it is and must, in justice, be accepted as obedience to the spirit of moral law. For whatever does not follow the action of the will, by a law of necessity, is naturally impossible to us, and, therefore, not obligatory. To attempt to legislate directly over the involuntary powers, would be inconsistent with natural justice. You may as well attempt to legislate over the beating of the heart, as directly over any involuntary mental actions.

12. In morals, actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation. The maxim, "*ignorantia legis non excusat*" (ignorance of the law excuses no one), applies in morals to but a very limited extent. That actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation, will appear--

(1.) From the following scriptures;

Jam 4:17 : "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Luk 12:47-48 : "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Joh 9:41 : "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." In the first and second chapters of the epistle to the Romans, the apostle reasons at large on this subject. He convicts the heathen of sin, upon the ground that they violate their own consciences, and do not live according to the light they have.

(2.) The principle is everywhere recognized in the Bible, that an increase of knowledge increases obligation. This impliedly, but plainly, recognizes the principle that knowledge is indispensable to, and commensurate with, obligation. In sins of ignorance, the sin lies in the state of heart that neglects or refuses to be informed, but not in the neglect of what is unknown. A man may be guilty of present or past neglect to ascertain the truth. Here his ignorance is sin, or rather, the state of heart that induces ignorance, is sin. The heathen are culpable for not living up to the light of nature; but are under no obligation to embrace Christianity, until they have the opportunity to do so.

13. Moral law is to be so interpreted, as to be consistent with physical law. In other words, the application of moral law to human beings, must recognize man as he is, as both a corporeal and an intellectual being; and must never be so interpreted as that obedience to it would violate the laws of the physical constitution, and prove the destruction of the body.

14. Moral law is to be so interpreted as to recognize all the attributes and circumstances of both body and soul. In the application of the law of God to human beings, we are to regard their powers and attributes as they really are, and not as they are not.

15. Moral law is to be so interpreted as to restrict its obligation to the actions, and not to extend them to the nature or constitution of moral beings. Law must not be understood as extending its legislation to the nature, or requiring a man to possess certain attributes, but as prescribing a rule of action, suited to the attributes he at present possesses. It is not the existence or possession of certain attributes which the law requires, or that these attributes should be in a certain state of perfection; but the right use of all these attributes as they are, is what the law is to be interpreted as requiring.

16. It should be always understood, that the obedience of the heart to any law, implies, and includes general faith, or confidence in the lawgiver; but no law should be so construed as to require faith in what the intellect does not perceive. A man may be under obligation to perceive what he does not; that is, it may be his duty to inquire after and ascertain the truth. But obligation to believe with the heart, does not attach until the intellect obtains perception of the things to be believed.

Now, in the light of these rules let us proceed to inquire:--

II. *What is not implied in entire obedience to the law of God.*

1. Entire obedience does not imply any change in the substance of the soul or body; for this the law does not require; and it would not be obligatory if it did, because the requirement would be inconsistent with natural justice, and, therefore, not law. Entire obedience is the entire consecration of the powers, as they are, to God. It does not imply any change in them, but simply the right use of them.

2. It does not imply the annihilation of any constitutional traits of character, such as constitutional ardour or impetuosity. There is nothing, certainly, in the law of God that requires such constitutional traits to be annihilated, but simply that they should be rightly directed in their exercise.

3. It does not imply the annihilation of any of the constitutional appetites, or susceptibilities. It seems to be supposed by some, that the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities, are in themselves sinful, and that a state of entire conformity to the law of God implies their entire annihilation. And I have often been astonished at the fact, that those who array themselves against the doctrine of entire conformity to the law of God in this life, assume the sinfulness of the constitution of man. And I have been not a little surprised to find, that some persons who, I had supposed, were far enough from embracing the doctrine of physical moral depravity, were, after all, resorting to this assumption, in order to set aside the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. But let us appeal to the law. Does the law any where, expressly or impliedly, condemn the constitution of man, or require the annihilation of any thing that is properly a part of the constitution itself? Does it require the annihilation of the appetite for food, or is it satisfied merely with regulating its indulgence? In short, does the law of God any where require any thing more than the consecration of all the powers, appetites, and susceptibilities of body and mind to the service of God?

4. Entire obedience does not imply the annihilation of natural affection, or natural resentment. By natural affection I mean, that certain persons may be naturally pleasing to us. Christ appears to have had a natural affection for John. By natural resentment I mean, that, from the laws of our being, we must resent or feel opposed to injustice or ill-treatment. Not that a disposition to retaliate or revenge ourselves is consistent with the law of God. But perfect obedience to the law of God does not imply that we should have no sense of injury and injustice, when we are abused. God has this, and ought to have it, and so has every moral being. To love your neighbour as yourself, does not imply, that if he injure you, you should feel no sense of the injury or injustice, but that you should love him and do him good, notwithstanding his injurious treatment.

5. It does not imply any unhealthy degree of excitement of the mind. Rule 13 lays down the principle that moral law is to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical law. God's laws certainly do not clash with each other. And the moral law cannot require such a state of constant mental excitement as will destroy the physical constitution. It cannot require any more mental excitement than is consistent with all the laws, attributes, and circumstances of both soul and body, as stated in Rule 14.

6. It does not imply that any organ or faculty is to be at all times exerted to the full measure of its capacity. This would soon exhaust and destroy any and every organ of the body. Whatever may be true of the mind, when separated from the body, it is certain, while it acts through a material organ, that a constant state of excitement is impossible. When the mind is strongly excited, there is of necessity a great determination of blood to the brain. A high degree of excitement cannot long continue, without producing inflammation of the brain, and consequent insanity. And the law of God does not require any degree of emotion, or mental excitement, inconsistent with life and health. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not appear to have been in a state of continual mental excitement. When he and his disciples had been in a great excitement for a time, they would turn aside, "and rest a while."

Who that has ever philosophized on this subject, does not know that the high degree of excitement which is sometimes witnessed in revivals of religion, must necessarily be short, or that the people must become deranged? It seems sometimes to be indispensable that a high degree of excitement should prevail for a time, to arrest public and individual attention, and draw off people from other pursuits, to attend to the concerns of their souls. But if any suppose that this high degree of excitement is either necessary or desirable, or possible to be long continued, they have not well considered the matter. And here is one grand mistake of the church. They have supposed that the revival consists mostly in this state of excited emotion, rather than in conformity of the human will to the law of God. Hence, when the reasons for much excitement have ceased, and the public mind begins to grow more calm, they begin immediately to say, that the revival is on the decline; when, in fact, with much less excited emotion, there may be vastly more real religion in the community.

Excitement is often important and indispensable, but the vigorous actings of the will are infinitely more important. And this state of mind may exist in the absence of highly excited emotions.

7. Nor does it imply that the same degree of emotion, volition, or intellectual effort, is at all times required. All volitions do not need the same strength. They cannot have equal strength, because they are not produced by equally influential reasons. Should a man put forth as strong a volition to pick up an apple, as to extinguish the flames of a burning house? Should a mother, watching over her sleeping nursling, when all is quiet and secure, put forth as powerful volitions, as might be required to snatch it from the devouring flames? Now, suppose that she were equally devoted to God, in watching her sleeping babe, and in rescuing it from the jaws of death. Her holiness would not consist in the fact, that she exercised equally strong volitions, in both cases; but that in both cases the volition was equal to the accomplishment of the thing required to be done. So that persons may be entirely holy, and yet continually varying in the strength of their affections, emotions, or volitions, according to their circumstances, the state of their physical system, and the business in which they are engaged.

All the powers of body and mind are to be held at the service and disposal of God. Just so much of physical, intellectual, and moral energy are to be expended in the performance of duty, as the nature and the circumstances of the case require. And nothing is further from the truth than that the law of God requires a constant, intense state of emotion and mental action, on any and every subject alike.

8. Entire obedience does not imply that God is to be at all times the direct object of attention and affection. This is not only impossible in the nature of the case, but would render it impossible for us to think of or love our neighbour as ourselves: Rule 9.

The law of God requires the supreme love of the heart. By this is meant that the mind's supreme preference should be of God--that God should be the great object of its supreme regard. But this state of mind is perfectly consistent with our engaging in any of the necessary business of life--giving to that business that attention, and exercising about it all those affections and emotions, which its nature and importance demand.

If a man love God supremely, and engage in any business for the promotion of his glory, if his eye be single, his affections and conduct, so far as they have any moral character, are entirely holy when necessarily engaged in the right transaction of his business, although, for the time being, neither his thoughts nor affections are upon God; just as a man, who is intensely devoted to his family, may be acting consistently with his supreme affection, and rendering them the most important and perfect service, while he does not think of them at all. It is said, in my lecture on the text, "Make to yourself a new heart, and a new spirit:"--"The moral heart is the mind's supreme preference. The natural, or fleshy, heart propels the blood through all the physical system. Now there is a striking analogy between this and the moral heart. And the analogy consists in this, that as the natural heart, by its pulsations, diffuses life through the physical system, so the moral heart, or the supreme governing preference, or ultimate intention of the mind, is that which gives life and character to man's moral actions. For example, suppose that I am engaged in teaching mathematics; in this, my ultimate intention is to glorify God in this particular calling. Now, in demonstrating some of its intricate propositions, I am obliged, for hours together, to give the entire attention of my mind to that object. While my mind is thus intensely employed in one particular business, it is impossible that I should have any thoughts directly about God, or should exercise any direct affections, or emotions, or volitions, towards him. Yet if, in this particular calling, all selfishness is excluded, and my supreme design is to glorify God, my mind is in a state of entire obedience, even though, for the time being, I do not think of God."

It should be understood, that while the supreme preference or intention of the mind has such efficiency, as to exclude all selfishness, and to call forth just that strength of volition, thought, affection, and emotion, that is requisite to the right discharge of any duty, to which the mind may be called, the heart is in a right state. And this must always be the case while the intention is really honest, as was shown on a former occasion. By a suitable degree of thought and feeling, to the right discharge of duty, I mean just that intensity of thought, and energy of action, that the nature and importance of the particular duty, to which, for the time being, I am called, demand, in my honest estimation.

In making this statement, I take it for granted, that the brain, together with all the circumstances of the constitution are such that the requisite amount of thought, feeling, &c., are possible. If the physical constitution be in such a state of exhaustion, as to be unable to put forth that amount of exertion which the nature of the case might otherwise demand, even in this case, the languid efforts, though far below the importance of the subject, would be all that the law of God requires. Whoever, therefore, supposes that a state of entire obedience implies a state of entire abstraction of mind from everything but God, labours under a grievous mistake. Such a state of mind is as inconsistent with duty, as it is impossible, while we are in the flesh.

The fact is, that the language and spirit of the law have been and generally are, grossly misunderstood, and interpreted to mean what they never did, or can, mean, consistently with natural justice. Many a mind has been thrown open to the assaults of Satan, and kept in a state of continual bondage and condemnation, because God was not, at all times, the direct object of thought, affection, and emotion; and because the mind was not kept in a state of perfect tension, and excited to the utmost at every moment.

9. Nor does it imply a state of continual calmness of mind. Christ was not in a state of continual calmness. The deep peace of his mind was never broken up, but the surface or emotions of his mind were often in a state of great excitement, and at other times, in a state of great calmness. And here let me refer to Christ, as we have his history in the Bible, in illustration of the positions I have already taken. For example, Christ had all the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities of human nature. Had it been otherwise, he could not have been "tempted in all points like as we are;" nor could he have been tempted in any point as we are, any further than he possessed a constitution similar to our own. Christ also manifested natural affection for his mother and for other friends. He also showed that he had a sense of injury and injustice, and exercised a suitable resentment when he was injured and persecuted. He was not always in a state of great excitement. He appears to have had his seasons of excitement and of calm--of labour and rest--of joy and sorrow, like other good men. Some persons have spoken of entire obedience to the law, as implying a state of uniform and universal calmness, and as if every kind and degree of excited feeling, except the feeling of love to God, were inconsistent with this state. But Christ often manifested a great degree of excitement when reproving the enemies of God. In short, his history would lead to the conclusion that his calmness and excitement were various, according to the circumstances of the case. And although he was sometimes so pointed and severe in his reproof, as to be accused of being possessed of a devil, yet his emotions and feelings were only those that were called for, and suited to the occasion.

10. Nor does it imply a state of continual sweetness of mind, without any indignation or holy anger at sin and sinners.

Anger at sin is only a modification of love to being in general. A sense of justice, or a disposition to have the wicked punished for the benefit of the government, is only another of the modifications of love. And such dispositions are essential to the existence of love, where the circumstances call for their exercise. It is said of Christ, that he was angry. He often manifested anger and holy indignation. "God is angry with the wicked every day." And holiness, or a state of obedience, instead of being inconsistent with, always implies, the existence of anger, whenever circumstances occur which demand its exercise. Rule 10.

11. It does not imply a state of mind that is all compassion, and no sense of justice. Compassion is only one of the modifications of love. Justice, or willing the execution of law and the punishment of sin, is another of its modifications. God, and Christ, and all holy beings, exercise all those dispositions that constitute the different modifications of love, under every possible circumstance.

12. It does not imply that we should love or hate all men alike, irrespective of their value, circumstances, and relations. One being may have a greater capacity for well-being, and be of much more importance to the universe, than another. Impartiality and the law of love require us not to regard all beings and things alike, but all beings and things according to their nature, relations, circumstances, and value.

13. Nor does it imply a perfect knowledge of all our relations. Rule 7.

Now such an interpretation of the law as would make it necessary, in order to yield obedience, for us to understand all our relations, would imply in us the possession of the attribute of omniscience; for certainly there is not a being in the universe to whom we do not sustain some relation. And a knowledge of all these relations plainly implies infinite knowledge. It is plain that the law of God cannot require any such thing as this; and that entire obedience to the law of God, therefore, implies no such thing.

14. Nor does it imply perfect knowledge on any subject. Perfect knowledge on any subject, implies a perfect knowledge of its nature, relations, bearings, and tendencies. Now, as every single thing in the universe sustains some relation to, and has some bearing upon, every other thing, there can be no such thing as perfect knowledge on any one subject, that does not embrace universal or infinite knowledge.

15. Nor does it imply freedom from mistake on any subject whatever. It is maintained by some that the grace of the gospel pledges to every man perfect knowledge, or at least such knowledge as to exempt him from any mistake. I cannot stop here to debate this question, but would merely say, the law does not expressly or impliedly require infallibility of judgment in us. It only requires us to make the best use we can of all the light we have.

16. Nor does entire obedience imply the knowledge of the exact relative value of different interests. I have already said, in illustrating Rule 7, that the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," does not imply that we should, in every instance, understand exactly the relative value and importance of every interest. This plainly cannot be required, unless it be assumed that we are omniscient.

17. It does not imply the same degree of knowledge that we might have possessed, had we always improved our time in its acquisition. The law cannot require us to love God or man, as well as we might have been able to love them, had we always improved all our time in obtaining all the knowledge we could, in regard to their nature, character, and interests. If this were implied in the requisition of the law, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that does, or ever can perfectly obey. What is lost in this respect is lost, and past neglect can never be so remedied, that we shall ever be able to make up in our acquisitions of knowledge what we have lost. It will no doubt be true to all eternity, that we shall have less knowledge than we might have possessed, had we filled up all our time in its acquisition. We do not, cannot, nor shall we ever be able to, love God as well as we might have loved him, had we always applied our minds to the acquisition of knowledge respecting him. And if entire obedience is to be understood as implying that we love God as much as we should, had we all the knowledge we might have had, then I repeat it, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven, nor ever will be, that is entirely obedient.

18. It does not imply the same amount of service that we might have rendered, had we never sinned. The law of God does not imply or suppose, that our powers are in a perfect state; that our strength of body or mind is what it would have been, had we never sinned. But it simply requires us to use what strength we have. The very wording of the law is proof conclusive, that it extends its demand only to the full amount of what strength we have. And this is true of every moral being, however great or small.

The most perfect developement and improvement of our powers, must depend upon the most perfect use of them. And every departure from their perfect use, is a diminishing of their highest developement, and a curtailing of their capabilities to serve God in the highest and best manner. All sin then does just so much towards crippling and curtailing the powers of body and mind, and rendering them, by just so much, incapable of performing the service they might otherwise have rendered.

To this view of the subject it has been objected, that Christ taught an opposite doctrine, in the case of the woman who washed his feet with her tears, when he said, "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." But can it be that Christ intended to be understood as teaching, that the more we sin the greater will be our love, and our ultimate virtue? If this be so, I do not see why it does not follow that the more sin in this life, the better, if so be that we are forgiven. If our virtue is really to be improved by our sins, I see not why it would not be good economy both for God and man, to sin as much as we can while in this world. Certainly, Christ meant to lay down no such principle as this. He undoubtedly meant to teach, that a person who was truly sensible of the greatness of his sins, would exercise more of the love of gratitude than would be exercised by one who had a less affecting sense of ill-desert.

19. Entire obedience does not imply the same degree of faith that might have been exercised but for our ignorance and past sin.

We cannot believe anything about God of which we have neither evidence nor knowledge. Our faith must therefore be limited by our intellectual perceptions of truth. The heathen are not under obligation to believe in Christ, and thousands of other things of which they have no knowledge. Perfection in a heathen would imply much less faith than in a Christian. Perfection in an adult would imply much more and greater faith than in a child. And perfection in an angel would imply much greater faith than in a man, just in proportion as he knows more of God than man does. Let it be always understood, that entire obedience to God never implies that which is naturally impossible. It is naturally impossible for us to believe that of which we have no knowledge. Entire obedience implies, in this respect, nothing more than the heart's faith or confidence in all the truth that is perceived by the intellect.

20. Nor does it imply the conversion of all men in answer to our prayers. It has been maintained by some, that entire obedience implies the offering of prevailing prayer for the conversion of all men. To this I reply,--

(1.) Then Christ did not obey, for he offered no such prayer.

(2.) The law of God makes no such demand, either expressly or impliedly.

(3.) We have no right to believe that all men will be converted in answer to our prayers, unless we have an express or implied promise to that effect.

(4.) As, therefore, there is no such promise, we are under no obligation to offer such prayer. Nor does the non-conversion of the world imply, that there are no saints in the world who fully obey God's law.

21. It does not imply the conversion of any one for whom there is not an express or implied promise in the word of God. The fact that Judas was not converted in answer to Christ's prayer, does not prove that Christ did not fully obey.

22. Nor does it imply that all those things which are expressly or impliedly promised, will be granted in answer to our prayers; or, in other words, that we should pray in faith for them, if we are ignorant of the existence or application of those promises. A state of perfect love implies the discharge of all known duty. And nothing strictly speaking can be duty, of which the mind has no knowledge. It cannot, therefore, be our duty to believe a promise of which we are entirely ignorant, or the application of which to any specific object we do not understand.

If there is sin in such a case as this, it lies in the fact, that the soul neglects to know what it ought to know. But it should always be understood that the sin lies in this neglect to know, and not in the neglect of that of which we have no knowledge. Entire obedience is inconsistent with any present neglect to know the truth; for such neglect is sin. But it is not inconsistent with our failing to do that of which we have no knowledge. James says: "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "If ye were blind," says Christ, "ye should have no sin, but because ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth."

23. Entire obedience to the divine law does not imply, that others will of course regard our state of mind, and our outward life, as entirely conformed to the law.

It was insisted and positively believed by the Jews, that Jesus Christ was possessed of a wicked, instead of a holy spirit. Such were their notions of holiness, that they no doubt supposed him to be actuated by any other than the Spirit of God. They especially supposed so on account of his opposition to the current orthodoxy, and to the ungodliness of the religious teachers of the day. Now, who does not see, that when the church is, in a great measure, conformed to the world, a spirit of holiness in any man would certainly lead him to aim the sharpest rebukes at the spirit and life of those in this state, whether in high or low places? And who does not see, that this would naturally result in his being accused of possessing a wicked spirit? And who does not know, that where a religious teacher finds himself under the necessity of attacking a false orthodoxy, he will certainly be hunted, almost as a beast of prey, by the religious teachers of his day, whose authority, influence, and orthodoxy are thus assailed?

The most violent opposition that I have ever seen manifested to any person, has been manifested by members of the church, and even by some ministers of the gospel, towards those who, I believe, were among the most holy persons I ever knew. I have been shocked, and wounded beyond expression, at the almost fiendish opposition to such persons which I have witnessed. I have several times of late observed, that writers in newspapers were calling for examples of Christian perfection or entire sanctification, or, which is the same thing, of entire obedience to the law of God. Now I would humbly inquire, of what use is it to point the church to examples, so long as they do not know what is, and what is not, implied in entire obedience to moral law? I would ask, are the church agreed among themselves in regard to what constitutes this state? Are any considerable number of ministers agreed among themselves, as to what is implied in a state of entire obedience to the law of God? The church and the ministry are in a great measure in the dark on this subject. Why then call for examples? No man can profess to render this obedience, without being sure to be set at nought as a hypocrite or a self-deceiver.

24. Nor does it imply exemption from sorrow or mental suffering.

It was not so with Christ. Nor is it inconsistent with our sorrowing for our own past sins, and sorrowing that we have not now the health, and vigour, and knowledge, and love, that we might have had, if we had sinned less; or sorrow for those around us--sorrow in view of human sinfulness, or suffering. These are all consistent with a state of joyful love to God and man, and indeed are the natural results of it.

25. Nor is it inconsistent with our living in human society--with mingling in the scenes, and engaging in the affairs of this world, as some have supposed. Hence the absurd and ridiculous notions of papists in retiring to monasteries, and convents--in taking the veil, and, as they say, retiring to a life of devotion. Now I suppose this state of voluntary exclusion from human society, to be utterly inconsistent with any degree of holiness, and a manifest violation of the law of love to our neighbour.

26. Nor does it imply moroseness of temper and manners. Nothing is further from the truth than this. It is said of Xavier, than whom, perhaps, few holier men have ever lived, that "he was so cheerful as often to be accused of being gay." Cheerfulness is certainly the result of holy love. And entire obedience no more implies moroseness in this world than it does in heaven.

In all the discussions I have seen upon the subject of Christian holiness, writers seldom or never raise the distinct inquiry: What does obedience to the law of God imply, and what does it not imply? Instead of bringing everything to this test, they seem to lose sight of it. On the one hand, they include things that the law of God never required of man in his present state. Thus they lay a stumbling-block and a snare for the saints, to keep them in perpetual bondage, supposing that this is the way to keep them humble, to place the standard entirely above their reach. Or, on the other hand, they really abrogate the law, so as to make it no longer binding. Or they so fritter away what is really implied in it, as to leave nothing in its requirements, but a sickly, whimsical, inefficient sentimentalism, or perfectionism, which in its manifestations and results, appears to me to be anything but that which the law of God requires.

27. It does not imply that we always or ever aim at, or intend to do our duty. That is, it does not imply that the intention always, or ever, terminates on duty as an ultimate end.

It is our duty to aim at or intend the highest well-being of God and the universe, as an ultimate end, or for its own sake. This is the infinitely valuable end at which we are at all times to aim. It is our duty to aim at this. While we aim at this, we do our duty, but to aim at duty is not doing duty. To intend to do our duty is failing to do our duty. We do not, in this case, intend the thing which it is our duty to intend. Our duty is to intend the good of being. But to intend to do our duty, is only to intend to intend.

28. Nor does it imply that we always think at the time of its being duty, or of our moral obligation to intend the good of being. This obligation is a first truth, and is always and necessarily assumed by every moral agent, and this assumption or knowledge is a condition of his moral agency. But it is not at all essential to virtue or true obedience to the moral law, that moral obligation should at all times be present to the thoughts as an object of attention. The thing that we are bound to intend is the highest good of God, and of being in general. The good, the valuable, must be before the mind. This must be intended. We are under moral obligation to intend this. But we are not under moral obligation to intend moral obligation, or to intend to fulfil moral obligation, as an ultimate end. Our obligation is a first truth, and necessarily assumed by us at all times, whether it is an object of attention or not, just as causality or liberty is.

29. Nor does it imply that the rightness or moral character of benevolence is, at all times, the object of the mind's attention. We may intend the glory of God and the good of our neighbour, without at all times thinking of the moral character of this intention. But the intention is not the less virtuous on this account. The mind unconsciously, but necessarily, assumes the rightness of benevolence, or of willing the good of being, just as it assumes other first truths, without being distinctly conscious of the assumption. First truths are those truths that are universally and necessarily known to every moral agent, and that are, therefore, always and necessarily assumed by him, whatever his theory may be. Among them, are the law of causality--the freedom of moral agents--the intrinsic value of happiness or blessedness--moral obligation to will it for or because of its intrinsic value--the infinite value of God's well-being, and moral obligation to will it on that account--that to will the good of being is duty, and to comply with moral obligation is right--that selfishness is wrong. These and many such like truths are among the class of first truths of reason. They are always and necessarily taken along with every moral agent, at every moment of his moral agency. They live in his mind as intuitions or assumptions of his reason. He always and necessarily affirms their truth, whether he thinks of them, that is, whether he is conscious of the assumption, or not. It is not, therefore, at all essential to obedience to the law of God, that we should at all times have before our minds the virtuousness or moral character of benevolence.

30. Nor does obedience to the moral law imply, that the law itself should be, at all times, the object of thought, or of the mind's attention. The law lies developed in the reason of every moral agent in the form of an idea. It is the idea of that choice or intention which every moral agent is bound to exercise. In other words, the law, as a rule of duty, is a subjective idea always and necessarily developed in the mind of every moral agent. This idea he always and necessarily takes along with him, and he is always and necessarily a law to himself. Nevertheless, this law or idea, is not always the object of the mind's attention and thought. A moral agent may exercise good-will or love to God and man, without at the time being conscious of thinking, that this love is required of him by the moral law. Nay, if I am not mistaken, the benevolent mind generally exercises benevolence so spontaneously as not, for much of the time, even to think that this love to God is required of him. But this state of mind is not the less virtuous on this account. If the infinite value of God's well-being and of his infinite goodness constrains me to love him with all my heart, can any one suppose that this is regarded by him as the less virtuous, because I did not wait to reflect, that God commanded me to love him, and that it was my duty to do so?

The thing upon which the intention must or ought to terminate is the good of being, and not the law that requires me to will it. When I will that end, I will the right end, and this willing is virtue, whether the law be so much as thought of or not. Should it be said that I may will that end for a wrong reason, and, therefore, thus willing it is not virtue; that unless I will it because of my obligation, and intend obedience to moral law, or to God, it is not virtue; I answer, that the objection involves an absurdity and a contradiction. I cannot will the good of God and of being as an ultimate end, for a wrong reason. The reason of the choice and the end chosen are identical, so that if I will the good of being, as an ultimate end, I will it for the right reason.

Again: to will the good of being, not for its intrinsic value, but because God commands it, and because I am under a moral obligation to will it, is not to will it as an ultimate end. It is willing the will of God, or moral obligation, as an ultimate end, and not the good of being, as an ultimate end. This willing would not be obedience to the moral law.

Again: It is absurd and a contradiction to say, that I can love God, that is, will his good out of regard to his authority, rather than out of regard to the intrinsic value of his well-being. It is impossible to will God's good as an end, out of regard to his authority. This is to make his authority the end chosen, for the reason of a choice is identical with the end chosen. Therefore, to will anything for the reason that God requires it, is to will God's requirement as an ultimate end. I cannot, therefore, love God with any acceptable love, primarily, because he commands it. God never expected to induce his creatures to love him, or to will his good, by commanding them to do so. "The law," says the apostle, "was not made for a righteous man, but for sinners." If it be asked, then, "Wherefore serveth the law?" I answer--

(1.) That the obligation to will good to God exists antecedently to his requiring it.

(2.) He requires it because it is naturally obligatory.

(3.) It is impossible that he, being benevolent, should not will that we should be benevolent.

(4.) His expressed will is only the promulgation of the law of nature. It is rather declaratory than dictatorial.

(5.) It is a vindication or illustration of his righteousness.

(6.) It sanctions and rewards love. It cannot, as a mere authority, beget love, but it can encourage and reward it.

(7.) It can fix the attention on the end commanded, and thus lead to a fuller understanding of the value of that end. In this way, it may convert the soul.

(8.) It can convince of sin, in case of disobedience.

(9.) It holds before the mind the standard by which it is to judge itself, and by which it is to be judged.

But let it be kept in constant remembrance, that to aim at keeping the law as an ultimate end is not keeping it. It is a legal righteousness, and not love.

31. Obedience to the moral law does not imply, that the mind always, or at any time, intends the right for the sake of the right. This has been so fully shown in a former lecture, that it need not be repeated here.

32. Nor does it imply, that the benevolent mind always so much as thinks of the rightness of good willing. I surely may will the highest well-being of God and of men as an end, or from a regard to its intrinsic value, and not at the time, or at least at all times, be conscious of having any reference to the rightness of this love. It is, however, none the less virtuous on this account. I behold the infinite value of the well-being of God, and the infinite value of the immortal soul of my neighbour. My soul is fired with the view. I instantly consecrate my whole being to this end, and perhaps do not so much as think, at the time, either of moral obligation, or of the rightness of the choice. I choose the end with a single eye to its intrinsic value. Will any one say that this is not virtue?--that this is not true and real obedience to the law of God?

33. Obedience to the moral law does not imply that we should practically treat all interests that are of equal value according to their value. For example, the precept, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," cannot mean that I am to take equal care of my own soul, and the soul of every other human being. This were impossible. Nor does it mean that I should take the same care and oversight of my own, and of all the families of the earth. Nor that I should divide what little of property, or time, or talent I have, equally among all mankind. This were--

(1.) Impossible.

(2.) Uneconomical for the universe. More good will result to the universe by each individual's giving his attention particularly to the promotion of those interests that are within his reach, and that are so under his influence that he possesses particular advantages for promoting them. Every interest is to be esteemed according to its relative value; but our efforts to promote particular interests should depend upon our relations and capacity to promote them. Some interests of great value we may be under no obligation to promote, for the reason that we have no ability to promote them, while we may be under obligation to promote interests of vastly less value, for the reason, that we are able to promote them. We are to aim at promoting those interests that we can most surely and extensively promote, but always in a manner that shall not interfere with others promoting other interests, according to their relative value. Every man is bound to promote his own, and the salvation of his family, not because they belong to self, but because they are valuable in themselves, and because they are particularly committed to him, as being directly within his reach. This is a principle everywhere assumed in the government of God, and I wish it to be distinctly borne in mind, as we proceed in our investigations, as it will, on the one hand, prevent misapprehension, and, on the other, avoid the necessity of circumlocution, when we wish to express the same idea; the true intent and meaning of the moral law, no doubt, is, that every interest or good known to a moral being shall be esteemed according to its intrinsic value, and that, in our efforts to promote good, we are to aim at securing the greatest practicable amount, and to bestow our efforts where, and as it appears from our circumstances and relations, we can accomplish the greatest good. This ordinarily can be done, beyond all question, only by each one attending to the promotion of those particular interests which are most within the reach of his influence.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XVII.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE MORAL LAW.

It has been shown that the sum and spirit of the whole law is properly expressed in one word--love. It has also been shown, that this love is benevolence or good willing; that it consists in choosing the highest good of God and of universal being for its own intrinsic value, in a spirit of entire consecration to this as the ultimate end of existence. Although the whole law is fulfilled in one word--love, yet there are many things implied in the state of mind expressed by this term. It is, therefore, indispensable to a right understanding of this subject, that we inquire into the characteristics or attributes of this love. We must keep steadily in mind certain truths of mental philosophy. I will, therefore--

I. Call attention to certain facts in mental philosophy which are revealed to us in consciousness: and--

II. Point out the attributes of that love which constitutes obedience to the law of God; and, as I proceed, call attention to those states of the intelligence and of the sensibility, and also to the course of outward conduct implied in the existence of this love in any mind, implied in it as necessarily resulting from it, as an effect does from its cause.

I. *Call attention again to certain facts in mental philosophy as they are revealed in consciousness.*

1. Moral agents possess intellect, or the faculty of knowledge.

2. They also possess sensibility, or sensitivity, or in other words, the faculty or susceptibility of feeling.

3. They also possess will or the power of choosing or refusing in every case of moral obligation.

4. These primary faculties are so correlated to each other, that the intellect or the sensibility may control the will, or the will may, in a certain sense, control them. That is, the mind is free to choose in accordance with the demands of the intellect which is the law-giving faculty, or with the desires and impulses of the sensibility, or to control and direct them both. The will can directly control the attention of the intellect, and consequently its perceptions, thoughts, &c. It can indirectly control the states of the sensibility, or feeling faculty, by controlling the perceptions and thoughts of the intellect. We also know from consciousness, as was shown in a former lecture, that the voluntary muscles of the body are directly controlled by the will, and that the law which obliges the attention, the feelings, and the actions of the body to obey the decisions of the will, is physical law, or the law of necessity. The attention of the intellect and the outward actions are controlled directly, and the feelings indirectly, by the decisions of the will. The will can either command or obey. It can suffer itself to be enslaved by the impulses of the sensibility, or it can assert its sovereignty and control them. The will is not influenced by either the intellect or the sensibility, by the law of necessity or force; so that the will can always resist either the demands of the intelligence, or the impulses of the sensibility. But while they cannot lord it over the will, through the agency of any law of force, the will has the aid of the law of necessity or force by which to control them.

Again: We are conscious of affirming to ourselves our obligation to obey the law of the intellect rather than the impulses of the sensibility; that to act virtuously we must act rationally, or intelligently, and not give ourselves up to the blind impulses of our feelings.

Now, inasmuch as the love required by the moral law consists in choice, willing, intention, as before repeatedly shown; and inasmuch as choice, willing, intending, controls the states of the intellect and the outward actions directly, by a law of necessity, and by the same law controls the feelings or states of the sensibility indirectly, it follows that certain states of the intellect and of the sensibility, and also certain outward actions, must be implied in the existence of the love which the law of God requires. I say, implied in it, not as making a part of it, but as necessarily resulting from it. The thoughts, opinions, judgments, feelings, and outward actions must be moulded and modified by the state of the heart or will.

Here it is important to remark, that, in common language, the same word is often used to express either an action or attitude of the will, or a state of the sensibility, or both. This is true of all the terms that represent what are called the Christian graces or virtues, or those various modifications of virtue of which Christians are conscious, and which appear in their life and temper. Of this truth we shall be constantly reminded as we proceed in our investigations, for we shall find illustrations of it at every step of our progress.

Before I proceed to point out the attributes of benevolence, it is important to remark, that all the moral attributes of God and of all holy beings, are only attributes of benevolence. Benevolence is a term that comprehensively expresses them all. God is love. This term expresses comprehensively God's whole moral character. This love, as we have repeatedly seen, is benevolence. Benevolence is good-willing, or the choice of the highest good of God and the universe, as an end. But from this comprehensive statement, accurate though it be, we are apt to receive very inadequate conceptions of what really belongs to, as implied in, benevolence. To say that love is the fulfilling of the whole law; that benevolence is the whole of true religion; that the whole duty of man to God and his neighbour, is expressed in one word, love--these statements, though true, are so comprehensive as to need with all minds much amplification and explanation. Many things are implied in love or benevolence. By this is intended, that benevolence needs to be viewed under various aspects and in various relations, and its nature considered in the various relations in which it is called to act. Benevolence is an ultimate intention, or the choice of an ultimate end. But if we suppose that this is all that is implied in benevolence, we shall egregiously err. Unless we inquire into the nature of the end which benevolence chooses, and the means by which it seeks to accomplish that end, we shall understand but little of the import of the word benevolence. Benevolence has many attributes or characteristics. These must all harmonize in the selection of its end, and in its efforts to realize it. By this is intended that benevolence is not a blind, but the most intelligent, choice. It is the choice of the best possible end in obedience to the demand of the reason and of God, and implies the choice of the best possible means to secure this end. Both the end and the means are chosen in obedience to the law of God, and of reason. An attribute is a permanent quality of a thing. The attributes of benevolence are those permanent qualities which belong to its very nature. Benevolence is not blind, but intelligent choice. It is the choice of the highest well-being of moral agents. It seeks this end by means suited to the nature of moral agents. Hence wisdom, justice, mercy, truth, holiness, and many other attributes, as we shall see, are essential elements, or attributes, of benevolence. To understand what true benevolence is, we must inquire into its attributes. Not everything that is called love has at all the nature of benevolence. Nor has all that is called benevolence any title to that appellation. There are various kinds of love. Natural affection is called love. The affection that exists between the sexes is also called love. Our preference of certain kinds of diet is called love. Hence we say we love fruit, vegetables, meat, milk, &c. Benevolence is also called love, and is the kind of love, beyond all question, required by the law of God. But there is more than one state of mind that is called benevolence. There is a constitutional or phrenological benevolence, which is often mistaken for, and confounded with, the benevolence which constitutes virtue. This so called benevolence is in truth only an imposing form of selfishness; nevertheless it is called benevolence. Many of its manifestations are like those of true benevolence. Care, therefore, should be taken, in giving religious instruction, to distinguish accurately between them. Benevolence, let it be remembered, is the obedience of the will to the law of reason and of God. It is willing good as an end, for its own sake, and not to gratify self. Selfishness consists in the obedience of the will to the impulses of the sensibility. It is a spirit of self-gratification. The will seeks to gratify the desires and propensities, for the pleasure of the gratification. Self-gratification is sought as an end, and as the supreme end. It is preferred to the claims of God and the good of being. Phrenological, or constitutional benevolence, is only obedience to the impulse of the sensibility--a yielding to a feeling of compassion. It is only an effort to gratify a desire. It is, therefore, as really selfishness, as is an effort to gratify any constitutional desire whatever.

It is impossible to get a just idea of what constitutes obedience to the divine law, and what is implied in it, without considering attentively the various attributes or aspects of benevolence, properly so called. Upon this discussion we are about to enter. But before I commence the enumeration and definition of these attributes, it is important further to remark, that the moral attributes of God, as revealed in his works, providence, and word, throw much light upon the subject before us. Also the many precepts of the Bible, and the developements of benevolence therein revealed, will assist us much, as we proceed in our inquiries upon this important subject. As the Bible expressly affirms that love comprehends the whole character of God--that it is the whole that the law requires of man--that the end of the commandment is charity or love--we may be assured that every form of true virtue is only a modification of love or benevolence, that is, that every state of mind required by the Bible, and recognized as virtue, is, in its last analysis, resolvable into love or benevolence. In other words, every virtue is only benevolence viewed under certain aspects, or in certain relations. In other words still, it is only one of the elements, peculiarities, characteristics, or attributes of benevolence. This is true of God's moral attributes. They are, as has been said, only attributes of benevolence. They are only the essential qualities that belong to the very nature of benevolence which are manifested and brought into activity wherever benevolence is brought into certain circumstances and relations. Benevolence is just, merciful, &c. Such is its nature, that in appropriate circumstances these qualities, together with many others, will manifest themselves in executive acts.* This is and must be true of every holy being.

*A recent writer has spoken contemptuously of "being," as he calls it, "sophisticated into believing, or rather saying, that faith is love, justice is love, humility is love." I would earnestly recommend to that and kindred writers, the study of the thirteenth chapter of the first Corinthians. They will there find a specimen of what they please to call sophistry. If it is "sophistry," or "excessive generalization," as other writers seem to regard it, to represent love as possessing the attributes which comprise the various forms of virtue, it surely is the "generalization" and "sophistry" of inspiration. Generalization was the great peculiarity of Christ's preaching. His epitomizing all the commandments of God, and resolving the whole of obedience into love, is an illustration of this, and in no other way could he have exposed the delusion of those who obeyed the letter, but overlooked and outraged the spirit of the divine commandments. The same was true of the apostles, and so it is of every preacher of the gospel. Every outward act is only the expression of an inward voluntary state of mind. To understand ourselves or others, we must conceive clearly of the true spirit of moral law, and of heart-obedience to it.

II. *I will now proceed to point out the attributes of that love which constitutes obedience to the law of God.*

As I proceed I will call attention to the states of the intellect and of the sensibility, and also to the courses of outward conduct implied in the existence of this love in any mind--implied in its existence as necessarily resulting from it by the law of cause and effect. These attributes are--

1. *Voluntariness*. That is to say, it is a phenomenon of the will. There is a state of the sensibility often expressed by the term love. Love may, and often does exist, as every one knows, in the form of a mere feeling or emotion. The term is often used to express the emotion of fondness or attachment, as distinct from a voluntary state of mind, or a choice of the will. This emotion or feeling, as we are all aware, is purely an involuntary state of mind. Because it is a phenomenon of the sensibility, and of course a passive state of mind, it has in itself no moral character. The law of God requires voluntary love or good-will, as has been repeatedly shown. This love consists in choice, intention. It is choosing the highest well-being of God and the universe of sentient beings as an end. Of course voluntariness must be one of its characteristics. The word benevolence expresses this idea.

If it consist in choice, if it be a phenomenon of the will, it must control the thoughts and states of the sensibility, as well as the outward action. This love, then, not only consists in a state of consecration to God and the universe, but also implies deep emotions of love to God and man. Though a phenomenon of the will, it implies the existence of all those feelings of love and affection to God and man, that necessarily result from the consecration of the heart or will to their highest well-being. It also implies all that outward course of life that necessarily flows from a state of will consecrated to this end. Let it be borne in mind, that where these feelings do not arise in the sensibility, and where this course of life is not, there the true love or voluntary consecration to God and the universe required by the law, is not. Those follow from this by a law of necessity. Those, that is, feelings or emotions of love, and a correct outward life, may exist without this voluntary love, as I shall have occasion to show in its proper place; but this love cannot exist without those, as they follow from it by a law of necessity. These emotions will vary in their strength, as constitution and circumstances vary, but exist they must, in some sensible degree, whenever the will is in a benevolent attitude.

2. *Liberty* is an attribute of this love. The mind is free and spontaneous in its exercise. It makes this choice when it has the power at every moment to choose self-gratification as an end. Of this every moral agent is conscious. It is a free, and therefore a responsible, choice.

3. *Intelligence*. That is, the mind makes choice of this end intelligently. It not only knows what it chooses, and why it chooses, but also that it chooses in accordance with the dictates of the intellect, and the law of God; that the end is worthy of being chosen, and that for this reason the intellect demands that it should be chosen; and also, that for its own intrinsic value it is chosen.

Because voluntariness, liberty, and intelligence are *natural* attributes of this love, therefore, the following are its *moral* attributes.

4. *Virtue* is an attribute of it. Virtue is a term that expresses the moral character of benevolence; it is moral rightness. Moral rightness is moral perfection, righteousness, or uprightness. The term marks or designates its relation to moral law, and expresses its conformity to it.

In the exercise of this love or choice, the mind is conscious of uprightness, or of being conformed to moral law or moral obligation. In other words, it is conscious of being virtuous or holy; of being like God; of loving what ought to be loved, and of consecration to the right end.

Because this choice is in accordance with the demands of the intellect, therefore, the mind in its exercise, is conscious of the approbation of that power of the intellect which we call conscience. The conscience must approve this love, choice, or intention.

Again: Because the conscience approves of this choice, therefore, there is and must be a corresponding state of the sensibility. There is and must be in the sensibility a feeling of happiness or satisfaction, a feeling of complacency or delight in the love that is in the heart or will. This love, then, always produces self-approbation in the conscience, and a felt satisfaction in the sensibility, and these feelings are often very acute and joyous, insomuch that the soul, in the exercise of this love of the heart, is sometimes led to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This state of mind does not always and necessarily amount to joy. Much depends in this respect on the clearness of the intellectual views, upon the state of the sensibility, and upon the manifestation of Divine approbation to the soul. But where peace, or approbation of conscience, and consequently a peaceful state of the sensibility are not, this love is not. They are connected with it by a law of necessity, and must of course appear on the field of consciousness where this love exists. These, then, are implied in the love that constitutes obedience to the law of God. Conscious peace of mind, and conscious joy in God must be where true love to God exists.

5. *Disinterestedness* is another attribute of this love. By disinterestedness, it is not intended that the mind takes no interest in the object loved, for it does take a supreme interest in it. But this term expresses the mind's choice of an end for its own sake, and not merely upon condition that the good belongs to self. This love is disinterested in the sense that the highest well-being of God and the universe is chosen, not upon condition of its relation to self, but for its own intrinsic and infinite value. It is this attribute particularly that distinguishes this love from selfish love. Selfish love makes the relation of good to self the condition of choosing it. The good of God and of the universe, if chosen at all, is only chosen as a means or condition of promoting the highest good of self. But this love does not make good to self its end; but good to God and being in general, is its end.

As disinterestedness is an attribute of this love it does not seek its own, but the good of others. "Charity (love) seeketh not her own." It grasps in its comprehensive embrace the good of being in general, and of course, of necessity, secures a corresponding outward life and inward feeling. The intellect will be employed in devising ways and means for the promotion of its end. The sensibility will be tremblingly alive to the good of all and of each, will rejoice in the good of others as in its own, and will grieve at the misery of others as in its own. It "will rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." There will not, cannot be envy at the prosperity of others, but unfeigned joy, joy as real and often as exquisite as in its own prosperity. Benevolence enjoys everybody's good things, while selfishness is too envious at the good things of others even to enjoy its own. There is a Divine economy in benevolence. Each benevolent soul not only enjoys his own good things, but also enjoys the good things of all others so far as he knows their happiness. He drinks at the river of God's pleasure. He not only rejoices in doing good to others, but also in beholding their enjoyment of good things. He joys in God's joy and in the joy of angels and of saints. He also rejoices in the good things of all sentient existences. He is happy in beholding the pleasure of the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea. He sympathizes with all joy and all suffering known to him; nor is his sympathy with the suffering of others a feeling of unmingled pain. It is a real luxury to sympathize in the woes of others. He would not be without this sympathy. It so accords with his sense of propriety and fitness, that, mingled with the painful emotion, there is a sweet feeling of self-approbation; so that a benevolent sympathy with the woes of others is by no means inconsistent with happiness, and with perfect happiness. God has this sympathy. He often expresses and otherwise manifests it. There is, indeed, a mysterious and an exquisite luxury in sharing the woes of others. God and angels, and all holy beings know what it is. Where this result of love is not manifested, there love itself is not. Envy at the prosperity, influence, or good of others, the absence of sensible joy in view of the good enjoyed by others, and of sympathy with the sufferings of others, prove conclusively that this love does not exist. There is an expansiveness, an ampleness of embrace, a universality, and a Divine disinterestedness in this love, that necessarily manifests itself in the liberal devising of liberal things for Zion, and in the copious outpourings of the floods of sympathetic feeling, both in joys and sorrows, when suitable occasions present themselves before the mind.

6. *Impartiality* is another attribute of this love. By this term is not intended, that the mind is indifferent to the character of him who is happy or miserable; that it would be as well pleased to see the wicked as the righteous eternally and perfectly blessed. But it is intended that, other things being equal, it is the intrinsic value of their well-being which is alone regarded by the mind. Other things being equal, it matters not to whom the good belongs. It is no respecter of persons. The good of being is its end, and it seeks to promote every interest according to its relative value. Selfish love is partial. It seeks to promote self-interest first, and secondarily those interests that sustain such a relation to self as will at least indirectly promote the gratification of self. Selfish love has its favourites, its prejudices, unreasonable and ridiculous. Colour, family, nation, and many other things of like nature, modify it. But benevolence knows neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, white nor black, Barbarian, Scythian, European, Asiatic, African, nor American, but accounts all men as men, and by virtue of their common manhood, calls every man a brother, and seeks the interest of all and of each. Impartiality, being an attribute of this love, will of course manifest itself in the outward life and in the temper and spirit of its subject. This love can have no fellowship with those absurd and ridiculous prejudices that are so often rife among nominal Christians. Nor will it cherish them for a moment in the sensibility of him who exercises it. Benevolence recognizes no privileged classes on the one hand, nor proscribed classes on the other. It secures in the sensibility an utter loathing of those discriminations, so odiously manifested and boasted of, and which are founded exclusively in a selfish state of the will. The fact that a man is a man, and not that he is of our party, of our complexion, or of our town, state, or nation--that he is a creature of God, that he is capable of virtue and happiness, these are the considerations that are seized upon by this divinely impartial love. It is the intrinsic value of his interests, and not that they are the interests of one connected with self, that the benevolent mind regards.

But here it is important to repeat the remark, that the economy of benevolence demands, that where two interests are, in themselves considered, of equal value, in order to secure the greatest amount of good, each one should bestow his efforts where they can be bestowed to the greatest advantage. For example: every man sustains such relations that he can accomplish more good by seeking to promote the interest and happiness of certain persons rather than of others: his family, his kindred, his companions, his immediate neighbours, and those to whom, in the providence of God, he sustains such relations as to give him access to them, and influence over them. It is not unreasonable, it is not partial, but reasonable and impartial, to bestow our efforts more directly upon them. Therefore, while benevolence regards every interest according to its relative value, it reasonably puts forth its efforts in the direction where there is a prospect of accomplishing the most good. This, I say, is not partiality, but impartiality; for, be it understood, it is not the particular persons to whom good can be done, but the amount of good that can be accomplished, that directs the efforts of benevolence. It is not because my family is my own, nor because their well-being is, of course, more valuable in itself than that of my neighbours' families, but because my relations afford me higher facilities for doing them good, I am under particular obligation to aim first at promoting their good. Hence the apostle says: "If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Strictly speaking, benevolence esteems every known good according to its intrinsic and relative value; but practically treats every interest according to the perceived probability of securing on the whole the highest amount of good. This is a truth of great practical importance. It is developed in the experience and observation of every day and hour. It is manifest in the conduct of God and of Christ, of apostles and martyrs. It is everywhere assumed in the precepts of the Bible, and everywhere manifested in the history of benevolent effort. Let it be understood, then, that impartiality, as an attribute of benevolence, does not imply that its effort to do good will not be modified by relations and circumstances. But, on the contrary, this attribute implies, that the efforts to secure the great end of benevolence, to wit, the greatest amount of good to God and the universe, will be modified by those relations and circumstances that afford the highest advantages for doing good.

The impartiality of benevolence causes it always to lay supreme stress upon God's interests, because his well-being is of infinite value, and of course benevolence must be supreme to him. Benevolence, being impartial love, of course accounts God's interests and well-being, as of infinitely greater value than the aggregate of all other interests. Benevolence regards our neighbour's interests as our own, simply because they are in their intrinsic value as our own. Benevolence, therefore, is always supreme to God and equal to man.

7. *Universality* is another attribute of this love. Benevolence chooses the highest good of being in general. It excludes none from its regard; but on the contrary embosoms all in its ample embrace. But by this it is not intended, that it practically seeks to promote the good of every individual. It would if it could; but it seeks the highest practicable amount of good. The interest of every individual is estimated according to its intrinsic value, whatever the circumstances or character of each may be. But character and relations may and must modify the manifestations of benevolence, or its efforts in seeking to promote this end. A wicked character, and governmental relations and consideration, may forbid benevolence to seek the good of some. Nay, they may demand that positive misery shall be inflicted on some, as a warning to others to beware of their destructive ways. By universality, as an attribute of benevolence, is intended, that good-will is truly exercised towards all sentient beings, whatever their character and relations may be; and that, when the higher good of the greater number does not forbid it, the happiness of all and of each will be pursued with a degree of stress equal to their relative value, and the prospect of securing each interest. Enemies as well as friends, strangers and foreigners as well as relations and immediate neighbours will be enfolded in its sweet embrace. It is the state of mind required by Christ in the truly divine precept, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, pray for them that hate you, and do good unto them that despitefully use and persecute you." This attribute of benevolence is gloriously conspicuous in the character of God. His love to sinners alone accounts for their being to-day out of perdition. His aiming to secure the highest good of the greatest number, is illustrated by the display of his glorious justice in the punishment of the wicked. His universal care for all ranks and conditions of sentient beings manifested in his works and providence, beautifully and gloriously illustrates the truth, that "his tender mercies are over all his works."

It is easy to see that universality must be a modification or attribute of true benevolence. It consists in good-willing, that is, in choosing the highest good of being as such, and for its own sake. Of course it must, to be consistent with itself, seek the good of all and of each, so far as the good of each is consistent with the greatest good upon the whole. Benevolence not only wills and seeks the good of moral beings, but also the good of every sentient existence, from the minutest animalcule to the highest order of beings. It of course produces a state of the sensibility tremblingly alive to all happiness and to all pain. It is pained at the agony of an insect, and rejoices in its joy. God does this, and all holy beings do this. Where this sympathy with the joys and sorrows of universal being is not, there benevolence is not. Observe, good is its end; where this is promoted by the proper means, the feelings are gratified. Where evil is witnessed, the benevolent spirit deeply and necessarily sympathizes.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XVIII.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

Efficiency is another attribute or characteristic of benevolence. Benevolence consists in choice, intention. Now we know from consciousness that choice or intention constitutes the mind's deepest source or power of action. If I honestly intend a thing, I cannot but make efforts to accomplish that which I intend, provided that I believe the thing possible. If I choose an end, this choice must and will energize to secure its end. When benevolence is the supreme choice, preference, or intention of the soul, it is plainly impossible that it should not produce efforts to secure its end. It must cease to exist, or manifest itself in exertions to secure its end, as soon as, and whenever the intelligence deems it wise to do so. If the will has yielded to the intelligence in the choice of an end, it will certainly obey the intelligence in pursuit of that end. Choice, intention, is the cause of all the outward activity of moral agents. They have all chosen some end, either their own gratification, or the highest good of being; and all the busy bustle of this world's teeming population, is nothing else than choice or intention seeking to compass its end.

Efficiency, therefore, is an attribute of benevolent intention. It must, it will, it does energize in God, in angels, in saints on earth and in heaven. It was this attribute of benevolence, that led God to give his only begotten Son, and that led the Son to give himself, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

If love is efficient in producing outward action, and efficient in producing inward feelings; it is efficient to wake up the intellect, and set the world of thought in action to devise ways and means for realizing its end. It wields all the infinite natural attributes of God. It is the mainspring that moves all heaven. It is the mighty power that is heaving the mass of mind, and rocking the moral world like a smothered volcano. Look to the heavens above. It was benevolence that hung them out. It is benevolence that sustains those mighty rolling orbs in their courses. It was good-will endeavouring to realize its end that at first put forth creative power. The same power, for the same reason, still energizes, and will continue to energize for the realization of its end, so long as God is benevolent. And O! what a glorious thought, that infinite benevolence is wielding, and will for ever wield, infinite natural attributes for the promotion of good. No mind but an infinite one can begin to conceive of the amount of good that Jehovah will secure. O blessed, glorious thought! But it is, it must be a reality, as surely as God and the universe exist. It is no vain imagination; it is one of the most certain, as well as the most glorious, truths in the universe. Mountains of granite are but vapour in comparison with it. But will the truly benevolent on earth and in heaven sympathize with God? The power that energizes in him, energizes in them. One principle animates and moves them all, and that principle is love, good-will to universal being. Well may our souls cry out, Amen, go on, God-speed the work; let this mighty power heave and wield universal mind, until all the ills of earth shall be put away, and until all that can be made holy are clothed in the garments of everlasting gladness.

Since benevolence is necessarily, from its very nature, active and efficient in putting forth efforts to secure its end, and since its end is the highest good of being, it follows that all who are truly religious will, and must, from the very nature of true religion, be active in endeavouring to promote the good of being. While effort is possible to a Christian, it is as natural to him as his breath. He has within him the very main-spring of activity, a heart set on the promotion of the highest good of universal being. While he has life and activity at all, it will, and it must, be directed to this end. Let this never be forgotten. An idle, an inactive, inefficient Christian is a misnomer. Religion is an essentially active principle, and when and while it exists, it must exercise and manifest itself. It is not merely good desire, but it is good-willing. Men may have desires, and hope and live on them, without making efforts to realize their desires. They may desire without action. If their will is active, their life must be. If they really choose an ultimate end, this choice must manifest itself. The sinner does and must manifest his selfish choice, and so likewise must the saint manifest his benevolence.

9. *Penitence* must be a characteristic of benevolence, in one who has been a sinner. Penitence, as we have briefly said, and shall more fully illustrate hereafter, is not a phenomenon of the sensibility, but of the will. Every form of virtue must, of necessity, be a phenomenon of the will, and not of the intellect, or of the sensibility alone. This word is commonly used also to designate a certain phenomenon of the sensibility, to wit, sorrow for sin. This sorrow, though called penitence, is not penitence regarded as a virtue. Evangelical penitence consists in a peculiar attitude of the will toward our own past sins. It is the will's continued rejection of, and opposition to, our past sins--the will's aversion to them. This rejection, opposition, and aversion, is penitence, and is always a peculiarity in the history of those benevolent minds that have been sinners. This change in the will, most deeply and permanently affects the sensibility. It will keep the intelligence thoroughly awake to the nature, character, and tendencies of sin, to its unspeakable guilt, and to all its intrinsic odiousness. This will, of course, break up the fountains of the great deep of feeling; the sensibility will often pour forth a torrent of sorrow in view of past sin; and all its loathing and indignation will be kindled against it when it is beheld. This attribute of benevolence will secure confession and restitution, that is, these must necessarily follow from genuine repentance. If the soul forsakes sin, it will of course make all possible reparation, where it has done an injury. Benevolence seeks the good of all, of course it will and must seek to repair whatever injury it has inflicted on any.

Repentance will, and must, secure a God-justifying and self-condemning spirit. It will take all shame and all blame to self, and fully acquit God of blame. This deep self-abasement is always and necessarily a characteristic of the true penitent; where this is not, true repentance is not.

It should, however, be here remarked, that feelings of self-loathing, of self-abasement, and of abhorrence of sin, depend upon the view which the intelligence gains of the nature, and guilt, and aggravation of sin. In a sensible and manifested degree, it will always exist when the will has honestly turned or repented; but this feeling I have described gains strength as the soul, from time to time, gains a deeper insight into the nature, guilt, and tendencies of sin. It is probable that repentance, as an emotion, will always gain strength, not only in this world but in heaven. Can it be that the saints can in heaven reflect upon their past abuse of the Saviour, and not feel their sorrow stirred within them? Nor will this diminish their happiness. Godly sorrow is not unhappiness. There is a luxury in the exercise. Remorse cannot be known in heaven, but godly sorrow, I think, must exist among the saints for ever. However this may be in heaven, it certainly is implied in repentance on earth. This attribute must, and will, secure an outward life conformed to the law of love. There may be an outward morality without benevolence, but there cannot be benevolence without corresponding purity of outward life.

10. Another characteristic or attribute of benevolence is *Faith*. Evangelical faith is by no means, as some have supposed, a phenomenon of the intelligence. The term, however, is often used to express states both of the sensibility and of the intellect. Conviction, or a strong perception of truth, such as banishes doubt, is, in common language, called faith or belief, and this without any reference to the state of the will, whether it embraces or resists the truth perceived. But, certainly, this conviction cannot be evangelical faith. In this belief, there is no virtue; it is essentially but the faith of devils. The term is often used, in common language, to express a mere feeling of assurance, or confidence. Faith, to be a virtue, must be a phenomenon of the will. It must be an attribute of benevolence or love. Faith, as an attribute of benevolence, is that quality that inclines it to trust in veracity and truth as the necessary condition of securing the good of being. It is a first truth, that truth, and obedience to truth, are conditions of the good of being. Hence, in the very act of becoming benevolent, the will embraces and commits itself to truth. The reason also affirms the veracity of God. Hence, in becoming benevolent, the mind commits itself to the veracity of God. Benevolence, be it remembered, is an intelligent choice, in obedience to the law of God. Of course its very nature implies confidence in God. Such is its nature that it will, of course, embrace and be influenced by the revealed will of God, and receive this revealed will as law, in all its efforts to secure its end. This quality reveals itself in specific acts. There is an important distinction between faith, as an attribute of benevolence, and faith as a volition, or special act. The first is the cause of the last. Faith, as an attribute, is a quality that belongs to the nature of benevolence. This quality reveals itself in particular acts, or in embracing and committing itself to the testimony and will of God, in resting in the promises and declarations of God, and in the word and work of Christ. It trusts in God, this is its nature. As has been said, in the very act of becoming benevolent, the mind commits itself to truth, and to the God of truth. It obeys the law of the intellect in the act of choosing the good of being, as an ultimate end. The intellect affirms the veracity of God, and the relations of this veracity and of truth to the good of being. Hence confidence in God belongs to the very nature of benevolence. As confidence in God is an attribute of benevolence, it will, of course, employ the intellect to ascertain the truth and will of God, and put forth appropriate expressions of confidence, in specific acts, as new truths shall be discovered. Particular acts of confidence in God, or in others, or in particular truths, are executive acts, and efforts to secure the end of benevolence. It also implies that state of the sensibility which is called faith. Both the state of the intellect and the state of the sensibility just expressed are implied in faith, though neither of them makes any part of it. Faith always begets a realizing state of the sensibility. The intellect sees the truth clearly, and the sensibility feels it deeply, in proportion to the strength of the intellectual perception. But the clearest possible perception, and the deepest possible felt assurance of the truth, may consist with a state of the utmost opposition of the will to truth. But this cannot be trust, confidence, faith. The damned in hell, no doubt, see the truth clearly, and have a feeling of the utmost assurance of the truth of Christianity, but they have no faith.

Faith, then, must certainly be a phenomenon of the will, and must be a modification, or attribute, of benevolence. It is good-will or benevolence considered in its relations to the truth of God. It is good-will to God, manifested by confiding in his veracity and faithfulness. It cannot be too distinctly borne in mind, that every modification or phase of virtue is only benevolence, existing in certain relations, or good will to God and the universe, manifesting itself in the various circumstances and relations in which it is called to act.

11. *Complacency* in holiness or moral excellence, is another attribute of benevolence. This consists in benevolence contemplated in its relations to holy beings.

This term also expresses both a state of the intelligence and of the sensibility. Moral agents are so constituted, that they necessarily approve of moral worth or excellence; and when even sinners behold right character, or moral goodness, they are compelled to respect and approve it, by a law of their intelligence. This they not unfrequently regard as evidence of goodness in themselves. But this is doubtless just as common in hell as is it on earth. The veriest sinners on earth or in hell, have, by the unalterable constitution of their nature, the necessity imposed upon them, of paying intellectual homage to moral excellence. When a moral agent is intensely contemplating moral excellence, and his intellectual approbation is emphatically pronounced, the natural, and often the necessary result, is a corresponding feeling of complacency or delight in the sensibility. But this being altogether an involuntary state of mind, has no moral character. Complacency, as a phenomenon of will, consists in willing the highest actual blessedness of the holy being in particular, as a good in itself, and upon condition of his moral excellence.

This attribute of benevolence is the cause of a complacent state of the sensibility. It is true, that feelings of complacency may exist, when complacency of will does not exist. But complacency of feeling surely will exist, when complacency of will exists. Complacency of will implies complacency of conscience, or the approbation of the intelligence. When there is a complacency of intelligence and of will, there must follow, of course, complacency of the sensibility.

It is highly worthy of observation here, that this complacency of feeling is that which is generally termed love to God and to the saints, in the common language of Christians, and often in the popular language of the Bible. It is a vivid and pleasant state of the sensibility, and very noticeable by consciousness, of course. Indeed, it is perhaps the general usage now to call this phenomenon of the sensibility, love, and for want of just discrimination, to speak of it as constituting religion. Many seem to suppose that this feeling of delight in, and fondness for, God, is the love required by the moral law. They are conscious of not being voluntary in it, as well they may be. They judge of their religious state, not by the end for which they live, that is, by their choice or intention, but by their emotions. If they find themselves strongly exercised with emotions of love to God, they look upon themselves as in a state well-pleasing to God. But if their feelings or emotions of love are not active, they of course judge themselves to have little or no religion. It is remarkable to what extent religion is regarded as a phenomenon of the sensibility, and as consisting in mere feelings. So common is it, indeed, that almost uniformly, when professed Christians speak of their religion, they speak of their feelings, or the state of their sensibility, instead of speaking of their conscious consecration to God, and the good of being.

It is also somewhat common for them to speak of their views of Christ, and of truth, in a manner that shows, that they regard the states of the intellect as constituting a part, at least, of their religion. It is of great importance that just views should prevail among Christians upon this momentous subject. Virtue, or religion, as has been repeatedly said, must be a phenomenon of the will. The attribute of benevolence which we are considering, that is, complacency of will in God, is the most common light in which the scriptures present it, and also the most common form in which it lies revealed on the field of consciousness. The scriptures often assign the goodness of God as a reason for loving him, and Christians are conscious of having much regard to his goodness in their love to him; I mean in their good-will to him. They will good to him, and ascribe all praise and glory to him, upon the condition that he deserves it. Of this they are conscious. Now, as was shown in a former lecture, in their love or good will to God, they do not regard his goodness as the fundamental reason for willing good to him. Although his goodness is that, which, at the time, most strongly impresses their minds, yet it must be that the intrinsic value of his well-being is assumed, and had in view by them, or they would no sooner will good than evil to him. In willing his good they must assume its intrinsic value to him, as the fundamental reason for willing it; and his goodness as a secondary reason or condition; but they are conscious of being much influenced in willing his good in particular, by a regard to his goodness. Should you ask the Christian why he loved God, or why he exercised good-will to him, he would probably reply, it is because God is good. But, suppose he should be further asked, why he willed good rather than evil to God; he would say, because good is good or valuable to him. Or, if he returned the same answer as before, to wit, because God is good, he would give this answer, only because he could think it impossible for any one not to assume and to know, that good is willed instead of evil, because of its intrinsic value. The fact is, the intrinsic value of well-being is necessarily taken along with the mind, and always assumed by it, as a first truth. When a virtuous being is perceived, this first truth being spontaneously and necessarily assumed, the mind thinks only of the secondary reason or condition, or the virtue of the being in willing good to him.

The philosophy of the heart's complacency in God may be illustrated by many familiar examples. For instance: the law of causality is a first truth. Every one knows it. Every one assumes it, and must assume it. No one ever did or can practically deny it. Now, I have some important end to accomplish. In looking around for means to accomplish my end, I discover a certain means which I am sure will accomplish it. It is the tendency of this to accomplish my end, that my mind is principally affected with at the time. Should I be asked, why I choose this, I should naturally answer, because of its utility or tendency; and I should be conscious that this reason was upon the field of consciousness. But it is perfectly plain, that the fundamental reason for this choice, and one which was assumed, and had in fact the prime and fundamental influence in producing the choice, was the intrinsic value of the end to which the thing chosen sustained the relation of a means. Take another illustration: That happiness is intrinsically valuable, is a first truth. Every body knows and assumes it as such. Now, I behold a virtuous character; assuming the first truth, that happiness is intrinsically valuable, I affirm irresistibly that he deserves happiness, and that it is my duty to will his happiness in particular. Now, in this case, the affirmation, that he deserves happiness, and that I ought to will it, is based upon the assumption that happiness is intrinsically valuable. The thing with which I am immediately conscious of being affected, and which necessitated the affirmation of the obligation to will his particular good, and which induced me to will it, was the perception of his goodness or desert of happiness. Nevertheless, it is certain that I did assume, and was fundamentally influenced, both in my affirmation of obligation, and in my choice, by the first truth, that happiness is intrinsically valuable. I assumed it, and was influenced by it, though unconscious of it. And this is generally true of first truths. They are so universally and so necessarily assumed in practice, that we lose the direct consciousness of being influenced by them. Myriads of illustrations of this are arising all around us. We do really love God, that is, exercise good-will to him. Of this we are strongly conscious. We are also conscious of willing his actual blessedness upon conditions that he is good. This reason we naturally assign to ourselves and to others. But in this we may overlook the fact, that there is still another, and a deeper, and a more fundamental reason assumed for willing his good, to wit, its intrinsic value. And this reason is so fundamental, that we should irresistibly affirm our obligation to will his good, upon the bare perception of his susceptibility of happiness, wholly irrespective of his character.*

*Let the foregoing be read in connection with the lecture on the Moral Excellence of God being the Foundation of Obligation.

Before I dismiss this subject, I must advert again to the subject of complacent love, as a phenomenon of the sensibility, and also as a phenomenon of the intellect. If I mistake not, there are sad mistakes, and gross and ruinous delusions, entertained by many upon this subject. The intellect, of necessity, perfectly approves of the character of God where it is apprehended. The intellect is so correlated to the sensibility, that, where it perceives in a strong light the divine excellence, or the excellence of the divine law, the sensibility is affected by the perception of the intellect, as a thing of course and of necessity, so that emotions of complacency and delight in the law, and in the divine character, may and often do glow and burn in the sensibility, while the will or heart is unaffected. The will remains in a selfish choice, while the intellect and the sensibility are strongly impressed with the perception of the Divine excellence. This state of the intellect and the sensibility are, no doubt, often mistaken for true religion. We have undoubted illustrations of this in the Bible, and similar cases of it in common life. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." Isa 58:2. "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Eze 33:32.

Nothing is of greater importance, than for ever to understand, that religion is always and necessarily a phenomenon of the will; that it always and necessarily produces outward action and inward feeling; that, on account of the correlation of the intellect and sensibility, almost any and every variety of feeling may exist in the mind, as produced by the perceptions of the intellect, whatever the state of the will may be; that unless we are conscious of good-will, or of consecration to God and the good of being--unless we are conscious of living for this end, it avails us nothing, whatever our views and feelings may be.

And also, it behoves us to consider that, although these views and feelings may exist while the heart is wrong, they will certainly exist when the heart is right; that there may be feeling, and deep feeling, when the heart is in a selfish attitude, yet, that there will and must be deep emotion and strenuous action, when the heart is right. Let it be remembered, that complacency, as a phenomenon of the will, is always a striking characteristic of true love to God; that the mind is affected and consciously influenced, in willing the actual and infinite blessedness of God, by a regard to his goodness. The goodness of God is not, as has been repeatedly shown, the fundamental reason for the good will, but it is one reason or a condition, both of the possibility of willing, and of the obligation to will, his blessedness in particular. It assigns to itself and to others, his goodness as the reason for willing his good, rather than the intrinsic value of good; because this last is so universally, and so necessarily assumed, that it thinks not of mentioning it, taking it always for granted, that this will, and must be understood.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XIX.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ENTIRE OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

12. *Opposition to sin* is another attribute or characteristic of true love to God.

This attribute is simply benevolence contemplated in its relations to sin. This attribute certainly is implied in the very essence and nature of benevolence. Benevolence is good-willing, or willing the highest good of being as an end. Now there is nothing in the universe more destructive of this good than sin. Benevolence cannot do otherwise than be for ever opposed to sin, as that abominable thing which it necessarily hates. It is absurd and a contradiction to affirm, that benevolence is not opposed to sin. God is love or benevolence. He must, therefore, be the unalterable opponent of sin--of all sin, in every form and degree.

But there is a state, both of the intellect and of the sensibility, that is often mistaken for the opposition of the will to sin. Opposition to all sin is, and must be, a phenomenon of the will, and on that ground alone it becomes virtue. But it often exists also as a phenomenon of the intellect, and likewise of the sensibility. The intellect cannot contemplate sin without disapprobation. This disapprobation is often mistaken for opposition of heart, or of will. When the intellect strongly disapproves of, and denounces sin, there is naturally and necessarily a corresponding feeling of opposition to it in the sensibility, and emotion of loathing, of hatred, of abhorrence. This is often mistaken for opposition of the will, or heart. This is manifest from the fact, that often the most notorious sinners manifest strong indignation in view of oppression, injustice, falsehood, and many other forms of sin. This phenomenon of the sensibility and of the intellect, as I said, is often mistaken for a virtuous opposition to sin, which it cannot be unless it involve an act of the will.

But let it be remembered, that virtuous opposition to sin, is a characteristic of love to God and man, or of benevolence. This opposition to sin cannot possibly co-exist with any degree of sin in the heart. That is, this opposition cannot co-exist with a sinful choice. The will cannot, at the same time, be opposed to sin and commit sin. This is impossible, and the supposition involves a contradiction. Opposition to sin as a phenomenon of the intellect, or of the sensibility, may exist; in other words, the intellect may strongly disapprove of sin, and the sensibility may feel strongly opposed to certain forms of it, while, at the same time, the will may cleave to self-indulgence in other forms. This fact, no doubt, accounts for the common mistake, that we can, at the same time, exercise a virtuous opposition to sin, and still continue to commit it.

Many are, no doubt, labouring under this fatal delusion. They are conscious, not only of an intellectual disapprobation of sin in certain forms, but also, at times, of strong feelings of opposition to it. And yet they are also conscious of continuing to commit it. They, therefore, conclude, that they have a principle of holiness in them, and also a principle of sin, that they are partly holy and partly sinful, at the same time. Their opposition of intellect and of feeling, they suppose to be a holy opposition, when, no doubt, it is just as common in hell, and even more so than it is on earth, for the reason that sin is more naked there than it generally is here.

But now the inquiry may arise, how is it that both the intellect and the sensibility are opposed to it, and yet that it is persevered in? What reason can the mind have for a sinful choice, when urged to it neither by the intellect nor the sensibility? The philosophy of this phenomenon needs explanation. Let us attend to it.

I am a moral agent. My intellect necessarily disapproves of sin. My sensibility is so correlated to my intellect, that it sympathizes with it, or is affected by its perceptions and its judgments. I contemplate sin. I necessarily disapprove of it, and condemn it. This affects my sensibility. I loathe and abhor it. I nevertheless commit it. Now how is this to be accounted for? The usual method is by ascribing it to a depravity in the will itself, a lapsed or corrupted state of the faculty, so that it perversely chooses sin for its own sake. Although disapproved by the intellect, and loathed by the sensibility, yet such, it is said, is the inherent depravity of the will, that it pertinaciously cleaves to sin notwithstanding, and will continue to do so, until that faculty is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and a holy bias or inclination is impressed upon the will itself.

But here is a gross mistake. In order to see the truth upon this subject, it is of indispensable importance to inquire what sin is.

It is admitted on all hands, that selfishness is sin. Comparatively few seem to understand that selfishness is the whole of sin, and that every form of sin may be resolved into selfishness, just as every form of virtue may be resolved into benevolence. It is not my purpose now to show that selfishness is the whole of sin. It is sufficient for the present to take the admission, that selfishness is sin. But what is selfishness? It is the choice of self-gratification as an end. It is the preference of our own gratification to the highest good of universal being. Self-gratification is the supreme end of selfishness. This choice is sinful. That is, the moral quality of this selfish choice is sin. Now, in no case, is or can sin be chosen for its own sake, or as an end. Whenever any thing is chosen to gratify self, it is not chosen because the choice is sinful, but notwithstanding it is sinful. It is not the sinfulness of the choice upon which the choice fixes, as an end, or for its own sake, but it is the gratification to be afforded by the thing chosen. For example: theft is sinful. But the will, in an act of theft, does not aim at and terminate on the sinfulness of theft, but upon the gain or gratification expected from the stolen object. Drunkenness is sinful, but the inebriate does not intend or choose the sinfulness, for its own sake, or as an end. He does not choose strong drink because the choice is sinful, but notwithstanding it is so. We choose the gratification, but not the sin, as an end. To choose the gratification as an end is sinful, but it is not the sin that is the object of choice. Our mother Eve ate the forbidden fruit. This eating was sinful. But the thing that she chose or intended, was not the sinfulness of eating, but the gratification expected from the fruit. It is not, it cannot in any case be true, that sin is chosen as an end, or for its own sake. Sin is only the quality of selfishness. Selfishness is the choice, not of sin as an end, or for its own sake, but of self-gratification; and this choice of self-gratification as an end is sinful. That is, the moral quality of the choice is sin. To say that sin is, or can be, chosen for its own sake, is untrue and absurd. It is the same as saying that a choice can terminate on an element, quality, or attribute, of itself; that the thing chosen is really an element of the choice itself. This is absurd.

But it is said, that sinners are sometimes conscious of choosing sin for its own sake, or because it is sin; that they possess such a malicious state of mind, that they love sin for its own sake; that they "roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue;" that "they eat up the sins of God's people as they eat bread;" that is, that they love their own sins and the sins of others, as they do their necessary food, and choose it for that reason, or just as they do their food. That they not only sin themselves with greediness, but also have pleasure in them that do the same. Now all this may be true, yet it does not at all disprove the position which I have taken, namely, that sin never is, and never can be chosen as an end, or for its own sake. Sin may be sought and loved as a means, but never as an end. The choice of food will illustrate this. Food is never chosen as an ultimate end: it never can be so chosen. It is always as a means. It is the gratification, or the utility of it, in some point of view, that constitutes the reason for choosing it. Gratification is always the end for which a selfish man eats. It may not be merely the present pleasure of eating which he alone or principally seeks. But, nevertheless, if a selfish man, he has his own gratification in view as an end. It may be that it is not so much a present, as a remote gratification he has in view. Thus he may choose food to give him health and strength to pursue some distant gratification, the acquisition of wealth, or something else that will gratify him.

It may happen that a sinner may get into a state of rebellion against God and the universe, of so frightful a character, that he shall take pleasure in willing, and in doing, and saying, things that are sinful, just because they are sinful and displeasing to God and to holy beings. But, even in this case, sin is not chosen as an end, but as a means of gratifying this malicious feeling. It is, after all, self-gratification that is chosen as an end, and not sin. Sin is the means, and self-gratification is the end.

Now we are prepared to understand how it is that both the intellect and sensibility can often be opposed to sin, and yet the will cleave to the indulgence. An inebriate is contemplating the moral character of drunkenness. He instantly and necessarily condemns the abomination. His sensibility sympathizes with the intellect. He loathes the sinfulness of drinking strong drink, and himself on account of it. He is ashamed, and were it possible, he would spit in his own face. Now, in this state, it would surely be absurd to suppose that he could choose sin, the sin of drinking, as an end, or for its own sake. This would be choosing it for an impossible reason, and not for no reason. But still he may choose to continue his drink, not because it is sinful, but notwithstanding it is so. For while the intellect condemns the sin of drinking strong drink, and the sensibility loathes the sinfulness of the indulgence, nevertheless there still exists so strong an appetite, not for the sin, but for the liquor, that the will seeks the gratification, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it.

So it is, and so it must be, in every case where sin is committed in the face of the remonstrances of the intellect and the loathing of the sensibility. The sensibility loathes the sinfulness, but more strongly desires the thing the choice of which is sinful. The will in a selfish being yields to the strongest impulse of the sensibility, and the end chosen is, in no case, the sinfulness of the act, but the self-gratification. Those who suppose this opposition of the intellect, or of the sensibility, to be a holy principle, are fatally deluded. It is this kind of opposition to sin, that often manifests itself among wicked men, and that leads them to take credit for goodness or virtue, not an atom of which do they possess. They will not believe themselves to be morally and totally depraved, while they are conscious of so much hostility to sin within them. But they should understand, that this opposition is not of the will, or they could not go on in sin; that it is purely an involuntary state of mind, and has no moral character whatever. Let it be ever remembered, then, that a virtuous opposition to sin is always and necessarily an attribute of benevolence, a phenomenon of the will; and that it is naturally impossible, that this opposition of will should co-exist with the commission of sin.

As this opposition to sin is plainly implied in, and is an essential attribute of, benevolence, or true love to God, it follows, that obedience to the law of God cannot be partial, in the sense that we both love God and sin as the same time.

13. *Compassion for the miserable* is also an attribute of benevolence, or of pure love to God and man. This is benevolence viewed in its relations to misery and to guilt.

There is a compassion also which is a phenomenon of the sensibility. It may, and does often exist in the form of an emotion. But this emotion being involuntary, has no moral character in itself. The compassion which is a virtue, and which is required of us as a duty, is a phenomenon of the will, and is of course an attribute of benevolence. Benevolence, as has been often said, is good willing, or willing the highest happiness and well-being of God and the universe for its own sake, or as an end. It is impossible, therefore, from its own nature, that compassion for the miserable should not be one of its attributes. Compassion of will to misery is the choice or wish that it might not exist. Benevolence wills that happiness should exist for its own sake. It must therefore, wish that misery might not exist. This attribute or peculiarity of benevolence consists in wishing the happiness of the miserable. Benevolence, simply considered, is willing the good or happiness of being in general. Compassion of will is a willing particularly that the miserable should be happy.

Compassion of sensibility is simply a felling of pity in view of misery. As has been said, it is not a virtue. It is only a desire, but not willing; consequently does not benefit its object. It is the state of mind of which James speaks:--Jam 2:15-16 : "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" This kind of compassion may evidently co-exist with selfishness. But compassion of heart or will cannot; for it consists in willing the happiness of the miserable for its own sake, and of course impartially. It will, and from its very nature must, deny self to promote its end, whenever it wisely can, that is, when it is seen to be demanded by the highest general good. Circumstances may exist that render it unwise to express this compassion by actually extending relief to the miserable. Such circumstances forbid that God should extend relief to the lost in hell. But for their character and governmental relations, God's compassion would no doubt make immediate effort for their relief.

Many circumstances may exist in which, although compassion would hasten to the relief of its object, yet, on the whole, the misery that exists is regarded as the less of two evils, and therefore, the wisdom of benevolence forbids it to put forth exertions to save its object.

But it is of the last importance to distinguish carefully between compassion, as a phenomenon of the sensibility, or as a mere feeling, and compassion considered as a phenomenon of the will. This, be it remembered, is the only form of virtuous compassion. Many, who, from the laws of their mental constitution, feel quickly and deeply, often take credit to themselves for being compassionate, while they seldom do much for the downtrodden and the miserable. Their compassion is a mere feeling. It says, "Be ye warmed and clothed," but does not that for them which is needful. It is this particular attribute of benevolence that was so conspicuous in the life of Howard, Wilberforce, and many other Christian philanthropists.

It should be said, before I leave the consideration of this attribute, that the will is often influenced by the feeling of compassion. In this case, the mind is no less selfish in seeking to promote the relief and happiness of its object, than it is in any other form of selfishness. In such cases, self-gratification is the end sought, and the relief of the suffering is only a means. Pity is stirred, and the sensibility is deeply pained and excited by the contemplation of misery. The will is influenced by this feeling, and makes efforts to relieve the painful emotion on the one hand, and to gratify the desire to see the sufferer happy on the other. This is only an imposing form of selfishness. We, no doubt, often witness displays of the kind of self-gratification. The happiness of the miserable is not in this case sought as an end, or for its own sake, but as a means of gratifying our own feelings. This is not obedience of will to the law of the intellect, but obedience to the impulse of the sensibility. It is not a rational and intelligent compassion, but just such compassion as we often see mere animals exercise. They will risk, and even lay down, their lives, to give relief to one of their number, or to a man who is in misery. In them this has no moral character. Having no reason, it is not sin for them to obey their sensibility, nay, this is a law of their being. This they cannot but do. For them, then, to seek their own gratification as an end is not sin. But man has reason; he is bound to obey it. He should will and seek the relief and the happiness of the miserable, for its own sake, or for its intrinsic value. When he seeks if for no higher reason than to gratify his feelings, he denies his humanity. He seeks it, not out of regard to the sufferer, but in self-defence, or to relieve his own pain, and to gratify his own desires. This in him is sin.

Many, therefore, who take to themselves much credit for benevolence, are, after all, only in the exercise of this imposing form of selfishness. They take credit for holiness, when their holiness is only sin. What is especially worthy of notice here, is, that this class of persons appear to themselves and others, to be all the more virtuous, by how much more manifestly and exclusively they are led on by the impulse of feeling. They are conscious of feeling deeply, of being most sincere and earnest in obeying their feelings. Every body who knows them can also see, that they feel deeply, and are influenced by the strength of their feelings, rather than by their intellect. Now, so gross is the darkness of most persons upon this subject, that they award praise to themselves and to others, just in proportion as they are sure, that they are actuated by the depth of their feelings, rather than by their sober judgment.

But I must not leave this subject without observing, that when compassion exists as a phenomenon of the will, it will certainly also exist as a feeling of the sensibility. A man of a compassionate heart will also be a man of compassionate sensibility. He will feel and he will act. Nevertheless, his actions will not be the effect of his feelings, but will be the result of his sober judgment. Three classes of persons suppose themselves, and are generally supposed by others, to be truly compassionate. The one class exhibit much feeling of compassion; but their compassion does not influence their will, hence they do not act for the relief of suffering. These content themselves with mere desires and tears. They say, Be ye warmed and clothed, but give not the needed relief. Another class feel deeply, and give up to their feelings. Of course they are active and energetic in the relief of suffering. But being governed by feeling, instead of being influenced by their intellect, they are not virtuous, but selfish. Their compassion is only an imposing form of selfishness. A third class feel deeply, but are not governed by blind impulses of feeling. They take a rational view of the subject, act wisely and energetically. They obey their reason. Their feelings do not lead them, neither do they seek to gratify their feelings. But these last are truly virtuous, and altogether the most happy of the three. Their feelings are all the more gratified by how much less they aim at the gratification. They obey their intellect, and, therefore, have the double satisfaction of the applause of conscience, while their feelings are also fully gratified by seeing their compassionate desire accomplished.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XX.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

14. *Mercy* is also an attribute of benevolence. This term expresses a state of feeling, and represents a phenomenon of the sensibility. Mercy is often understood to be synonymous with compassion, but then it is not rightly understood.

Mercy, considered as a phenomenon of the will, is a disposition to pardon crime. Such is the nature of benevolence, that it will seek the good even of those who deserve evil, when this can be wisely done. It is "ready to forgive," to seek the good of the evil and unthankful, and to pardon when there is repentance. It is good-will viewed in relation to one who deserves punishment. Mercy, considered as a feeling or phenomenon of the sensibility, is a *desire* for the pardon or good of one who deserves punishment. It is only a feeling, a desire; of course it is involuntary, and has, in itself, no moral character.

Mercy will, of course, manifest itself in action, and in effort to pardon, or to procure a pardon, unless the attribute of wisdom prevent. It may be unwise to pardon, or to seek the pardon of a guilty one. In such cases, as all the attributes of benevolence must necessarily harmonize, no effort will be made to realize its end.

It was this attribute of benevolence, modified and limited in its exercise by wisdom and justice, that energized in providing the means, and in opening the way, for the pardon of our guilty race.

As wisdom and justice are also attributes of benevolence, mercy can never manifest itself by efforts to secure its end, except in a manner and upon conditions that do not set aside justice and wisdom. No one attribute of benevolence is or can be exercised at the expense of another, or in opposition to it. The moral attributes of God, as has been said, are only attributes of benevolence, for benevolence comprehends and expresses the whole of them. From the term benevolence we learn, that the end upon which it fixes is good. And we must infer, too, from the term itself, that the means are unobjectionable; because it is absurd to suppose that good would be chosen because it is good, and yet that the mind that makes this choice should not hesitate to use objectionable and injurious means to obtain its end. This would be a contradiction, to will good for its own sake, or out of regard to its intrinsic value, and then choose injurious means to accomplish this end. This cannot be. The mind that can fix upon the highest well-being of God and the universe as an end, can never consent to use efforts for the accomplishment of this end, that are seen to be inconsistent with it, that is, that tend to prevent the highest good of being.

Mercy, I have said, is the readiness of benevolence to pardon the guilty. But this attribute cannot go out in exercise but upon conditions that consist with the other attributes of benevolence. Mercy viewed by itself would pardon without repentance or condition; would pardon without reference to public justice. But viewed in connection with the other attributes of benevolence, we learn that, although a real attribute of benevolence, yet it is not and cannot be exercised, without the fulfilment of those conditions that will secure the consent of all the other attributes of benevolence. This truth is beautifully taught and illustrated in the doctrine and fact of atonement, as we shall see. Indeed, without consideration of the various attributes of benevolence, we are necessarily all in the dark, and in confusion, in respect to the character and government of God; the spirit and meaning of his law; the spirit and meaning of the gospel; our own spiritual state, and the developements of character around us. Without an acquaintance with the attributes of love or benevolence, we shall not fail to be perplexed--to find apparent discrepancies in the Bible and in the divine administration--and in the manifestation of Christian character, both as revealed in the Bible, and as exhibited in common life. For example: how universalists have stumbled for want of consideration upon the subject! God is love! Well, without considering the attributes of this love, they infer that if God is love, he cannot hate sin and sinners. If he is merciful, he cannot punish sinners in hell, &c. Unitarians have stumbled in the same way. God is merciful, that is, disposed to pardon sin. Well, then, what need of an atonement? If merciful, he can and will pardon upon repentance without atonement. But we may inquire, if he is merciful, why not pardon without repentance? If his mercy alone is to be taken in to view, that is, simply a disposition to pardon, that by itself would not wait for repentance. But if repentance is and must be, a condition of the exercise of mercy, may there not be, nay, must there not be, other conditions of its exercise? If wisdom and public justice are also attributes of benevolence, and conditionate the exercise of mercy, and forbid that it should be exercised but upon condition of repentance, why may they not, nay, why must they not, equally conditionate its exercise upon such a satisfaction of public justice, as would secure as full and as deep a respect for the law, as the execution of its penalty would do? In other words, if wisdom and justice be attributes of benevolence, and conditionate the exercise of mercy upon repentance, why may and must they not also conditionate its exercise upon the fact of an atonement? As mercy is an attribute of benevolence, it will naturally and inevitably direct the attention of the intellect to devising ways and means to render the exercise of mercy consistent with the other attributes of benevolence. It will employ the intelligence in devising means to secure the repentance of the sinner, and to remove all the obstacles out of the way of its free and full exercise. It will also secure the state of feeling which is also called mercy, or compassion. Hence it is certain, that mercy will secure efforts to procure the repentance and pardon of sinners. It will secure a deep yearning in the sensibility over them, and energetic action to accomplish its end, that is, to secure their repentance and pardon. This attribute of benevolence led the Father to give his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and it led the Son to give himself to die, to secure the repentance and pardon of sinners. It is this attribute of benevolence that leads the Holy Spirit to make such mighty and protracted efforts to secure the repentance of sinners. It is also this attribute that energized the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and in saints of every age, to secure the conversion of the lost in sin. It is an amiable attribute. All its sympathies are sweet, and tender, and kind as heaven.

15. *Justice* is another attribute of benevolence.

This term also expresses a state or phenomenon of the sensibility. As an attribute of benevolence, it is the opposite of mercy, when viewed in its relations to crime. It consists in a disposition to treat every moral agent according to his intrinsic desert or merit. In its relations to crime, the criminal, and the public, it consists in a tendency to punish according to law. Mercy would pardon--justice would punish for the public good.

Justice, as a feeling or phenomenon of the sensibility, is a feeling that the guilty deserves punishment, and a desire that he may be punished. This is an involuntary feeling, and has no moral character. It is often strongly excited, and is frequently the cause of mobs and popular commotions. When it takes the control of the will, as it often does with sinners, it leads to what is popularly called lynching, and a resort to those summary methods of executing vengeance which are so appalling.

I have said that the mere desire has no moral character. But when the will is governed by this desire, and yields itself up to seek its gratification, this state of will is selfishness under one of its most odious and frightful forms. Under the providence of God, however, this form of selfishness, like every other in its turn, is overruled for good, like earthquakes, tornadoes, pestilence, and war, to purify the moral elements of society, and scourge away those moral nuisances with which communities are sometimes infested. Even war itself is often but an instance and an illustration of this.

Justice, as an attribute of benevolence, is virtue, and exhibits itself in the execution of the penalties of law, and in support of public order, and in various other ways for the well-being of mankind.

There are several modifications of this attribute. That is, it may and must be viewed under various aspects, and in various relations. One of these is public justice. This is a regard to the public interests, and secures a due administration of law for the public good. It will in no case suffer the execution of the penalty to be set aside, unless something be done to support the authority of the law and of the lawgiver. It also secures the due administration of rewards, and looks narrowly after the public interests, always insisting that the greater interest shall prevail over the lesser; that private interest shall never set aside or prejudice a public one of greater value. Public justice is modified in its exercise by the attribute of mercy. It conditionates the exercise of mercy, and mercy conditionates its exercise. Mercy cannot, consistently with this attribute, extend a pardon but upon conditions of repentance, and an equivalent being rendered to the government. So, on the other hand, justice is conditionated by mercy, and cannot, consistently with that attribute, proceed to take vengeance when the highest good does not require it, and when punishment can be dispensed with without public loss. Thus these attributes mutually limit each other's exercise, and render the whole character of benevolence perfect, symmetrical, and heavenly.

Justice is reckoned among the sterner attributes of benevolence; but it is indispensable to the filling up of the entire circle of moral perfections. Although solemn and awful, and sometimes inexpressibly terrific in its exercise, it is nevertheless one of the glorious modifications and manifestations of benevolence. Benevolence without justice would be anything but morally lovely and perfect. Nay, it could not be benevolence. This attribute of benevolence appears conspicuous in the character of God as revealed in his law, in his gospel, and sometimes as indicated most impressively by his providence.

It is also conspicuous in the history of inspired men. The Psalms abound with expressions of this attribute. We find many prayers for the punishment of the wicked. Samuel hewed Agag in pieces; and David's writings abound in expressions that show, that this attribute was strongly developed in his mind; and the circumstances under which he was placed, often rendered it proper to express and manifest in various ways the spirit of this attribute. Many have stumbled at such prayers, expressions, and manifestations as are here alluded to. But this is for want of due consideration. They have supposed that such exhibitions were inconsistent with a right spirit. Oh, they say, how unevangelical! How un-Christ-like! How inconsistent with the sweet and heavenly spirit of Christ and of the gospel! But this is all a mistake. These prayers were dictated by the Spirit of Christ. Such exhibitions are only the manifestations of one of the essential attributes of benevolence. Those sinners deserved to die. It was for the greatest good that they should be made a public example. This the spirit of inspiration knew, and such prayers, under such circumstances, are only an expression of the mind and will of God. They are truly the spirit of justice pronouncing sentence upon them. These prayers and such-like things found in the Bible, are no vindication of the spirit of fanaticism and denunciation that so often have taken shelter under them. As well might fanatics burn cities and lay waste countries, and seek to justify themselves by an appeal to the destruction of the old world by flood, and the destruction of the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone.

Retributive justice is another modification of this attribute. This consists in a disposition to visit the offender with that punishment which he deserves, because it is fit and proper that a moral agent should be dealt with according to his deeds. In a future lecture I shall enlarge upon this modification of justice.

Another modification of this attribute is commercial justice. This consists in willing exact equivalents, and uprightness in business and all secular transactions.

There are some other modifications of this attribute, but the foregoing may suffice to illustrate sufficiently the various departments over which this attribute presides.

This attribute, though stern in its spirit and manifestations, is nevertheless one of prime importance in all governments by moral agents, whether human or divine. Indeed, without it government could not exist. It is vain for certain philosophers to think to disparage this attribute, and to dispense with it altogether in the administration of government. They will, if they try the experiment, find to their cost and confusion, that no one attribute of benevolence can say to another, "I have no need of thee." In short, let any one attribute of benevolence be destroyed or overlooked, and you have destroyed its perfection, its beauty, its harmony, its propriety, its glory. You have, in fact, destroyed benevolence; it is no longer benevolence, but a sickly, and inefficient, and limping sentimentalism, that has no God, no virtue, no beauty, nor form, nor comeliness in it, that when we see it we should desire it.

This attribute stands by, nay, it executes law. It aims to secure commercial honesty. It aims to secure public and private integrity and tranquillity. It says to violence, disorder, and injustice, Peace, be still, and there must be a great calm. We see the evidence and the illustrations of this attribute in the thunderings of Sinai, and in the agony of Calvary. We hear it in the wail of a world when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and when the windows of heaven were opened, and the floods descended, and the population of a globe were swallowed up. We see its manifestations in the descending torrent that swept over the cities of the plain; and lastly, we shall forever see its bright, but awful and glorious displays, in the dark and curling folds of that pillar of smoke of the torment of the damned, that ascends up before God for ever and ever.

Many seem to be afraid to contemplate justice as an attribute of benevolence. Any manifestations of it among men, causes them to recoil and shudder as if they saw a demon. But let it have its place in the glorious circle of moral attributes; it must have--it will have--it cannot be otherwise. Whenever any policy of government is adopted, in family or state, that excludes the exercise of this attribute, all must be failure, defeat, and ruin.

Again: Justice being an attribute of benevolence, will prevent the punishment of the finally impenitent from diminishing the happiness of God and of holy beings. They will never delight in misery for its own sake; but they will take pleasure in the administration of justice. So that when the smoke of the torment of the damned comes up in the sight of heaven, they will, as they are represented, shout "Alleluia! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;" "Just and righteous are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

Before I pass from the consideration of this topic, I must not omit to insist, that where true benevolence is, there must be exact commercial justice, or business honesty and integrity. This is as certain as that benevolence exists. The rendering of exact equivalents, or the intention to do so, must be a characteristic of a truly benevolent mind. Impulsive benevolence may exist; that is, phrenological or constitutional benevolence, falsely so called, may exist to any extent, and yet justice not exist. The mind may be much and very often carried away by the impulse of feeling, so that a man may at times have the appearance of true benevolence, while the same individual is selfish in business, and overreaching in all his commercial relations. This has been a wonder and an enigma to many, but the case is a plain one. The difficulty is, the man is not just, that is, not truly benevolent. His benevolence is only an imposing species of selfishness. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." His benevolence results from feeling, and is not true benevolence.

Again: Where benevolence is, the golden rule will surely be observed. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The justice of benevolence cannot fail to secure conformity to this rule. Benevolence is a just state of the will. It is a willing justly. It must then, by a law of necessity, secure just conduct. If the heart is just, the life must be.

This attribute of benevolence must secure its possessor against every species and degree of injustice; he cannot be unjust to his neighbour's reputation, his person, his property, his soul, his body, nor indeed be unjust in any respect to man or God. It will and must secure confession and restitution, in every case of remembered wrong, so far as this is practicable. It should be distinctly understood, that a benevolent or a truly religious man cannot be unjust. He may indeed appear to be so to others; but he cannot be truly religious or benevolent, and unjust at the same time. If he appears to be so in any instance, he is not and cannot be really so, if he is at the time in a benevolent state of mind. The attributes of selfishness, as we shall see in the proper place, are the direct opposite of those of benevolence. The two states of mind are as contrary as heaven and hell, and can no more co-exist in the same mind, than a thing can be and not be at the same time. I said, that if a man truly, in the exercise of benevolence, appears to be unjust in any thing, he is only so in appearance, and not in fact. Observe; I am speaking of one who is really at the time in a benevolent state of mind. He may mistake, and do that which would be unjust, did he see it differently and intend differently. Justice and injustice belong to the intention. No outward act can in itself be either just or unjust. To say that a man, in the exercise of a truly benevolent intention, can at the same time be unjust, is the same absurdity as to say, that he can intend justly and unjustly at the same time, and in regard to the same thing; which is a contradiction. It must all along be borne in mind, that benevolence is one identical thing, to wit, good-will, willing for its own sake the highest good of being, and every known good according to its relative value. Consequently, it is impossible that justice should not be an attribute of such a choice. Justice consists in regarding and treating, or rather in willing, every thing just agreeably to its nature, or intrinsic and relative value and relations. To say, therefore, that present benevolence admits of any degree of present injustice, is to affirm a palpable contradiction. A just man is a sanctified man, is a perfect man, in the sense that he is at present in an upright state.

16. *Veracity* is another attribute of benevolence.

Veracity, as an attribute of benevolence, is that quality that adheres to truth. In the very act of becoming benevolent, the mind embraces truth, or the reality of things. Then veracity must be one of the qualities of benevolence. Veracity is truthfulness. It is the conformity of the will to the reality of things. Truth in statement is conformity of statement to the reality of things. Truth in action is action conformed to the nature and relations of things. Truthfulness is a disposition to conform to the reality of things. It is willing in accordance with the reality of things. It is willing the right end by the right means. It is willing the intrinsically valuable as an end, and the relatively valuable as a means. In short, it is the willing of every thing according to the reality or facts in the case.

Veracity, then, must be an attribute of benevolence. It is, like all the attributes, only benevolence viewed in a certain aspect or relation. It cannot be distinguished from benevolence, for it is not distinct from it, but only a phase or form of benevolence. The universe is so constituted that if every thing proceeded and were conducted and willed according to its nature and relations, the highest possible good must result. Veracity seeks the good as an end, and truth as a means to secure this end. It wills the good, and that it shall be secured only by means of truth. It wills truth in the end, and truth in the means. The end is truly valuable, and chosen for that reason. The means are truth, and truth is the only appropriate or possible means.

Truthfulness of heart begets, of course, a state of the sensibility which we call the love of truth. It is a feeling of pleasure that spontaneously arises in the sensibility of one whose heart is truthful, in contemplating truth; this feeling is not virtue, it is rather a part of the reward of truthfulness of heart.

Veracity, as a phenomenon of the will, is also often called, and properly called, a love of the truth. It is a willing in accordance with objective truth. This is virtue, and is an attribute of benevolence. Veracity, as an attribute of the divine benevolence, is the condition of confidence in Him as a moral governor. Both the physical and moral laws of the universe evince, and are instances and illustrations of the truthfulness of God. Falsehood, in the sense of lying, is naturally regarded by a moral agent with disapprobation, disgust, and abhorrence. Veracity is as necessarily regarded by him with approbation, and, if the will be benevolent, with pleasure. We necessarily take pleasure in contemplating objective truth, as it lies in idea on the field of consciousness. We also take pleasure in the perception and contemplation of truthfulness, in the concrete realization of the idea of truth. Veracity is morally beautiful. We are pleased with it just as we are with natural beauty, by law of necessity, when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. This attribute of benevolence secures it against every attempt to promote the ultimate good of being by means of falsehood. True benevolence will no more, can no more, resort to falsehood as a means of promoting good, than it can contradict or deny itself. The intelligence affirms, that the highest ultimate good can be secured only by a strict adherence to truth. The mind cannot be satisfied with anything else. Indeed, to suppose the contrary is to suppose a contradiction. It is the same absurdity as to suppose, that the highest good could be secured only by the violation and setting aside of the nature and relations of things. Since the intellect affirms this unalterable relation of truth to the highest ultimate good, benevolence, or that attribute of benevolence which we denominate veracity or love of the truth, can no more consent to falsehood, than it can consent to relinquish the highest good of being as an end. Therefore, every resort to falsehood, every pious fraud, falsely so called, presents only a specious but real instance of selfishness. A moral agent cannot lie for God; that is, he cannot tell a sinful falsehood, thinking and intending thereby to please God. He knows, by intuition, that God cannot be pleased or truly served by a resort to lying. There is a great difference between concealing or withholding the truth for benevolent purposes, and telling a wilful falsehood. An innocent persecuted and pursued man, has taken shelter under my roof from one who pursued him to shed his blood. His pursuer comes and inquires after him. I am not under obligation to declare to him the fact that he is in my house. I may, and indeed ought to withhold the truth in this instance, for the wretch has no right to know it. The public and highest good demands that he should not know it. He only desires to know it for selfish and bloody purposes. But in this case I should not feel or judge myself at liberty to state a known falsehood. I could not think that this would ultimately conduce to the highest good. The person might go away deceived, or under the impression that his victim was not there. But he could not accuse me of telling him a lie. He might have drawn his own inference from my refusing to give the desired information. But even to secure my own life or the life of my friend, I am not at liberty to tell a lie. If it be said that lying implies telling a falsehood for selfish purposes, and that, therefore, it is not lying to tell a falsehood for benevolent purposes, I reply, that our nature is such that we can no more state a wilful falsehood with a benevolent intention, that we can commit a sin with a benevolent intention. We necessarily regard falsehood as inconsistent with the highest good of being, just as we regard sin as inconsistent with the highest good of being, or just as we regard holiness and truthfulness as the indispensable condition of the highest good of being. The correlation of the will and the intellect forbids the mistake that wilful falsehood is, or can be, the means or condition of the highest good. Universal veracity, then, will always characterize a truly benevolent man. While he is truly benevolent, he is, he must be, faithful, truthful. So far as his knowledge goes, his statements may be depended upon with as much safety as the statements of an angel. Veracity is necessarily an attribute of benevolence in all beings. No liar has, or can have, a particle of true virtue or benevolence in him.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXI.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

17. *Patience* is another attribute of benevolence.

This term is frequently used to express a phenomenon of the sensibility. When thus used, it designates a calm and unruffled state of the sensibility or feelings, under circumstances that tend to excite anger or impatience of feeling. The calmness of the sensibility, or patience as a phenomenon of the sensibility, is purely an involuntary state of mind, and although it is a pleasing and amiable manifestation, yet it is not properly virtue. It may be, and often is, an effect of patience as a phenomenon of the will, and therefore an effect of virtue. But it is not itself virtue. This amiable temper, may and often does, proceed from constitutional temperament, and from circumstances and habits.

Patience as a virtue must be a voluntary state of mind. It must be an attribute of love or benevolence; for all virtue, as we have seen, and as the Bible teaches, is resolvable into love or benevolence. The Greek term, *upomone*, so often rendered patience in the New Testament, means perseverance under trials, continuance, bearing up under afflictions or privations, steadfastness of purpose in despite of obstacles. The word may be used in a good or in a bad sense. Thus a selfish man may patiently, that is, perseveringly pursue his end, and may bear up under much opposition to his course.

This is patience as an attribute of selfishness, and patience in a bad sense of the term. Patience in the good sense, or in the sense in which I am considering it, is an attribute of benevolence. It is the quality of constancy, a fixedness, a bearing up under trials, afflictions, crosses, persecutions, or discouragements. This must be an attribute of benevolence. Whenever patience ceases, when it holds out no longer, when discouragement prevails, and the will relinquishes its end, benevolence ceases, as a matter of course.

Patience as a phenomenon of the will, tends to patience as a phenomenon of the sensibility. That is, the quality of fixedness and steadfastness in the intention naturally tends to keep down and allay impatience of temper. As, however, the states of the sensibility are not directly under the control of the will, there may be irritable or impatient feelings, when the heart remains steadfast. Facts or falsehoods may be suggested to the mind which may, in despite of the will, produce a ruffling of the sensibility, even when the heart remains patient. The only way in which a temptation, for it is only a temptation while the will abides firm to its purpose, I say, the only way in which a temptation of this kind can be disposed of, is by diverting the attention from that view of the subject that creates the disturbance in the sensibility. I should have said before, that although the will controls the feelings by a law of necessity, yet, as it does not do so directly, but indirectly, it may and does often happen, that feelings corresponding to the state of the will do not exist in the sensibility. Nay, for a time, a state of the sensibility may exist which is the opposite of the state of the will. From this source arise many, and indeed most, of our temptations. We could never be properly tried or tempted at all, if the feelings must always, by a law of necessity, correspond with the state of the will. Sin consists in willing to gratify our feelings or constitutional impulses, in opposition to the law of our reason. But if these desires and impulses could never exist in opposition to the law of reason, and, consequently, in opposition to a present holy choice, then a holy being could not be tempted. He could have no motive or occasion to sin. If our mother Eve could have had no feelings of desire in opposition to the state of her will, she never could have desired the forbidden fruit, and of course would not have sinned. I wish now, then, to state distinctly what I should have said before, that the state or choice of the will does not necessarily so control the feelings, desires, or emotions, that these may never be strongly excited by Satan or by circumstances, in opposition to the will, and thus become powerful temptations to seek their gratification, instead of seeking the highest good of being. Feelings, the gratification of which would be opposed to every attribute of benevolence, may at times co-exist with benevolence, and be a temptation to selfishness; but opposing acts of will cannot co-exist with benevolence. All that can be truly said is, that as the will has an indirect control of the feelings, desires, appetites, passions, &c., it can suppress any class of feelings when they arise, by diverting the attention from their causes, or by taking into consideration such views and facts as will calm or change the state of the sensibility. Irritable feelings, or what is commonly called impatience, may be directly caused by ill health, irritable nerves, and by many things over which the will has no direct control. But this is not impatience in the sense of sin. If these feelings are not suffered to influence the will; if the will abides in patience; if such feelings are not cherished, and are not suffered to shake the integrity of the will; they are not sin. That is, the will does not consent to them, but the contrary. They are only temptations. If they are allowed to control the will, to break forth in words and actions, then there is sin; but the sin does not consist in the feelings, but in the consent of the will, to gratify them. Thus, the apostle says, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." That is, if anger arise in the feelings and sensibility, do not sin by suffering it to control your will. Do not cherish the feeling, and let not the sun go down upon it. For this cherishing it is sin. When it is cherished, the will consents and broods over the cause of it; this is sin. But if it be not cherished, it is not sin.

That the outward actions will correspond with the states and actions of the will, provided no physical obstacle be opposed to them, is a universal truth. But that feelings and desires cannot exist contrary to the states or decisions of my will, is not true. If this were a universal truth, temptation, as I have said, could not exist. The outward actions will be as the will is, always; the feelings generally. Feelings corresponding to the choice of the will, will be the rule, and opposing feelings the exception. But these exceptions may and do exist in perfectly holy beings. They existed in Eve before she consented to sin, and had she resisted them, she had not sinned. They doubtless existed in Christ, or he could not have been tempted in all points like as we are. If there be no desires or impulses of the sensibility contrary to the state of the will, there is not properly any temptation. The desire or impulse must appear on the field of consciousness before it is a motive to action, and of course before it is a temptation to self-indulgence. Just as certainly then as a holy being may be tempted, and not sin, just so certain it is that emotions of any kind, or of any strength, may exist in the sensibility without sin. If they are not indulged, if the will does not consent to them, and to their indulgence or gratification, the soul is not the less virtuous for their presence. Patience as a phenomenon of the will must strengthen and gird itself under such circumstances, so that patience of will may be, and if it exist at all, must be, in exact proportion to the impatience of the sensibility. The more impatience of sensibility there is, the more patience of will there must be, or virtue will cease altogether. So that it is not always true, that virtue is strongest when the sensibility is most calm, placid, and patient. When Christ passed through his greatest conflicts, his virtue as a man was undoubtedly most intense. When in his agony in the garden, so great was the anguish of his sensibility, that he sweat as it were great drops of blood. This, he says, was the hour of the prince of darkness. This was his great trial. But did he sin? No, indeed. But why? Was he calm and placid as a summer's evening? As far from it as possible.

Patience, then, as an attribute of benevolence, consists, not in placid feeling, but in perseverance under trials and states of the sensibility that tend to selfishness. This is only benevolence viewed in a certain aspect. It is benevolence under circumstances of discouragement, of trial, or temptation. "This is the patience of the saints."

Before dismissing the subject of patience as an emotion, I would observe that, the steadfastness of the heart tends so strongly to secure patience, that if an opposite state of the sensibility is more than of momentary duration, there is strong presumption that the heart is not steadfast in love. The first risings of it will produce an immediate effort to suppress it. If it continues, this is evidence that the attention is allowed to dwell upon the cause of it. This shows that the will is in some sense indulging it.

If it so far influences the will as to manifest itself in impatient words and actions, there must be a yielding of the will. Patience, as an attribute of benevolence is overcome. If the sensibility were perfectly and directly under the control of the will, the least degree of impatience would imply sin. But as it is not directly, but indirectly under the control of the will, momentary impatience of feeling, when it does not at all influence the will, and when it is not at all indulged, is not sure evidence of a sinful state of the will. It should always be borne in mind, that neither patience nor impatience, in the form of mere feeling, existing for any length of time, and in any degree, is in itself either holy on the one hand, or sinful on the other. All that can be said of these states of the sensibility is, that they indicate, as a general thing, the attitude of the will. When the will is for a long time steadfast in its patience, the result is great equanimity of temper, and great patience of feeling. This comes to be a law of the sensibility, insomuch that very advanced saints may, and doubtless do, experience the most entire patience of feeling for many years together. This does not constitute their holiness, but is a sweet fruit of it. It is to be regarded rather in the light of a reward of holiness, than as holiness itself.

18. Another attribute of benevolence is *Meekness*.

Meekness, considered as a virtue, is a phenomenon of the will. This term also expresses a state of the sensibility. When used to designate a phenomenon of the sensibility, it is nearly synonymous with patience. It designates a sweet and forbearing temper under provocation. Meekness, a phenomenon of the will, and as an attribute of benevolence, is the opposite both of resistance to injury and of retaliation. It is properly and strictly forbearance under injurious treatment. This certainly is an attribute of God, as our existence and our being out of hell plainly demonstrate. Christ said of himself that he was "meek and lowly in heart;" and this surely was no vain boast. How admirably, and how incessantly did this attribute of his love manifest itself! The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a prophecy exhibiting this attribute in a most affecting light. Indeed, scarcely any feature of the character of God and of Christ is more strikingly exhibited than this. It must evidently be an attribute of benevolence. Benevolence is good-will to all beings. We are naturally forbearing toward those whose good we honestly and diligently seek. If our hearts are set upon doing them good, we shall naturally exercise great forbearance toward them. God has greatly commended his forbearance to us, in that, while we were yet his enemies, he forbore to punish us, and gave his Son to die for us. Forbearance is a sweet and amiable attribute. How affectingly it displayed itself in the hall of Pilate, and on the cross. "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

This attribute has in this world abundant opportunity to develope and display itself in the saints. There are daily occasions for the exercise of this form of virtue. Indeed, all the attributes of benevolence are called into frequent exercise in this school of discipline. This is indeed a suitable world in which to train God's children, to develope and strengthen every modification of holiness. This attribute must always appear where benevolence exists, and wherever there is an occasion for its exercise.

It is delightful to contemplate the perfection and glory of that love which constitutes obedience to the law of God. As occasions arise, we behold it developing one attribute after another, and there may be many of its attributes and modifications of which we have as yet no idea whatever. Circumstances will call them into exercise. It is probable, if not certain, that the attributes of benevolence were very imperfectly known in heaven previous to the existence of sin in the universe, and that but for sin many of these attributes would never have been manifested in exercise. But the existence of sin, great as the evil is, has afforded an opportunity for benevolence to manifest its beautiful phases, and to develope its sweet attributes in a most enchanting manner. Thus the divine economy of benevolence brings good out of so great an evil.

A hasty and unforbearing spirit is always demonstrative evidence of a want of benevolence, or true religion. Meekness is, and must be, a peculiar characteristic of the saints in this world, where there is so much provocation. Christ frequently and strongly enforced the obligation to forbearance. "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." How beautiful!

19. *Long-suffering* is another attribute of benevolence.

This attribute is hardly distinguishable from meekness or forbearance. It seems to be an intense form of forbearance; or it is forbearance exercised long and under great suffering from persecution and unreasonable opposition. God's forbearance is lengthened out to long-suffering. Christ's forbearance, also, was and is often put to the severest trial, and is lengthened out to most affecting long-suffering. This is an intense state or form of benevolence, when it is most sorely tried, and, as it were, put upon the rack. The prophets, and Christ, and the apostles, the martyrs, and primitive saints, and many in different ages of the church, have given forth a glorious specimen and illustration of this sweet attribute of love. But for the existence of sin, however, it is probable and perhaps certain, that no being but God could have had an idea of its existence. The same, no doubt, may be said of many of the attributes of divine love. God has intended to exhibit strongly this attribute in himself, and in all his saints and angels. The introduction of sin, excuseless and abominable as it is, has given occasion for a most thorough developement, and a most affecting manifestation of this attribute of love. It is a sweet, a heavenly attribute. It is most opposite to the spirit and maxims of this world. It is the very contrast of the law and the spirit of honour, as it appears in this world. The law of honour says, If you receive an injury or an insult, resent it sharply, and retaliate it fully. This gentle spirit says, If you receive many insults and injuries, do not resent them, nor retaliate, but bear and forbear even to long-suffering. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

20. *Humility* is another modification or attribute of love.

This term seems often to be used to express a sense of unworthiness, of guilt, of ignorance, and of nothingness, to express a feeling of ill-desert. It seems to be used in common language to express sometimes a state of the intelligence, when it seems to indicate a clear perception of our guilt. When used to designate a state of the sensibility, it represents those feelings of shame and unworthiness, of ignorance, and of nothingness, of which those are most deeply conscious who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in respect to their true character.

But as a phenomenon of the will, and as an attribute of love, it consists in a willingness to be known and appreciated according to our real character. Humility, as a phenomenon either of the sensibility or of the intelligence, may co-exist with great pride of heart. Pride is a disposition to exalt self, to get above others, to hide our defects, and to pass for more than we are. Deep conviction of sin, and deep feelings of shame, of ignorance, and of desert of hell, may co-exist with a great unwillingness to confess and be known just as we are, and to be appreciated just according to what our real character has been and is. There is no virtue in such humility. But humility, considered as a virtue, consists in the consent of the will to be known, to confess, and to take our proper place in the scale of being. It is that peculiarity of love that wills the good of being so disinterestedly, as to will to pass for no other than we really are. This is an honest, a sweet, and amiable feature of love. It must perhaps, be peculiar to those who have sinned. It is only love acting under or in a certain relation, or in reference to a peculiar set of circumstances. It would, under the same circumstances, develope and manifest itself in all truly benevolent minds. This attribute will render confession of sin to God and man natural, and even make it a luxury. It is easy to see that, but for this attribute, the saints could not be happy in heaven. God has promised to bring into judgment every work and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Now while pride exists, it would greatly pain the soul to have all the character known. So that, unless this attribute really belongs to the saints, they would be ashamed at the judgment, and filled with confusion even in heaven itself. But this sweet attribute will secure them against that shame and confusion of face that would otherwise render heaven itself a hell to them. They will be perfectly willing and happy to be known and estimated according to their characters. This attribute will secure in all the saints on earth that confession of faults one to another, which is so often enjoined in the Bible. By this it is not intended, that Christians always think it wise and necessary to make confession of all their secret sins to man. But it is intended, that they will confess to those whom they have injured, and to all to whom benevolence demands that they should confess. This attribute secures its possessor against spiritual pride, against ambition to get above others. It is a modest and unassuming state of mind.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXII.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

21. *Self-denial* is another attribute of love.

If we love any being better than ourselves, we of course deny ourselves when our own interests come in competition with his. Love is good-will. If I will good to others more than to myself, it is absurd to say that I shall not deny myself when my own inclinations conflict with their good.

Now the love required by the law of God, we have repeatedly seen to be good will, or willing the highest good of being for its own sake, or as an end.

As the interests of self are not at all regarded because they belong to self, but only according to their relative value, it must be certain, that self-denial for the sake of promoting the higher interests of God and of the universe, is and must be a peculiarity or attribute of love.

But again. The very idea of disinterested benevolence, and there is no other true benevolence, implies the abandonment of the spirit of self-seeking, or of selfishness. It is impossible to become benevolent, without ceasing to be selfish. In other words, perfect self-denial is implied in beginning to be benevolent. Self-indulgence ceases where benevolence begins. This must be. Benevolence is the consecration of our powers to the highest good of being in general as an end. This is utterly inconsistent with consecration to self-interest or self-gratification. Selfishness makes good to self the end of every choice. Benevolence makes good to being in general the end of every choice. Benevolence, then, implies complete self-denial. That is, it implies that nothing is chosen merely because it belongs to self, but only because of its relative value, and in proportion to it.

I said there was no true benevolence, but disinterested benevolence; no true love, but disinterested love. There is such a thing as interested love or benevolence. That is, the good of others is willed, though not as an end, or for its intrinsic value to them, but as a means of our own happiness, or because of its relative value to us. Thus a man might will the good of his family, or of his neighbourhood, or country, or of anybody, or anything that sustained such relations to self as to involve his own interests. When the ultimate reason of his willing good to others is, that his own may be promoted, this is selfishness. It is making good to self his end. This a sinner may do toward God, toward the church, and toward the interests of religion in general. This is what I call interested benevolence. It is willing good as an end only to self, and to all others only as a means of promoting our own good.

But again: when the will is governed by mere feeling in willing the good of others, this is only the spirit of self-indulgence, and is only interested benevolence. For example: the feeling of compassion is strongly excited by the presence of misery. The feeling is intense, and constitutes, like all the feelings, a strong impulse or motive to the will to consent to its gratification. For the time being, this impulse is stronger than the feeling of avarice, or any other feeling. I yield to it, and then give all the money I have to relieve the sufferer. I even take my clothes from my back, and give them to him. Now in this case, I am just as selfish as if I had sold my clothes to gratify my appetite for strong drink. The gratification of my feelings was my end. This is one of the most specious and most delusive forms of selfishness.

Again: when one makes his own salvation the end of prayer, of almsgiving, and of all his religious duties, this is only selfishness and not true religion, however much he may abound in them. This is only interested benevolence, or benevolence to self.

Again: from the very nature of true benevolence, it is impossible that every interest should not be regarded according to its relative value. When another interest is seen by me to be more valuable in itself, or of more value to God and the universe than my own, and when I see that, by denying myself, I can promote it, it is certain, if I am benevolent, that I shall do it. I cannot fail to do it, without failing to be benevolent. Two things in this case must be apprehended by the mind.

(1.) That the interest is either intrinsically or relatively more valuable than my own.

(2.) That, by denying myself, I can promote or secure a greater good to being, than I sacrifice of my own. When these two conditions are fulfilled, it is impossible that I should remain benevolent, unless I deny myself, and seek the higher good.

Benevolence is an honest and disinterested consecration of the whole being to the highest good of God and of the universe. The benevolent man will, therefore, and must, honestly weigh each interest as it is perceived in the balance of his own best judgment, and will always give the preference to the higher interest, provided he believes, that he can by endeavour, and by self-denial secure it.

That self-denial is an attribute of the divine love, is manifested most gloriously and affectingly in God's gift of his Son to die for men. This attribute was also most conspicuously manifested by Christ, in denying himself, and taking up his cross, and suffering for his enemies. Observe. It was not for friends that Christ gave himself. It was not unfortunate but innocent sufferers for whom God gave his Son, or for whom he gave himself. It was for enemies. It was not that he might make slaves of them that he gave his Son, nor from any selfish consideration whatever, but because he foresaw that, by making this sacrifice himself, he could secure to the universe a greater good than he should sacrifice. It was this attribute of benevolence that caused him to give his Son to suffer so much. It was disinterested benevolence alone that led him to deny himself, for the sake of a greater good to the universe. Now observe: this sacrifice would not have been made, unless it had been regarded by God as the less of two natural evils. That is, the sufferings of Christ, great and overwhelming as they were, were considered as an evil of less magnitude than the eternal sufferings of sinners. This induced him to make the sacrifice, although for his enemies. It mattered not whether for friends or for enemies, if so be he could, by making a less sacrifice, secure a greater good to them. When I come to consider the economy of benevolence, I may enlarge upon this topic.

Let it be understood, that a self-indulgent spirit is never, and can never be, consistent with benevolence. No form of self-indulgence, properly so called, can exist where true benevolence exists. The fact is, self-denial must be, and universally is, wherever benevolence reigns. Christ has expressly made whole-hearted self-denial a condition of discipleship; which is the same thing as to affirm, that it is an essential attribute of holiness or love; that there cannot be the beginning of true virtue without it.

Again: much that passes for self-denial is only a specious form of self-indulgence. The penances and self-mortifications, as they are falsely called, of the superstitious, what are they after all but a self-indulgent spirit? A popish priest abstains from marriage to obtain the honour, and emoluments, and the influence of the priestly office here, and eternal glory hereafter. A nun takes the veil, and a monk immures himself in a monastery; a hermit forsakes human society, and shuts himself up in a cave; a devotee makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, and a martyr goes to the stake. Now if these things are done with an ultimate reference to their own glory and happiness, although apparently instances of great self-denial, yet they are, in fact, only a spirit of self-indulgence and self-seeking. They are only following the strongest desire of good to self. They are obviously instances of choosing good to self, as the supreme and final end.

There are many mistakes upon this subject. For example; it is common for persons to deny self in one form, for the sake of gratifying self in another form. In one man avarice is the ruling passion. He will labour hard, rise early, and sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness, and deny himself even the necessaries of life, for the sake of accumulating wealth. Every one can see, that this is denying self in one form merely for the sake of gratifying self in another form. Yet this man will complain bitterly of the self-indulgent spirit manifested by others, their extravagance and want of piety.

One man will deny all his bodily appetites and passions for the sake of a reputation with men. This is also an instance of the same kind. Another will give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul; will sacrifice everything else to obtain an eternal inheritance, and be just as selfish as the man who sacrifices to the things of time his soul and all the riches of eternity.

But it should be remarked, that this attribute of benevolence does and must secure the subjugation of all the propensities. It must, either suddenly or gradually, so far subdue and quiet them, that their imperious clamour must cease. They will, as it were, be slain, either suddenly or gradually, so that the sensibility will become, in a great measure, dead to those objects that so often and so easily excited it. It is a law of the sensibility--of all the desires and passions, that their indulgence developes and strengthens them, and their denial suppresses them. Benevolence consists in a refusal to gratify the sensibility, and in obeying the reason. Therefore it must be true, that this denial of the propensities will greatly suppress them; while the indulgence of the intellect and of the conscience will greatly develope them. Thus selfishness tends to stultify, while benevolence tends greatly to strengthen the intellect.

22. *Condescension* is another attribute of love.

This attribute consists in a tendency to descend to the poor, the ignorant, or the vile, for the purpose of securing their good. It is a tendency to seek the good of those whom Providence has placed in any respect below us, by stooping, descending, coming down to them for this purpose. It is a peculiar form of self-denial. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, manifest infinite condescension in efforts to secure the well-being of sinners, even the most vile and degraded. This attribute is called by Christ lowliness of heart. God is said to humble himself, that is, to condescend when he beholds the things that are done in heaven. This is true, for every creature is, and must for ever be, infinitely below Him in every respect. But how much greater must that condescension be, that comes down to earth, and even to the lowest and most degraded of earth's inhabitants, for purposes of benevolence. This is a lovely modification of benevolence. It seems to be entirely above the gross conceptions of infidelity. Condescension seems to be regarded by most people, and especially by infidels, as rather a weakness than a virtue. Sceptics clothe their imaginary God with attributes in many respects the opposite of true virtue. They think it entirely beneath the dignity of God to come down even to notice, and much more to interfere with, the concerns of men. But hear the word of the Lord: "Thus saith the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And again, "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool, where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord. But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Thus the Bible represents God as clothed with condescension as with a cloak.

This is manifestly an attribute both of benevolence and of true greatness. The natural perfections of God appear all the more wonderful, when we consider, that he can and does know and contemplate and control, not only the highest, but the lowest of all his creatures; that he is just as able to attend to every want and every creature, as if this were the sole object of attention with him. So his moral attributes appear all the more lovely and engaging when we consider that his "tender mercies are over all his works," "that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him;" that he condescends to number the very hairs on the heads of his servants, and that not one of them can fall without him. When we consider that no creature is too low, too filthy, or too degraded for him to condescend to,--this places his character in a most ravishing light. Benevolence is good-will to all beings. Of course one of its characteristics must be condescension to those who are below us. This in God is manifestly infinite. He is infinitely above all creatures. For him to hold communion with them is infinite condescension.

This is an attribute essentially belonging to benevolence or love in all benevolent beings. With the lowest of moral beings it may have no other developement, than in its relations to sentient existences below the rank of moral agents, for the reason, that there are no moral agents below them to whom they can stoop. God's condescension stoops to all ranks of sentient existences. This is also true with every benevolent mind, as to all inferiors. It seeks the good of being in general, and never thinks any being too low to have his interests attended to and cared for, according to their relative value. Benevolence cannot possibly retain its own essential nature, and yet be above any degree of condescension that can effect the greatest good. Benevolence does not, cannot know any thing of that loftiness of spirit that considers it too degrading to stoop any where, or to any being whose interests need to be, and can be, promoted by such condescension. Benevolence has its end, and it cannot but seek this, and it does not, cannot think anything below it that is demanded to secure that end. O the shame, the infinite folly and madness of pride, and every form of selfishness! How infinitely unlike God it is! Christ could condescend to be born in a manger; to be brought up in humble life; to be poorer than the fox of the desert, or the fowls of heaven; to associate with fishermen; to mingle with and seek the good of all classes; to be despised in life, and die between two thieves on the cross. His benevolence "endured the cross and despised the shame." He was "meek and lowly in heart." The Lord of heaven and earth is as much more lowly in heart than any of his creatures, as he is above them in his infinity. He can stoop to any thing but to commit sin. He can stoop infinitely low.

23. *Candour* is another attribute of benevolence.

Candour is a disposition to treat every subject with fairness and honesty; to examine and weigh all the evidence in the case, and decide according to testimony. It is a state of mind which is the opposite of prejudice. Prejudice is pre-judgment. It is a decision made up with but partial information. It is not a mere opinion. It is a committal of the will.

Candour is that quality of benevolence that holds the intellect open to conviction. It is that state of the will in which all the light is sought upon all questions, that can be obtained. Benevolence is an impartial, a disinterested choice of the highest good of being--not of some of them,--not of self--but of being in general. It inquires not to whom an interest belongs, but what is its intrinsic and relative value, and what is the best means of promoting it. Selfishness, as we shall see, is never candid. It never can be candid. It is contrary to its very nature. Benevolence can not but be candid. It has no reasons for being otherwise. Its eye is single. It seeks to know all truth for the sake of doing it. It has no by-ends, no self-will or self-interest to consult. It is not seeking to please or profit self. It is not seeking the interest of some favourite. No, it is impartial, and must be candid.

It should always be borne in mind, that where there is prejudice, benevolence is not, cannot be. There is not, cannot be such a thing as honest prejudice. There may be an honest mistake for want of light, but this is not prejudice. If there be a mistake, and it be honest, there will be, and must be, a readiness to receive light to correct the mistake. But where the will is committed, and there is not candour to receive evidence, there is, and there must be, selfishness. Few forms of sin are more odious and revolting than prejudice. Candour is an amiable and a lovely attribute of benevolence. It is captivating to behold it. To see a man where his own interest is deeply concerned, exhibit entire candour, is to witness a charming exhibition of the spirit of love. What can be more abhorrent to benevolence than the prejudices which are sometimes manifested, by professedly good men, against other men. They seem unwilling to believe any thing good of those against whom they are prejudiced. The great zeal for what they regard as orthodoxy, is often nothing more nor less than most revolting prejudice. This is often too manifest to require proof. Every one can see, in many cases, that this zeal is not a benevolent, but a selfish one.

24. *Stability* is another attribute of benevolence. This love is not a mere feeling or emotion, that effervesces for a moment, and then cools down and disappears. But it is choice, not a mere volition which accomplishes its object, and then rests. It is the choice of an end, a supreme end. It is an intelligent choice--the most intelligent choice that can be made. It is considerate choice--none so much so; a deliberate choice; a reasonable choice, which will always commend itself to the highest perceptions and intuitions of the intellect. It is intelligent and impartial, and universal consecration to an end, above all others the most important and captivating in its influence. Now, stability must be a characteristic of such a choice as this. By stability, it is not intended that the choice may not be changed. Nor that it never is changed; but that when the attributes of the choice are considered, it appears as if stability, as opposed to instability, must be an attribute of this choice. It is a new birth, a new nature, a new creature, a new heart, a new life. These and such like are the representations of scripture. Are these representations of an evanescent state? The beginning of benevolence in the soul--this choice is represented as the death of sin, as a burial, a being planted, a crucifixion of the old man, and many such like things. Are these representations of what we so often see among professed Christians? Nay, verily. The nature of the change itself would seem to be a guarantee of its stability. We might reasonably suppose, that any other choice would be relinquished sooner than this; that any other state of mind would fail sooner than benevolence. It is vain to reply to this, that facts prove the contrary to be true. I answer, what facts? Who can prove them to be facts? Shall we appeal to the apparent facts in the instability of many professors of religion; or shall we appeal, to the very nature of the choice, and to the scriptures? To these doubtless. So far as philosophy can go, we might defy the world to produce an instance of choice which has so many chances for stability. The representations of scripture are such as I have mentioned above. What then shall we conclude of those effervescing professors of religion, who are soon hot and soon cold; whose religion is a spasm; "whose goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew, which goeth away?" Why, we must conclude, that they never had the root of the matter in them. That they are not dead to sin and to the world, we see. That they are not new creatures, that they have not the spirit of Christ, that they do not keep his commandments, we see. What then shall we conclude, but this, that they are stony ground-hearers?

25. *Kindness* is another attribute of love.

The original word rendered kindness is sometimes rendered gentleness. This term designates that quality of benevolence that begets a gentleness and kindness of outward demeanour towards those around us. Benevolence is good-will. It must possess the attribute of kindness or gentleness toward its object. Love seeks to make others happy. It cannot be otherwise, than that the beloved object should be treated kindly and gently, unless circumstances and character demand a different treatment. A deportment regardless of the sensibilities of those around us, indicates a decidedly and detestably selfish state of mind. Love always manifests a tender regard for the feelings and well-being of its object; and as benevolence is universal love, it will and must manifest the attribute of gentleness and kindness toward all, except in those cases where either the good of the individual, or of the public, shall demand a different treatment. In such cases it will be love, and only love, that leads to different treatment; and in no case will benevolence treat any, even the worst of beings, more severely than is demanded by the highest good. Benevolence does every thing for one reason; it has but one end, and that is the highest good of being in general. It will and must treat all kindly, unless the public good demands a different course. But it punishes, when it does punish, for the same reason that it forgives, when it does forgive. It gives life, and takes it away; it gives health and sickness, poverty and riches; it smiles and frowns; it blesses and curses, and does, and says, and omits, gives and withholds every thing for one and the same reason, to wit, the promotion of the highest good of being. It will be gentle or severe, as occasions arise which demand either of these exhibitions. Kindness is its rule, and severity is its exception. Both, however, as we shall soon see, are equally and necessarily attributes of benevolence.

The gentleness and kindness of God and of Christ are strikingly manifested in providence and in grace. Christ is called a lamb, no doubt because of the gentleness and kindness of his character. He is called the good shepherd, and represented as gently leading his flock, and carrying the lambs in his bosom. Many such affecting representations are made of him in the Bible, and he often makes the same manifestations in his actual treatment, not only of his servants, but also of his enemies. Who has not witnessed this? and who cannot testify to this attribute of his character, as having been a thousand times affectingly manifested in his own history? Who can call to mind the dealings of his Heavenly Father without being deeply penetrated with the remembrances, not only of his kindness, but of his *loving kindness*, and tender mercy, and of its exceeding greatness? There is a multitude of tender representations in the Bible, which are all verified in the experience of every saint. "As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." This lovely attribute will and must always appear where benevolence is. It is important, however, to remark, that constitutional temperament will often greatly modify the expression of it. "Charity is kind,"--this is one of its attributes; yet, as I just said, its manifestations will be modified by constitution, education, &c. A manifest absence of it, in cases where it would be appropriate, is sad evidence that benevolence is wanting.

26. *Severity* is another attribute of benevolence. "Behold," says the apostle, "the goodness and severity of God." They greatly err who suppose that benevolence is all softness under all circumstances. Severity is not cruelty, but is love manifesting strictness, rigour, purity, when occasion demands. Love is universal good-will, or willing the highest good of being in general. When, therefore, any one, or any number, so conduct themselves as to interfere with and endanger the public good, severity is just as natural, and as necessary to benevolence, as kindness and forbearance, under other circumstances. Christ is not only a lamb, but a lion. He is not only gentle as mercy, but stern as justice; not only yielding as the tender bowels of mercy, but as inflexibly stern as infinite purity and justice. He exhibits the one attribute or the other, as occasion demands. At one time we hear him praying for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." At another time we hear him say, by the pen of the apostle, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." At another time we hear him, in the person of the Psalmist, praying for vengeance on his enemies: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness, and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for my comforters, but I found none. They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them, and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold upon them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. Add iniquity (punishment) to their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." Many such like passages might be quoted from the records of inspiration, as the breathings of the Spirit of the God of love.

Now, it is perfectly manifest, that good-will to the universe of being implies opposition to whatever tends to prevent the highest good. Benevolence is, and must be, severe, in a good sense, toward incorrigible sinners, like those against whom Christ prays in the psalm just quoted.

The term severity is used sometimes in a good, and sometimes in a bad, sense. When used in a bad sense, it designates an unreasonable state of mind, and of course, a selfish state. It then represents a state which is the opposite of benevolence. But when used in a good sense, as it is when applied to God and Christ, and when spoken of as an attribute of benevolence, it designates the sternness, firmness, purity, and justice of love, acting for the public good in cases where sin exists, and where the public interests are at stake. In such circumstances, if severity were not developed as an attribute of benevolence, it would demonstrate that benevolence could not be the whole of virtue, even if it could be virtue at all. The intelligence of every moral being would affirm, in such circumstances, that if severity did not appear, something was wanting to make the character perfect, that is, to make the character answerable to the emergency.

It is truly wonderful to witness the tendency among men to fasten upon some one attribute of benevolence, and overlook the rest. They, perhaps, have been affected particularly by the manifestation of some one attribute, which leads them to represent the character of God as all summed up in that attribute. But this is fatally to err, and fatally to misrepresent God. God is represented in the Bible as being slow to anger, and of tender mercy; as being very pitiful; long-suffering; abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; but also visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and that will by no means clear the guilty; and as being angry with the wicked every day. These are by no means contradictory representations. They only express the different qualities of benevolence, and represent it as manifesting itself under different circumstances, and in different relations. These are just the attributes that we can see must belong to benevolence, and just what it ought to be, and must be, when these occasions arise. Good-will to the universe ought to be, and must be, in a good sense, severe where the public weal demands it, as it often does. It is one of the most shallow of dreams, that the Divine character is all softness and sweetness, in all its manifestations and in all circumstances. Sin has "enkindled a fire in the Divine anger that shall set on fire the foundations of the mountains, and shall burn to the lowest hell." Severity is also always, and necessarily, an attribute of benevolence in good angels, and in good men. When occasions arise that plainly demand it, this attribute must be developed and manifested, or benevolence must cease. It is, indeed, impossible that good-will to the whole should not manifest severity and indignation to the part which should rebel against the interests of the whole. Benevolence will seek the good of all, so long as there is hope. It will bear and forbear, and be patient, kind, meek even to long-suffering, while there is not a manifestation of incorrigible wickedness. But where there is, the lamb is laid aside, and the lion is developed; and his "wrathful anger" is as awful as his tender mercies are affecting. Innumerable instances of this are on record in this world's history. Why, then, should we seek to represent God's character as all made up of one attribute? It is, indeed, all comprehensively expressed in one word, love. But it should be for ever remembered, that this is a word of vast import, and that this love possesses, and, as occasions arise, developes and manifests, a great variety of attributes; all harmonious, and perfect, and glorious. This attribute always developes itself in the character of holy men, when occasions occur that demand it. Behold the severity of Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Witness the rebuke administered by Paul to Peter, when the latter dissembled and endangered the purity of the church. Witness also his severity in the case of Elymas the sorcerer; and hear him say to the Galatians, "I would that they who trouble you were even cut off,"--and many such like things in the conduct and spirit of holy men. Now, I know that such exhibitions are sometimes regarded as un-Christlike, as legal, and not evangelical. But they are evangelical. These are only manifestations of an essential attribute of benevolence, as every one must see, who will consider the matter. It very often happens that such manifestations, whatever the occasions may be, are denounced as the manifestations of a wicked spirit, as anger, and as sinful anger. Indeed, it seems to be assumed by many, that every kind and degree of anger is sinful, as a matter of course. But so far is all of this from the truth, that occasions often, or at least sometimes arise, that call for such manifestations; and to be any otherwise than indignant, to manifest any other than indignation and severity, were to be and manifest anything but that which is demanded by the occasion.

I know that this truth is liable, in a selfish world, to abuse. But I know also that it is a truth of revelation; and God has not withheld it for fear of its being abused. It is a truth of reason, and commends itself to the intuitions of every mind. It is a truth abundantly manifested in the moral and providential government of God. Let it not be denied nor concealed; but let no one abuse and pervert it.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXIII.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

27. *Holiness* is another attribute of benevolence.

This term is used in the Bible, as synonymous with moral purity. In a ceremonial sense it is applied to both persons and things; to make holy and to sanctify are the same thing. To sanctify and to consecrate, or set apart to a sacred use, are identical. Many things were, in this sense, sanctified, or made holy, under the Jewish economy. The term holiness may, in a general sense, be applied to anything whatever which is set apart to a sacred use. It may be applied to the whole being of a moral agent, who is set apart to the service of God.

As an attribute of benevolence, it denotes that quality which leads it to seek to promote the happiness of moral agents, by means of conformity to moral law.

As a moral attribute of God, it is that peculiarity of his benevolence which secures it against all efforts to obtain its end by other means than those that are morally and perfectly pure. His benevolence aims to secure the happiness of the universe of moral agents, by means of moral law and moral government, and of conformity to his own subjective idea of right.

In other words, holiness in God is that quality of his love that secures its universal conformity, in all its efforts and manifestations, to the Divine idea of right, as it lies in eternal developement in the Infinite Reason. This idea is moral law. It is sometimes used to express the moral quality, or character of his benevolence generally, or to express the moral character of the Godhead.

It sometimes seems to designate an attribute, and sometimes a quality of all his moral attributes.

Holiness is, doubtless, a characteristic, or quality of each and all of his moral attributes. They will harmonize in this, that no one of them can consent to do otherwise than conform to the law of moral purity, as developed and revealed in the Divine Reason.

That holiness is an attribute of God is everywhere assumed, and frequently asserted in the Bible. If an attribute of God, it must be an attribute of love; for God is love. This attribute is celebrated in heaven as one of those aspects of the divine character that give ineffable delight. Isaiah saw the seraphim standing around the throne of Jehovah, and crying one to another, "Holy! holy! holy!" John also had a vision of the worship of heaven, and says "They rest not day nor night, saying, Holy! holy! holy! Lord God Almighty." When Isaiah beheld the holiness of Jehovah, he cried out "Woe is me! I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" God's holiness is infinite, and it is no wonder that a perception of it should thus affect the prophet.

Finite holiness must forever feel itself awed in the presence of infinite holiness. Job says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." There is no comparing finite with infinite. The time will never come when creatures can with open face contemplate the infinite holiness of Jehovah without being like persons overcome with a harmony too intensely delightful to be calmly borne. Heaven seems not able to endure it without breaking forth into strains of inexpressible rapture.

The expressions of Isaiah and Job do not necessarily imply that, at the time they were in a sinful state, but their expressions no doubt related to whatever of sin they had at any time been guilty of. In the light of Jehovah's holiness they saw the comparative pollution of their character, taken as a whole. This view will always, doubtless, much affect the saints.

This must be, and yet in another sense they may be, and are, as holy, in their measure as He is. They may be as perfectly conformed to what light or truth they have, as he is. This is doubtless what Christ intended when he said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The meaning is, that they should live to the same end, and be as entirely consecrated to it as he is. This they must be, to be truly virtuous or holy in any degree. But when they are so, a full view of the holiness of God would confound and overwhelm them. If any one doubts this, he has not considered the matter in a proper light. He has not lifted up his thoughts, as he needs to do, to the contemplation of infinite holiness. No creature, however benevolent, can witness the divine benevolence without being overwhelmed with a clear vision of it. This is no doubt true of every attribute of the divine love. However perfect creature-virtue may be, it is finite, and, brought into the light of the attributes of infinite virtue, it will appear like the dimmest star in the presence of the sun, lost in the blaze of his glory. Let the most just man on earth or in heaven witness, and have a clear apprehension of, the infinite justice of Jehovah, and it would no doubt fill him with unutterable awe. So, could the most merciful saint on earth, or in heaven, have a clear perception of the divine mercy in its fulness, it would swallow up all thought and imagination, and, no doubt, overwhelm him. And so also of every attribute of God. Oh! when we speak of the attributes of Jehovah, we often do not know what we say. Should God unveil himself to us, or bodies would instantly perish. "No man," says he, "can see my face and live." When Moses prayed, "Show me thy glory," God condescendingly hid him in the cleft of a rock, and covering him with his hand, he passed by, and let Moses see only his back parts, informing him that he could not behold his face, that is, his unveiled glories, and live.

Holiness, or moral harmony of character is, then, an essential attribute of disinterested love. It must be so from the laws of our being, and from the very nature of benevolence. In man it manifests itself in great purity of conversation and deportment, in a great loathing of all impurity of flesh and spirit. Let no man profess piety who has not this attribute developed. The love required by the law of God is pure love. It seeks to make its object happy only by making him holy. It manifests the greatest abhorrence of sin and all uncleanness. In creatures it pants, and doubtless ever will pant and struggle, toward infinite purity or holiness. It will never find a resting place in such a sense as to desire to ascend no higher. As it perceives more and more of the fulness and infinity of God's holiness, it will no doubt pant and struggle to ascend the eternal heights where God sits in light too intense for the strongest vision of the highest cherub.

Holiness of heart or of will, produces a desire or feeling of purity in the sensibility. The feelings become exceedingly alive to the beauty of holiness and to the hatefulness and deformity of all spiritual, and even physical impurity. This is called the love of holiness. The sensibility becomes, ravished with the great loveliness of holiness, and unutterably disgusted with the opposite. The least impurity of conversation or of action exceedingly shocks one who is holy. Impure thoughts, if suggested to the mind of a holy being, are instantly felt to be exceedingly offensive and painful. The soul heaves and struggles to cast them out as the most loathsome abominations.

28. *Modesty* is another attribute of love.

This may exist either as a phenomenon of the sensibility, or of the will, or of both.

As a phenomenon of the sensibility, it consists in a feeling of delicacy, or shrinking from whatever is impure, unchaste; or from all boasting, vanity, or egotism; a feeling like retiring from public observation, and especially from public applause. It is a feeling of self-diffidence, and is the opposite of self-esteem and self-complacency. It takes on, as a mere feeling, a great variety of types; and when it controls the will, often gives its subject a very lovely and charming exterior. But when this is only a phenomenon of the sensibility, and manifests itself only as this feeling takes control of the will, it does not rise to the dignity of virtue, but is only a specious and delusive form of selfishness. It appears lovely because it is the counterfeit of a sweet and charming form of virtue.

As a phenomenon of the will, and as an attribute of benevolence, it is that quality which preserves it from ostentation and display, and disposes it to pursue an opposite course. It is nearly allied to humility. It is a state of heart the opposite of an egotistical spirit. It seeks not personal applause or distinction. It is the unostentatious characteristic of benevolence. "Love seeketh not its own, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly." Benevolence seeketh not its own profit, not its own honour. It seeks the good of being, with a single eye, and it is no part of its design to set off self to advantage. Hence modesty is one of its lovely characteristics. It manifests itself very much as the feeling of modesty manifests itself, when it takes control of the will, so that often it is difficult to distinguish modesty as a virtue, or as an attribute of religion, from the modesty of feeling which is a peculiarity of the constitution of some, and which comes to control the will.

True piety is always modest. It is unassuming, unostentatious, anti-egotistical, content to seek with a single eye its object--the highest good of being. In this work it seeks not public notice or applause. It finds a luxury in doing good, no matter how unobserved. If at any time it seeks to be known, it must be entirely disinterested in this. It is not the person, but the act that it exhibits, and that only for the sake of example. It seeks to be known only to make "manifest that its deeds are wrought in God," and to stimulate and encourage others to good works. Modesty as a virtue shrinks from self-display, from trumpeting its own deeds. It is prone to "esteem others better than self;" to give the preference to others, and hold self in very moderate estimation. It aims not to exhibit self, but God and Christ. After Paul had said, "I laboured more abundantly than they all;" he adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

This form of virtue is sometimes conspicuous in men and women whom the providence of God has placed in high stations, so that they are exposed to the public gaze. They seem never to aim at the exhibition or exaltation of self; they never appear flattered by applause, nor to be disheartened by censure and abuse. Having this attribute largely developed, they pursue their way, totally regardless both of the praise and the censure of men. Like Paul, they can say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." It seeks only to commend itself to God, and to the consciences of men.

29. *Sobriety* is another attribute of benevolence.

Sobriety, as a virtue, is the opposite of levity. There is, as every one knows, a remarkable difference in the constitutional temperament of different persons, in regard to levity and sobriety, considered as tendencies of the sensibility. Sobriety, considered as a constitutional peculiarity, when existing in an excessive degree, is often attributable to a diseased state of the organs of life, and is then not unfrequently termed hypochondriasis. In other instances, it seems not to result from, or to indicate, ill health, but is a peculiarity not to be accounted for by any philosophy of ours.

Sobriety, as a phenomenon of the sensibility, often results from conviction of sin and fear of punishment, and from worldly troubles, and, indeed, from a multitude of causes.

But sobriety, considered as a virtue, and as a characteristic or attribute of benevolence, consists in that solemn earnestness which indicates an honest intention to pursue to the utmost the highest good of being.

Sobriety is not synonymous with moroseness. It is not a sour, fault-finding, censorious spirit. Neither is it inconsistent with cheerfulness--I mean the cheerfulness of love. It is the contrast of levity, and not of cheerfulness. It has no heart for levity and folly. It cannot brook the spirit of gossip and of giggling. Sober earnestness is one of the essential attributes of love to God and souls. It cannot fail to manifest this characteristic, because benevolence supremely values its object. It meets with many obstacles in attempting to secure it. It too deeply prizes the good of being, and sees too plainly how much is to be done, to have any time or inclination for levity and folly. God is always serious and in earnest. Christ was always serious and in earnest. Trifling is an abomination to God, and equally so to true and enlightened benevolence.

But let it never be forgotten that sobriety, as an attribute of benevolence, has nothing in it of the nature of moroseness and peevishness. It is not melancholy. It is not sorrowfulness. It is not despondency. It is a sober, honest, earnest, intense state of choice or of good will. It is not an affected, but a perfectly natural and serious, earnestness. Benevolence is in earnest, and it appears to be so by a law of its own nature. It can laugh and weep for the same reason, and at the same time. It can do either without levity on the one hand, and without moroseness, melancholy, or discouragement, on the other. Abraham fell on his face and laughed, when God promised him a son by Sarah. But it was not levity. It was benevolence rejoicing in the promise of a faithful God.

We should always be careful to distinguish between sobriety as a mere feeling, and the sobriety of the heart. The former is often easily dissipated, and succeeded by trifling and levity. The latter is stable as benevolence itself, because it is one of its essential attributes. A trifling Christian is a contradiction. It is as absurd as to speak of a light and foolish benevolence. These are of a piece with a sinful holiness. Benevolence has, and must have, its changeless attributes. Some of them are manifest only on particular occasions that develope them. Others are manifest on all occasions, because every occasion calls them into exercise. This attribute is one of that class. Benevolence must be seriously in earnest on all occasions. The benevolent soul may and will rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. He may be always cheerful in faith and in hope, yet he always has too great business on hand, to have a heart for trifling or for folly.

30. *Sincerity* is another attribute of benevolence.

Sincerity is the opposite of hypocrisy. The terms sincerity and perfection seem, as used in the Bible, to be nearly synonymous. Sincerity, as an attribute of benevolence, implies whole-hearted honesty, singleness of aim, true uprightness of purpose. Where this attribute is, there is a consciousness of its presence. The soul is satisfied that it is really and truly whole-hearted. It cannot but respect its own honesty of intention and of purpose. It has not to affect sincerity--it has it. When the soul has this attribute developed, it is as deeply conscious of whole-heartedness, as of its own existence. It is honest. It is earnest. It is deeply sincere. It knows it, and never thinks of being suspected of insincerity, and of course has no reason for affectation.

This also is one of those attributes of benevolence that are manifest on all occasions. There is a manifestation of sincerity that carries conviction along with it, in the spirit and deportment of the truly benevolent man. It is exceedingly difficult so to counterfeit it that the deception shall not be seen. The very attempt to counterfeit sincerity will manifest hypocrisy to the discerning mind. There is a cant, a put-on seriousness, a hollow, shallow long-facedness, that reveals a want of sincerity; and the more pains men take to cover up insincerity, the more surely it reveals itself. There is a simplicity, an unguardedness, a transparency, a right up and down frankness, an open-heartedness in such sincerity, that at once commends it and gives it power. It tells the whole story, and carries with it, on its very face, the demonstration of its honesty. Sincerity is its own passport, its own letter of commendation. It is as transparent as light, as honest as justice, as kind as mercy, and as faithful as truth. It is all lovely and praiseworthy. It needs no hoods nor gowns, nor canonicals, nor ceremonials, to set it off; it stands on its own foundation. It walks abroad unsuspecting, and generally unsuspected of, hypocrisy. It lives in open day-light and courts no concealment. It inhabits love as its dwelling place; and where benevolence is, there is its rest.

31. Another attribute of benevolence is *Zeal*. Zeal is not always a phenomenon of the will; for the term often expresses an effervescing state of the sensibility. It often expresses enthusiasm in the mere form of excited feeling. It is also often an attribute of selfishness. The term expresses intensity in the pursuit of an object, whether used of the will or of the emotions, whether designating a characteristic of selfishness or of benevolence. Benevolence is an intense action of the will, or an intense state of choice. The intensity is not uniform, but varies with varying perceptions of the intellect. When the intellectual apprehensions of truth are clear, when the Holy Spirit shines on the soul, the actings of the will become proportionably intense. This must be, or benevolence must cease altogether. Benevolence is the honest choice of the highest good of being, and, of course, it has no sinister or bye-ends to prevent it from laying just that degree of stress upon the good of being, which its importance seems to demand. Benevolence consists in yielding the will up unreservedly to the demands of the intelligence, when the intelligence is enlightened as to the ground of moral obligation. Nothing else is benevolence. Hence it follows, that the intensity of benevolence will, and must, vary with varying light. When the light of God shines strongly upon the soul, there is often consuming intensity in the action of the will, and the soul can adopt the language of Christ, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up."

In its lowest estate, benevolence is zealous. That is, the intellectual perceptions never sink so low as to leave benevolence to become like a stagnant pool. It must be a fountain, flowing forth. It is never lazy, never sluggish, never inactive. It is aggressive in its nature. It is essential activity in itself. It consists in choice, the supreme choice of an end--and in consecration to that end. Zeal, therefore, must be one of its essential attributes. A lazy benevolence is a misnomer. In a world where sin is, benevolence must be aggressive. In such a world it cannot be conservative. It must be reformatory. This is its essential nature. In such a world as this, a conservative, anti-reform benevolence is sheer selfishness. To baptize anti-reform and conservatism with the name Christianity, is to steal a robe of light to cover the black shoulders of a fiend. Zeal, the zeal of benevolence, will not, cannot rest while sin is in the world. God is represented as clothed with zeal as with a cloak; and after making some of his exceeding great and precious promises, he concludes by saying, "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

32. *Unity* is another attribute of benevolence.

Benevolence or love has but one end. It consists in one choice, one ultimate intention. It is always one and indivisible. It possesses may attributes or characteristics; but they are all only so many phases of one principle. Every modification of virtue, actual or conceivable, may be, and must be, resolvable into love, for in fact, it is only a modification of love or benevolence. It is easy to see, that an honest choice of the highest good of being as an end, will sufficiently and fully account for every form in which virtue has appeared, or ever can appear. The love or good-will of God is a unit. He has but one end. All he does is for one and the same reason. So it is, and must be, with love or benevolence in all beings. God's conduct is all equally good and equally praiseworthy.

(1.) Because he always has one intention.

(2.) Because he always has the same degree of light.

With creatures this light varies, and consequently they, although benevolent, are not always equally praiseworthy. Their virtue increases as their light increases, and must for ever do so, if they continue benevolent. But their end is always one and the same. In this respect their virtue never varies, while their benevolence continues. They have the same end with God.

It is of great importance that the unity of virtue should be understood, else that which really constitutes its essence is overlooked. If it be supposed, that there can be various sorts of virtue, this is a fatal mistake; the fact is, virtue consists in whole-hearted consecration to one end, and that end is, as it ought to be, and must be, the highest well-being of God and of the universe. This, and nothing else, more nor less, is virtue. It is one and identical in all moral agents, in all worlds, and to all eternity. It can never be changed. It can never consist in anything else. God, if he is himself unchangeable, could not alter its nature, nor one of its essential attributes. The inquiry, and the only inquiry is, for what end do I live? To what end am I consecrated? Not merely, how do I feel, and what is my outward deportment? These may indicate the state of my will. But these cannot settle the question. If a man knows anything, it must be that he knows what his supreme intention is. That is, if he considers at all, and looks at the grand aim of his mind, he cannot fail to see, whether he is really living for God and the universe, or for himself apart.

If God is love, his virtue or love must be itself a unit. If all the law is fulfilled in one word; if love is the fulfilling of the law; then all virtue must resolve itself into love; and this unity is, and must be, an attribute of benevolence.

33. *Simplicity* is another attribute of benevolence.

By simplicity is intended singleness without mixture. It has, and can have, but one simple end. It does not, and cannot, mingle with selfishness. It is simple or single in its aim. It is, and must be, simple or single in all its efforts to secure its end. It does not, cannot, attempt to serve God and mammon. But, as I have dwelt at length upon this view of the subject in a former lecture, I need not enlarge upon it here.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXIV.

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

34. *Gratitude* is another characteristic of love.

This term also designates a state of the sensibility, or a mere feeling of being obliged to another, or benefited by him. This feeling includes an emotion of love and attachment to the benefactor who has shown us favour. It also includes a feeling of obligation, and of readiness to make such returns as we are able, to the being who has shown us favour. But, as a mere feeling or phenomenon of the sensibility, gratitude has no moral character. It may exist in the sensibility of one who is entirely selfish. For selfish persons love to be obliged, and love those who love to oblige them, and can feel grateful for favours shown to themselves, and desire or wish to make a return.

Gratitude, as a virtue, is only a modification or an attribute of benevolence or of good-will. It is that quality of benevolence that disposes it to acknowledge a favour, and to make suitable returns; to will and endeavour to promote the particular good of a benefactor. It always assumes of course the intrinsic value of the good willed, as the fundamental reason for willing it. But it always has particular reference to the relation of benefactor, as a secondary or additional reason for willing good to him in particular. This relation cannot be the foundation of the obligation to love or will the good of any being in the universe; for the obligation to will his good would exist, if this relation did not exist, and even if the relation of persecutor existed in its stead. But gratitude, always assuming the existence of the fundamental reason, to wit, the intrinsic value of the well-being of its object for its own sake, has, as I have just said, particular reference to the relation of benefactor; so particular reference to it, that, if asked why he loved or willed the good of that individual, he would naturally assign this relation as a reason. He would, as has been formerly shown, assign this as the reason, not because it is, or can be, or ought to be, the fundamental reason, much less the exclusive one, but because the other reason lies in the mind as a first truth, and is not so much noticed on the field of consciousness at the time, as the secondary reason, to wit, the relation just referred to.

This attribute of benevolence may never have occasion for its exercise in the Divine mind. No one can sustain to him the relation of benefactor. Yet, in his mind, it may, and no doubt does, exist in the form of good-will to those who are benefactors of others, and for that reason: just as finite minds ought to be affected by that relation. He has even gone much farther than this, and has been pleased to say, that good done to our fellowmen he will graciously consider and reward as good done to himself. This identification of good done to his creatures with good done to him and for his glory, raises benevolence to the highest conceivable point of dignity and honour.

That love will ever have an opportunity to develope all its attributes, and manifest all its loveliness, and take on every possible peculiarity, is more than we can know. Its loveliness can never be known nor conceived of by finite minds, except so far as occasions develope its charming attributes. Our love of gratitude to God finds abundant occasions of developement in all finite minds, and especially among sinners of our race. Our ill-desert is so infinite, and God's goodness, mercy, and long-suffering are so infinite, and so graciously manifested to us, that if we have any attribute of benevolence largely developed, it must be that of gratitude. Gratitude to God will manifest itself in a spirit of thanksgiving, and in a most tender and anxious regard to his feelings, his wishes, and all his commandments. A grateful soul will naturally raise the question on all occasions, Will this or that please God? There will be a constant endeavour of the grateful soul to please him. This must be; it is the natural and inevitable result of gratitude. It should be always borne in mind, that gratitude is good-will, modified by the relation of benefactor. It is not a mere feeling of thankfulness, but will always awaken that feeling. It is a living, energizing attribute of benevolence, and will and must manifest itself in corresponding feeling and action.

It should also be borne in mind, that a selfish feeling of gratitude or thankfulness often exists, and imposes upon its subject, and often upon those who witness its manifestations. It conceals its selfish foundation and character, and passes in this world for virtue; but it is not. I well recollect weeping with gratitude to God years previous to my conversion. The same kind of feeling is often, no doubt, mistaken for evangelical gratitude.

Benevolence is an all-comprehending, impartial principle. The benevolent soul regards all interests as his own, and all beings as parts of himself, in such a sense, as to feel obligations of gratitude for favours bestowed on others as well as on himself. Gratitude, as an attribute of benevolence, recognizes God as a benefactor to self in bestowing favours on others. Benevolence, regarding all interests as our own, acknowledges the favours bestowed upon any and upon all. It will thank God for favours bestowed upon the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and for "opening his hand and supplying the wants of every living thing."

35. *Wisdom* is another attribute of benevolence.

Wisdom is that quality of benevolence that disposes it to be directed by knowledge. Its manifestation in life and action is that of love directed by discretion, evidently for this reason, that hereby it becomes more efficient for good. Wisdom, therefore, must mingle with benevolence, and take the directions of its zeal and activity. It chooses the best and most valuable end, and the most appropriate means of obtaining it. It is like all the other attributes, only benevolence viewed in a certain relation, or only a particular aspect of it.

Wisdom is a term that expresses the perfectly intelligent character of love. It represents it as not a blind and unintelligent choice, but as being guided only by the highest intelligence. This attribute, like all the others, is perfect in God, in an infinitely higher sense than in any creature. It must be perfect in creatures, in such a sense as to be sinless; but can in them never be perfect, in such a sense as to admit of no increase.

The manifold displays of the divine wisdom in creation, providence, and grace, are enough, when duly considered, to overwhelm a finite mind. An inspired apostle could celebrate this attribute in such a strain as this: "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." The wisdom of the saints appears in their choice of an end. They choose invariably the same end that God does, but do not, for want of knowledge, always use the best means. This, however, is not a sinful defect in them, provided they act according to the best light they have or can obtain.

Wisdom is a term that is often and justly used to express true religion, and to distinguish it from everything else; it expresses both benevolence, or good-will, and the intelligent character of that choice, that is, that the choice is dictated by the intelligence, as distinguished from selfish choice, or choice occasioned by the mere impulses of feeling.

36. *Grace* is another attribute of benevolence.

Grace is that quality of benevolence that disposes it to bestow gratuitous favour, that is, favour on the undeserving and on the ill-deserving.

Grace is not synonymous with mercy. It is a term of broader meaning.

Mercy is a disposition to forgive the guilty. Grace expresses not only a willingness to pardon, or exempt from penalty, but to bestow other favours of a positive character.

Mercy might pardon; but unless great grace were bestowed, our pardon would by no means secure our salvation.

Grace does not wait for merit as a condition of bestowing favour. It causes its sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends its rain on the just and the unjust.

Grace in the saints manifests itself in acts of beneficence to the most unworthy, as well as to the deserving. It seeks to do good to all, whether meritorious or not. It seeks to do good from a love to being. It rejoices in opportunities to bestow its gratuities upon all classes that need them. To grace, necessity or want is the great consideration. When we come to God, his grace is delighted with the opportunity to supply our wants. The grace of God is a vast ocean without shore, or bound, or bottom. It is infinite. It is an ever overflowing stream of beneficence. Its streams go forth to make glad the universe. All creatures are objects of his grace to a greater or less extent. All are not objects of his saving grace, but all are, or have been, the recipients of his bounty. Every sinner that is kept out of hell, is sustained every moment by grace. Every thing that any one receives who has ever sinned, which is better than hell, is received of grace.

Repentance is a condition of the exercise of mercy; but grace is exercised in a thousand forms, without any reference to character. Indeed, the very term expresses good-will to the undeserving and ill-deserving. Surely it must have been a gracious disposition, deep and infinite, that devised and executed the plan of salvation for sinners of our race. A sympathy with the grace of God must manifest itself in strenuous and self-denying efforts to secure, to the greatest possible number, the benefits of this salvation. A gracious heart in man will leap forth to declare the infinite riches of the grace of God, in the ears of a dying world. No man certainly has or can have a sympathy with Christ who will or can hesitate to do his utmost to carry the gospel, and apply his grace, to a perishing world. What! shall the gracious disposition of Christ prepare the way, prepare the feast; and can they have any sympathy with him, who can hesitate to go or send to invite the starving poor? If Christ both lived and died to redeem men, is it a great thing for us to live to serve them? No, indeed: he only has the spirit of Christ who would not merely live, but also die for them.

37. *Economy* is another attribute of benevolence.

This term expresses that peculiarity of benevolence that makes the best use, and the most that can be made, of every thing to promote the public good. This attribute appears at every step in the works and government of God. It is truly wonderful to see how every thing is made to conduce to one end; and nothing exists or can exist in the universe, which God will not overrule to some good account. Even "the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain." A most divine economy is every where manifest in the works and ways of God. If he is love, we might expect this. Nay, if he is love, it is impossible that this should not be. He lives only for one end. All things were created, and are ruled or overruled by him. All things, then, must, directly or indirectly, work together for good. He will secure some benefit from every thing. Nothing has occurred, or will occur, or can ever occur to all eternity, that will not in some way be used to promote the good of being. Even sin and punishment will not be without their use. God has created nothing, nor has he suffered anything to occur, in vain. Sin, inexcusable and ruinous as it is, if left to work out its natural results, is not without its use. And God will take care to glorify himself in sinners, whether they consent or not. He says, "He has created all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." That is, he created no man wicked, but he created those who have become wicked. He created them not for the sake of punishing them, but knowing that they would become incorrigible sinners, he designed to punish them, and by making them a public example, render them useful to his government. He created them, not because he delighted in their punishment for its own sake, but that he might make their deserved punishment useful to the universe. In this sense, it may be truly said, that he created them for the day of evil. Foreseeing that they would become incorrigible sinners, he designed, when he created them, to make them a public example.

God's glorious economy in overruling all events for the public benefit, is affectingly displayed in the fact, that all things are made to work together for good to them who love God. All beings, saints and sinners, good and evil angels, sin and holiness; in short, there is not a being nor an event in the universe, that is not all used up for the promotion of the highest good. Whether men intend it or not, God intends it. If men do not design it, no thanks to them, what every use God may make of them. He will give them, as he says, according to their endeavours or intentions; but he will take care to use them in one way or another for his glory. If men will consent to live and die for his glory and the good of being, well; they shall have their reward. But if they will not consent, he will take care to dispose of them for the public benefit. He will make the best use of them he can. If they are willing and obedient, if they sympathize with him in promoting the good of the universe, well. But if not, he can make them a public example, and make the influence of their punishment useful to his kingdom. Nothing shall be lost, in the sense that God will not make it answer some useful purpose. No, not even sin with all its deformities and guilt, and blasphemy with all its desolating tendencies, shall be suffered to exist in vain. It will be made useful in innumerable ways. But no thanks to the sinner; he means no such thing, as that his sin shall thus be made useful. He is set upon his own gratification, regardless of consequences. Nothing is further from his heart than to do good, and glorify God. But God has his eye upon him; has laid his plans in view of his foreseen wickedness; and so surely as Jehovah lives, so surely shall the sinner, in one way or another, be used up for the glory of God, and the highest good of being.

Economy is necessarily an attribute of benevolence in all minds. The very nature of benevolence shows that it must be so. It is consecration to the highest good of being. It has no other end. Now all choice must respect means or ends. Benevolence has but one end; and all its activity, every volition that it puts forth, must be to secure that end. The intellect will be used to devise means to promote that end. The whole life and activity of a benevolent being is, and must be, a life of strenuous economy for the promotion of the one great end of benevolence. Extravagance, self-indulgence, waste, are necessarily foreign to love. Everything is devoted to one end. Everything is scrupulously and wisely directed to secure the highest good of God and being in general. This is, this must be, the universal and undeviating aim of every mind, just so far as it is truly benevolent. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

There are many other attributes of benevolence that might be enumerated and enlarged upon, all of which are implied in entire obedience to the law of God. Enough has been said, I hope, to fix attention strongly upon the fact, that every modification of virtue, actual, conceivable, or possible, is only either an attribute or manifestation of benevolence; and where benevolence is, there all virtue is, and must be, and every form in which virtue does or can exist, must develope itself as its occasions shall arise.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXV.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

WHAT CONSTITUTES DISOBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

In discussing this question, I will,

I. *Revert to some points that have been settled.*

II. *Show what disobedience to the moral law cannot consist in.*

III. *What it must consist in.*

I. *Revert to some points that have been settled.*

1. That moral law requires love or benevolence, and that this is the sum of its requirements.

2. That benevolence is good-will to being in general. In other words, that it consists in the impartial choice of the good of being, as an end, or for its own sake.

3. That obedience to moral law is a unit, or that it invariably consists in disinterested benevolence. That consecration to the highest good of being, is virtue, and comprehensive of the whole of virtue.

4. That feeling and outward action are only results of ultimate intention, and in themselves are neither virtue nor vice.

5. That all choice and volition must terminate upon some object, and that this object must be chosen as an end, or as a means.

6. That the choice of anything as a means to an end is, in fact, only carrying into execution the ultimate choice, or the choice of an end.

7. That the mind must have chosen an end, or it cannot choose the means. That is, the choice of means implies the previous choice of an end.

8. That moral character belongs to the ultimate intention only, or to the choice of an end.

9. That virtue, or obedience to moral law, consists in choosing in accordance with the demands of the intellect, in opposition to following the feelings, desires, or impulses of the sensibility.

10. That whatever is chosen for its own sake, and not as a means to an end, is and must be chosen as an end.

11. That the mind must always have an end in view, or it cannot choose at all. That is, as has been said, the will must have an object of choice, and this object must be regarded as an end, or as a means.

12. That the fundamental reason for choosing an end, and the end chosen, are identical. That is, the fundamental reason of the obligation to choose a thing, must be found in the nature of the thing itself, and this reason is the end or thing chosen. For example: if the intrinsic value of a thing be the foundation of the obligation to choose it, the intrinsically valuable is the end or thing chosen.

II. *Show in what disobedience to moral law cannot consist.*

1. It cannot consist in malevolence, or in the choice of evil or misery as an ultimate end. This will appear, if we consider,--

(1.) That the choice of an end implies the choice of it, not for no reason, but for a reason, and for its own intrinsic value, or because the mind prizes it on its own account. But moral agents are so constituted, that they cannot regard misery as intrinsically valuable. They cannot, therefore, choose it as an ultimate end, nor prize it on its own account.

(2.) To will misery as an ultimate end, would imply the choice of universal misery, and every degree of it, according to its relative amount.

(3.) The choice of universal misery as an end, implies the choice of all the means necessary to that end.

(4.) The end chosen is identical with the reason for choosing it. To say that a thing can be chosen without any reason, is to say that nothing is chosen, or that there is no object of choice, or that there is actually no choice. Misery may be chosen to assert our own sovereignty; but this were to choose self-gratification, and not misery, as an ultimate end. To choose misery as an ultimate end, is to choose it, not to assert my own sovereignty, nor for any other reason than because it is misery.

(5.) To choose an end is not to choose without any reason, as has been said, but for some reason.

(6.) To choose misery as an end, is to choose it for the reason that it is misery, and that misery is preferred to happiness, for its own sake, which is absurd. Such a supposition overlooks the very nature of choice.

(7.) To will misery as a means is possible, but this is not malevolence, but might be either benevolence or selfishness.

(8.) The constitution of moral beings renders malevolence, or the willing of misery for its own sake, impossible. Therefore disobedience to moral law cannot consist in malevolence.

2. Disobedience to moral law cannot consist in the constitution of soul or body. The law does not command us to have a certain constitution, nor forbid us to have the constitution with which we came into being.

3. It cannot consist in any unavoidable state, either of the sensibility or of the intelligence; for these, as we have seen, are involuntary, and are dependent upon the actings of the will.

4. It cannot consist in outward actions, independent of the design with which they are put forth, for these, we have seen are controlled by the actions of the will, and, therefore, can have no moral character in themselves.

5. It cannot consist in inaction: for total inaction is to a moral agent impossible. Moral agents are necessarily active. That is, they cannot exist as moral agents without choice. They must, by a law of necessity, choose either in accordance with, or in opposition to, the law of God. They are free to choose in either direction, but they are not free to abstain from choice altogether. Choose they must. The possession of free-will, and the perception of opposing objects of choice, either exciting desire, or developing the rational affirmation of obligation to choose, render choice one way or the other inevitable. The law directs how they ought to choose. If they do not choose thus, it must be because they choose otherwise, and not because they do not choose at all.

6. It cannot consist in the choice of moral evil, or sin, as an ultimate end. Sin is but an element or attribute of choice or intention, or it is intention itself. If it be intention itself, then to make sin an end of intention, would be to make intention or choice terminate on itself, and the sinner must choose his own choice, or intend his own intention as an end: this is absurd.

If sin is but an element or attribute of choice or intention, then to suppose the sinner to choose it as an end, were to make choice or intention terminate on an element or attribute of itself, to suppose him to choose as an end an element of his own choice. This also is absurd and a contradiction.

The nature of a moral being forbids that he should choose sin for its own sake. He may choose those things the choosing of which is sinful, but it is not the sinfulness of the choice upon which the intention terminates. This is naturally impossible. Sin may be chosen as a means of gratifying a malicious feeling, but this is not choosing it as an end, but as a means. Malevolence, strictly speaking, is in itself impossible to a moral agent. That is, the choice of moral or natural evil for its own sake, contradicts the nature of moral agents, and the nature of ultimate choice, and is therefore impossible. In common language we may charge them with malevolence; but, strictly speaking, the evil is not the end, but the gratification of the malicious feeling of the selfish being is the end.

7. Disobedience to moral law cannot consist in self-love. Self-love is simply the constitutional desire of happiness. It is altogether an involuntary state. It has, as a desire, no moral character, any more than has the desire of food. It is no more sinful to desire happiness, and properly to seek it, than it is wrong to desire food, and properly to seek that.

III. *What disobedience to moral law must consist in*.

1. It must consist in choice or ultimate intention, for moral character belongs strictly only to ultimate intention.

2. As all choice must terminate on an end, or on means, and as the means cannot be chosen until the end is chosen, and but for its sake, it follows that disobedience to the moral law must consist in the choice of some end, or ends, inconsistent with its requisitions.

3. We have seen that misery, or natural evil, cannot be chosen as an end by a moral agent. So this cannot be the end chosen.

4. We have seen also that moral evil, or sin, cannot be chosen as an ultimate end.

5. Disobedience to God's law must consist in the choice of self-gratification as an end. In other words, it must consist essentially in committing the will, and through the will committing the whole being, to the indulgence of self-love, as the supreme and ultimate end of life. This is selfishness. In other words, it is seeking to gratify the desire of personal good, in a manner prohibited by the law of God.

It consists in choosing self-gratification as an end, or for its own sake, instead of choosing, in accordance with the law of the reason and of God, the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an ultimate end. In other words still, sin or disobedience to the moral law, consists in the consecration of the heart and life to the gratification of the constitutional and artificial desires, rather than in obedience to the law of the intelligence. Or, once more, sin consists in being governed by impulses of the sensibility, instead of being governed by the law of God, as it lies revealed in the reason.

That this is sin, and the whole of sin, viewed in its germinating principles, will appear, if we consider:--

1. That this state of mind, or this choice is the "carnal mind," or the minding of the flesh, which the apostle affirms to be "enmity against God."

2. It is the universal representation of scripture, that sin consists in the spirit of self-seeking.

3. This spirit of self-seeking is always in the Bible represented as the contrast or opposite of disinterested benevolence, or the love which the law requires. "Ephraim bringeth forth fruit to himself," is the sum of God's charges against sinners.

4. Selfishness is always spoken of in terms of reprobation in the Bible.

5. It is known by every moral agent to be sinful.

6. It is, in fact, the end which all unregenerate men pursue, and the only end they pursue.

7. When we come to the consideration of the attributes of selfishness, it will be seen that every form of sin, not only may, but must resolve itself into selfishness, just as we have seen that every form of virtue does and must resolve itself into love or benevolence.

8. From the laws of its constitution, the mind is shut up to the necessity of choosing that, as an ultimate end, which is regarded by the mind as intrinsically good or valuable in itself. This is the very idea of choosing an end, to wit, something chosen for its own sake, or for what it is in and of itself, or, because it is regarded by the mind as intrinsically valuable to self, or to being in general, or to both.

9. The gratification or happiness of being is necessarily regarded by the mind as a good in itself, or as intrinsically valuable.

10. Nothing else is or can be regarded as valuable in itself, or finally, but the good of being.

11. Moral agents are, therefore, shut up to the necessity of willing the good of being, either partially or impartially, either good to self, or good to being in general. Nothing else can possibly be chosen as an end or for its own sake. Willing the good of being impartially, as we have seen, is virtue. To will it partially is to will it, not for its own sake, except upon condition of its relation to self. That is, it is to will good to self. In other words, it is to will the gratification of self as an end, in opposition to willing the good of universal being as an end, and every good, or the good of every being, according to its intrinsic value.

12. But may not one will the good of a part of being as an end, or for the sake of the intrinsic value of their good? This would not be benevolence, for that, as we have seen, must consist in willing good for its own sake, and implies the willing of every good, and of the highest good of universal being. It would not be selfishness, as it would not be willing good to, or the gratification of, self. It would be sin, for it would be the partial love or choice of good. It would be loving some of my neighbours, but not all of them. It would, therefore, be sin, but not selfishness. If this can be, then there is such a thing possible, whether actual or not, as sin that does not consist in selfishness. But let us examine whether this supposition would not resolve itself into selfishness.

To say that I choose good for its own sake, or because it is valuable to being, that is, in obedience to the law of my reason, and of God, implies that I choose all possible good, and every good according to its relative value. If, then, a being chooses his own good, or the good of any being as an ultimate end, in obedience to the law of reason, it must be that he chooses, for the same reason, the highest possible good of all sentient being.

The partial choice of good implies the choice of it, not merely for its own sake, but upon condition of its relations to self, or to certain particular persons. Its relations conditionate the choice. When its relations to self conditionate the choice, so that it is chosen, not for its intrinsic value, irrespective of its relations, but for its relations to self, this is selfishness. It is the partial choice of good. If I choose the good of others besides myself, and choose good because of its relations to them, it must be either--

1. Because I love their persons with the love of fondness, and will their good for that reason, that is, to gratify my affection for them, which is selfishness; or--

2. Because of their relations to me, so that good to them is in some way a good to me, which also is selfishness; or--

3. Upon condition that they are worthy, which is benevolence; for if I will good to a being upon condition that he is worthy, I must value the good for its own sake, and will it particularly to him, because he deserves it. This is benevolence, and not the partial choice of good, because it is obeying the law of my reason. If I will the good of any being, or number of beings, it must be for some reason. I must will it as an end, or as a means. If I will it as an end, it must be the universal or impartial choice of good. If I will it as a means, it must be as a means to some end. The end cannot be their good for its own sake, for this would be willing it as an end, and not as a means. If I will it as a means, it must be as a means of my own gratification.

Again: If I will the good of any number of beings, I must do it in obedience to the law either of my intelligence and of God, or of my sensibility. But, if I will in obedience to the law of my intelligence, it must be the choice of the highest good of universal being. But if I will in obedience to the law or impulse of my sensibility, it must be to gratify my feelings or desires. This is selfishness.

Again: As the will must either follow the law of the reason and of God, or the impulses of the sensibility, it follows that moral agents are shut up to the necessity of being selfish or benevolent, and that there is no third way, because there is no third medium, through which any object of choice, can be presented. The mind can absolutely know nothing as an object of choice, that is not recommended by one of these faculties. Selfishness, then, and benevolence, are the only two alternatives.

Therefore, disobedience to the moral law must essentially consist in selfishness, and in selfishness alone.

It has been said, that a moral agent may will the good of others for its own sake, and yet not will the good of all. That is, that he may will the good of some for its intrinsic value, and yet not will universal good. But this is absurd. To make the valuable the object of choice for its own sake, without respect to any conditions or relations, is the same as to will all possible and universal good: that is, the one necessarily implies and includes the other. It has been asserted, for example, that an infidel abolitionist may be conscious of willing and seeking the good of the slave for its own sake, or disinterestedly, and yet not exercise universal benevolence. I reply, he deceives himself, just as a man would, who would say, he chooses fruit for its own sake. The fact is, he is conscious of desiring fruit for its own sake. But he does not and cannot choose it for its own sake. He chooses it in obedience to his desire, that is, to gratify his desire. So it is, and must be, with the infidel abolitionist. It cannot be that he chooses the good of the slave in obedience to the law of his intelligence and of God; for if he did, his benevolence would be universal. It must be, then, that he chooses the good of the slave, because he desires it, or to gratify a constitutional desire. Men naturally desire their own happiness, and the happiness of others: this is constitutional. But when, in obedience to these desires, they will their own or others' happiness, they seek to gratify their sensibility or desires: this is selfishness.

Let it be remembered, then, that sin is a unit, and always and necessarily consists in selfish ultimate intention, and in nothing else. This intention is sin; and thus we see that every phase of sin resolves itself into selfishness. This will appear more and more, as we proceed to unfold the subject of moral depravity.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXVI.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

In this discussion, I will

I. *State briefly what constitutes disobedience.*

II. *Show what is not implied in it*.

I. *What constitutes disobedience*.

We have seen that all sin or disobedience to moral law is a unit, and that it consists in selfishness, or in the choice of self-gratification as an end; in other words, that it consists in committing the will to the impulses of the sensibility, to the desires, emotions, feelings, and passions, instead of committing it to the good of being in general, in obedience to the law of the reason, or to the law of God as it is revealed in the reason. Selfishness is the intention to gratify self as an end. It is the preference of self-interest to other and higher interests.

II. *What is not implied in disobedience to the law of God*.

I. It does not necessarily imply an intention *to do wrong*. The thing intended in selfishness is to gratify self as an end. This is wrong; but it is not necessary to its being wrong, that the wrongness should be aimed at or intended. There may be a state of malicious feeling in a moral agent that would be gratified by the commission of sin. A sinner may have knowingly and intentionally made war upon God and man, and this may have induced a state of the sensibility so hostile to God, as that the sinner has a malicious desire to offend and abuse God, to violate his law, and trample upon his authority. This state of feeling may take the control of the will, and he may deliberately intend to violate the law and to do what God hates, for the purpose of gratifying this feeling. This, however, it will be seen, is not malevolence, or willing either natural or moral evil, for its own sake, but as a means of self-gratification. It is selfishness, and not malevolence.

But in the vast majority of instances, where the law is violated and sin committed, the wrong of the doing is no part of the sinner's aim or intention. He intends to gratify himself at all events. This intention is wrong. But it is not an intention to do wrong, nor is the wrong in any case the end upon which the intention terminates. There is a great mistake often entertained upon this subject. Many seem to think that they do not sin unless they intend to sin. The important truth, that sin belongs only to the ultimate intention, than which nothing is more true or more important, has been perverted in this manner. It has been assumed by some that they had not done wrong, nor intended wrong, because they were conscious that the wrong was not the end at which they aimed. "I did not intend the wrong," say they, "and therefore I did not sin." Now here is a fatal mistake, and a total perversion of the great and important truth, that sin and holiness belong only to the ultimate intention.

2. Disobedience to the moral law does not imply that wrong, or sin, or in other words, disobedience is ever intended as an end, or for its own sake. Gross mistakes have been fallen into upon this subject. Sinners have been represented as loving sin, and as choosing it for its own sake. They have also been represented as having a natural and constitutional craving or appetite for sin, such as carnivorous animals have for flesh. Now, if this craving existed, still it would not prove that sin is sought or intended for its own sake. I have a constitutional desire for food and drink. My desires terminate on these objects, that is, they are desired for their own sake. But they never are, and never can be chosen for their own sake, or as an end. They are chosen as a means of gratifying the desire, or may be chosen as a means of glorifying God, or both. Just so, if it were true that sinners have a constitutional appetency for sin, the sin would be desired for its own sake, or as an end, but could never be chosen except as a means of self-gratification.

But again. It is not true that sinners have a constitutional appetency and craving for sin. They have a constitutional appetite or desire for a great many things around them. They crave food, and drink, and knowledge. So did our first parents; and when these desires were strongly excited, they were a powerful temptation to prohibited indulgence. Eve craved the fruit, and the knowledge which she supposed she might attain by partaking of it. These desires led her to seek their indulgence in a prohibited manner. She desired and craved the food and the knowledge, and not the sin of eating. So, all sinners have constitutional and artificial appetites and desires enough. But not one of them is a craving for sin, unless it be the exception already named, when the mind has come into such relations to God, as to have a malicious satisfaction in abusing him. But this is not natural to man, and if it ever exists, is only brought about by rejecting great light, and inducing a most terrible perversion of the sensibility. But such cases are extremely rare; whereas, it has been strangely and absurdly maintained that all sinners, in consequence of the fall of Adam, have a sinful constitution, or one that craves sin, as it craves food and drink. This is false in fact, and absurd in philosophy, and wholly inconsistent with scripture, as we shall see, when we make moral depravity the special subject of attention. The facts are these: men have constitutional desires, appetites, and passions. These are not sinful in themselves; they all terminate on their respective objects. Selfishness, or sin, consists in choosing the gratification of these desires as an end, or in preferring their gratification to other and higher interests. This choice or intention is sinful. But, as I have said, sin is not the object intended, but self-gratification is the end intended.

Again: that disobedience to the law of God does not imply the choice of sin, or the wrong for its own sake, has been shown in a former lecture. But I must so far repeat as to say, that it is impossible that sin should be chosen as an end. Sin belongs to the ultimate intention. It either consists in, and is identical with, selfish intention, or it is the moral element or attribute of that intention. If it be identical with it, then to intend sin as an end, or for its own sake, were to intend my own intention as an end. If sin be but the moral element, quality, or attribute of the intention, then to intend sin as an end, I must intend an attribute of my intention as an end. Either alternative is absurd and impossible.

3. Disobedience to moral law does not imply, that the wrongness or sinfulness of the intention, is so much as thought of at the time the intention is formed. The sin not only need not be intended, but it is not essential to sin, that the moral character of the intention be at all taken into consideration, or so much as thought of at the time the intention is formed. The sinner ought to will the good of being. This he knows, and if he be a moral agent, which is implied in his being a sinner, he cannot but assume this as a first truth, that he ought to will the good of being in general, and not his own gratification, as an end. This truth he always and necessarily takes with him, in the form of an assumption of a universal truth. He knows, and cannot but know, that he ought to will the good of God and of the universe, as an end, instead of willing his own good as an end. Now, this being necessarily assumed by him as a first truth, it is no more essential to sin, that he should think at the time that a particular intention is or would be sinful, than it is essential to murder, that the law of causality should be distinctly before the mind, as an object of attention, when the murderer aims the fatal weapon at his victim. Murder consists in a selfish intention to kill a human being. I point a pistol at my neighbour's head with an intention to gratify a spirit of revenge or of avarice, or some such desire, by taking his life. I am, however, so exasperated, or so intent on self-gratification, as not to think of the law of God, or of God himself, or of my obligation to do otherwise. Now, am I hereby justified? No, indeed. I no more think of that law of causality which alone will secure the effect at which I aim, than I do of my obligation, and of the moral character of my intention. Nevertheless, I assume, and cannot but assume, those first truths at the moment of my intention. The first truths of reason are those, as has been repeatedly said, that are necessarily known and assumed by all moral agents. Among these truths are those of causality, moral obligation, right, wrong, human free agency, &c. Now, whether I think of these truths or not at every moment, I cannot but assume their truth at all times. In every endeavour to do anything, I assume the truth of causality, and generally without being conscious of any such assumption. I also assume the truth of my own free agency, and equally without being conscious of the assumption. I also assume that happiness is a good, for I am aiming to realize it to myself. I assume that it is valuable to myself, and cannot but assume that it is equally valuable to others. I cannot but assume also, that it ought to be chosen because of its intrinsic value, and that it ought to be chosen impartially, that is, that the good of each should be chosen according to its relative or intrinsic value. This is assuming my obligation to will it as an end, and is also assuming the rightness of such willing, and the wrongness of its opposite.

Now every moral agent does, and must, and this fact constitutes him a moral agent, assume all these, and divers other truths, at every moment of his moral agency. He assumes them all, one as really and as much as the other, and they are all assumed as first truths; and in the great majority of instances, the mind is not more taken up with the consciousness of the assumption, or with attending to those truths, as a subject of thought, than it is with the first truths, that space exists and is infinite, that duration exists and is infinite. It is of the highest importance, that this should be distinctly understood--that sin does not imply, that the moral character of an act or intention should be distinctly before the mind, at the time of its commission. Indeed, it is perfectly common for sinners to act thoughtlessly, as they say, that is, without reflecting upon the moral character of their intentions. But hereby they are not justified. Indeed, this very fact is often but an evidence and an instance of extreme depravity. Think you than an angel could sin thoughtlessly? Could he form a selfish intention without reflection, or thinking of its wickedness? Sinners, in sinning thoughtlessly, give the highest evidence of their desperate voluntary depravity. A sinner may become so hardened, and his conscience so stupified, that he may go on from day to day without thinking of God, of moral obligation, of right or wrong; and yet his sin and his guilt are real. He does and must know, and assume all these truths at every step, just as he assumes his own existence, the law of causality, his own liberty or free agency, &c. None of these need to be made the object of the mind's attention: they are known and need not to be learned. They are first truths, and we cannot act at all without assuming them. They are in the reason.

4. Disobedience to moral law does not necessarily imply an outwardly immoral life. A sinner may outwardly conform to every precept of the Bible, from selfish motives, or with a selfish intention, to gratify himself, to secure his own reputation here, and even his salvation hereafter. This is sin; but it is not outward immorality, but, on the contrary, is outward morality.

5. Disobedience to moral law does not necessarily imply feelings of enmity to God or to man. The will may be set upon self-indulgence, and yet as the sinner does not apprehend God's indignation against him, and his opposition to him, on that account, he may have no hard feelings, or feelings of hatred to God. Should God reveal to him his abhorrence of him on account of his sins, his determination to punish him for them, the holy sovereignty with which he will dispose of him; in this case, the sinner might, and probably would, feel deeply malicious and revengeful feelings towards God. But sin does not consist in these feelings, nor necessarily imply them.

6. Sin, or disobedience to moral law, does not imply, in any instance, a sinful nature; or a constitution in itself sinful. Adam and Eve sinned. Holy angels sinned. Certainly in their case, sin or disobedience, did not imply a sinful nature or constitution. Adam and Eve, certainly, and holy angels also, must have sinned by yielding to temptation. The constitutional desire being excited by the perception of their correlated objects, they consented to prefer their own gratification to obedience to God, in other words, to make their gratification an end. This was their sin. But in this there was no sin in their constitutions, and no other tendency to sin than this, that these desires, when strongly excited, are a temptation to unlawful indulgence.

It has been strangely and absurdly assumed, that sin in action implies a sinful nature. But this is contrary to fact and to sound philosophy, as well as contrary to the Bible, which we shall see in its proper place.

As it was with Adam and Eve, so it is with every sinner. There is not, there cannot be, sin in the nature of the constitution. But there are constitutional appetites and passions, and when these are strongly excited, they are a strong temptation or inducement to the will, to seek their gratification as an ultimate end. This, as I have said, is sin, and nothing else is or can be sin. It is selfishness. Under its appropriate head, I shall show that the nature or constitution of sinners has become physically depraved or diseased, and that as a consequence, the appetites and passions are more easily excited, and are more clamorous and despotic in their demands; and that, therefore, the constitution of man in its present state, tends more strongly than it otherwise would do, to sin. But to affirm that the constitution is in itself sinful, is worse than nonsense; it is contradicting God's own definition of sin. It is to stultify the whole question of morality and religion. But this we shall more fully see in a future lecture.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXVII.

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW.

In the discussion of this question, I must--

I. *Remind you of what constitutes disobedience to moral law.*

II. *Show what is implied in it.*

I. *What constitutes disobedience to moral law?*

1. We have seen that disobedience to moral law consists always in selfishness.

2. Selfishness consists in the ultimate choice of our own gratification.

3. An ultimate choice is the choice of an end, or the choice of something for its own sake, or for its own intrinsic value.

4. The choice of our own gratification as an ultimate end, is the preference of our own gratification, not merely because gratification is a good, but because, and upon condition, that it is our own gratification, or a good to self.

5. Selfishness chooses and cares for good only upon condition that it belongs to self. It is not the gratification of being in general, but self-gratification upon which selfishness terminates. It is a good because it belongs to self, or is chosen upon that condition. But when it is affirmed, that selfishness is sin, and the whole of sin, we are in danger of misconceiving the vast import of the word, and of taking a very narrow and superficial and inadequate view of the subject. It is, therefore, indispensable to raise and push the inquiry,--What is implied in selfishness? What are its characteristics and essential elements? What modifications or attributes does it develope and manifest, under the various circumstances in which in the providence of God it is placed? It consists in the committal of the will to the gratification of desire. The apostle calls it "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." What must be implied in the state of mind which consists in the committal of the whole being to the gratification of self as an end? What must be the effect upon the desires themselves, to be thus indulged? What must be the effect upon the intellect, to have its high demands trampled under foot? What must be the developements of it in the outward life? What must be the effect upon the temper and spirit, to have self-indulgence the law of the soul? This leads to the investigation of the point before us, namely--

II. *What is implied in disobedience to moral law?*

The inquiry, it will be seen, naturally divides itself into two branches. The first respects the moral character of selfishness, the second respects the attributes of selfishness. We will attend to these two inquiries in their order, and--

1. What is implied in the fact, that selfishness is a breach of moral law? Why is selfishness blameworthy? Why is not a spirit of self-seeking in mere animals or brute beasts, as much a breach of moral law as is the same spirit in man? If this spirit of self-seeking in man is sin, what is implied in this fact? In other words, what conditions are necessary to render a spirit of self-seeking a breach of moral law? These conditions, whatever they are, must be implied in disobedience to moral law. This brings us to the direct consideration of the things that belong to the first branch of our inquiry.

(1.) Disobedience to moral law implies the possession of the powers of moral agency. These have been so often enumerated as to render any enlargement upon this point unnecessary, except to say, that it is impossible for any but a moral agent to violate moral law. Mere animals may do that which the moral law prohibits in moral agents. But the moral law does not legislate over them; therefore, those things in them are not sin, not a violation of moral law.

(2.) It implies knowledge of the end which a moral agent is bound to choose. We have seen that the moral law requires love, and that this love is benevolence, and that benevolence is the disinterested and impartial choice of the highest good of God and of being in general, as an end. Now it follows, that this end must be apprehended, before we can possibly choose it. Therefore, obligation to choose it implies the perception or knowledge of it. Disobedience to moral law, then, implies the developement in the reason of the idea of the good or valuable to being. A being therefore who has not reason, or the ideas of whose reason on moral subjects are not at all developed, cannot violate the law of God; for over such the moral law does not extend its claims.

(3.) It implies the developement of the correlatives of the ideas of the good or the valuable, to wit, the ideas of moral obligation to will or choose it for the sake of its intrinsic value, and also the ideas of right and wrong. When the idea of the valuable to being is once developed, the mind is so constituted, that it cannot but instantly or simultaneously affirm its obligation to will it as an end, and every good according to its perceived relative value.

(4.) Disobedience, &c., also implies the developement of the correlative of the ideas of right and wrong, namely: the ideas of praise or blame-worthiness, or of merit and demerit. This idea, that is, the idea of moral character, is the correlative of that of right and wrong, in such a sense, that the idea of right and wrong necessitates and implies the idea of moral character, or of praise and blame-worthiness. When these conditions are fulfilled, and not till then, does the spirit of self-seeking, or the choice of our own gratification as an end, become sin, or constitute a breach of moral law. It will follow, that no beings are subjects of moral government, and capable of disobedience to moral law, but such as are moral agents, that is, such as possess both the powers of moral agency, and have these powers in such a state of developement and integrity, as to render obedience possible. It will follow, that neither the brute animals nor idiots, nor lunatics, nor somnambulists, nor indeed any being who is not rational and free, can disobey the moral law.

2. We come now to the second branch of the inquiry, namely: What is implied in selfishness, what are its attributes, and what states of the sensibility, and what outward developements, are implied in selfishness. This, it will be seen, brings us to the immensely interesting and important task of contrasting selfishness with benevolence. Formerly we considered the attributes of benevolence, and also what states of the sensibility and of the intellect, and also what outward actions, were implied in it, as necessarily resulting from it. We are now to take the same course with selfishness: and--

(1.) *Voluntariness* is an attribute of selfishness.

Selfishness has often been confounded with mere desire. But these things are by no means identical. Desire is constitutional. It is a phenomenon of the sensibility. It is a purely involuntary state of mind, and can in itself produce no action, nor can it, in itself, have moral character. Selfishness is a phenomenon of the will, and consists in committing the will to the gratification of the desires. The desire itself is not selfishness, but submitting the will to be governed by the desires, is selfishness. It should be understood, that no kind of mere desire, and no strength of mere desire, constitutes selfishness. Selfishness commences when the will yields to the desire, and seeks to obey it, in opposition to the law of the intelligence. It matters not what kind of desire it is; if it is the desire that governs the will, this is selfishness. It must be the will in a state of committal to the gratification of the desire.

(2.) *Liberty* is another attribute of selfishness.

That is, the choice of self-gratification is not necessitated by desire. But the will is always free to choose in opposition to desire. This every moral agent is as conscious of as of his own existence. The desire is not free, but the choice to gratify it is and must be free. There is a sense, as I shall have occasion to show, in which slavery is an attribute of selfishness, but not in the sense that the will chooses, by a law of necessity, to gratify desire. Liberty, in the sense of ability to make an opposite choice, must ever remain an attribute of selfishness, while selfishness continues to be a sin, or while it continues to sustain any relation to moral law.

(3.) *Intelligence* is another attribute of selfishness.

By this it is not intended, that intelligence is an attribute or phenomenon of will, nor that the choice of self-gratification is in accordance with the demands of the intellect. But it is intended, that the choice is made with the knowledge of the moral character that will be involved in it. The mind knows its obligation to make an opposite choice. It is not a mistake. It is not a choice made in ignorance of moral obligation to choose the highest good of being, as an end, in opposition to self-gratification. It is an intelligent choice in the sense, that it is a known resistance of the demands of the intellect. It is a known rejection of its claims. It is a known setting up of self-gratification, and preferring it to all higher interests.

(4.) *Unreasonableness* is another attribute of selfishness.

By this it is intended, that the selfish choice is in direct opposition to the demands of the reason. The reason was given to rule, that is, to affirm obligation, and thus announce the law of God. It affirms law and moral obligation. Obedience to moral law, as it is revealed in the reason, is virtue. Obedience to the sensibility in opposition to the reason, is sin. Selfishness consists in this. It is a dethroning of reason from the seat of government, and an enthroning of blind desire in opposition to it. Selfishness is always and necessarily unreasonable. It is a denial of that divine attribute that allies man to God, makes him capable of virtue, and is a sinking him to the level of a brute. It is a denial of his manhood, of his rational nature. It is a contempt of the voice of God within him, and a deliberate trampling down the sovereignty of his own intellect. Shame on selfishness! It dethrones human reason, and would dethrone the divine, and place mere blind lust upon the throne of the universe.

The very definition of selfishness implies that unreasonableness is one of its attributes. Selfishness consists in the will's yielding itself to the impulses of the sensibility, in opposition to the demands of the intelligence. Therefore, every act or choice of the will is necessarily altogether unreasonable. The sinner, while he continues such, never says nor does one thing that is in accordance with right reason. Hence the Bible says, that "madness is in their heart while they live." They have made an unreasonable choice of an end, and all their choices of means to secure their end are only a carrying out of their ultimate choice. They are, every one of them, put forth to secure an end contrary to reason. Therefore, no sinner who has never been converted, has, even in a single instance, chosen otherwise than in direct opposition to reason.

They are not merely sometimes unreasonable, but uniformly, and, while they remain selfish, necessarily so. The very first time that a sinner acts or wills reasonably, is when he turns to God, or repents and becomes a Christian. This is the first instance in which he practically acknowledges that he has reason. All previous to this, every one of the actions of his will and of his life, is a practical denial of his manhood, of his rational nature, of his obligation to God or his neighbour. We sometimes hear impenitent sinners spoken of as being unreasonable, in such a manner as to imply that all sinners are not so. But this only favours the delusion of sinners by leaving them to suppose that they are not all of them, at all times, altogether unreasonable. But the fact is, that there is not, and there never can be, in earth or hell, one impenitent sinner who, in any instance, acts otherwise than in direct and palpable opposition to his reason.

It had, therefore, been infinitely better for sinners if they had never been endowed with reason. They do not merely act without consulting their reason, but in stout and determined opposition to it.

Again: They act as directly in opposition to it as they possibly can. They not only oppose it, but they oppose it as much, in as aggravated a manner, as possible. What can be more directly and aggravatedly opposed to reason than the choice which the sinner makes of an end? Reason was given him to direct him in regard to the choice of the great end of life. It gives him the idea of the eternal and the infinite. It spreads out before him the interests of God and of the universe as of absolutely infinite value. It affirms their value, and the infinite obligation of the sinner to consecrate himself to these interests; and it promises him endless rewards if he will do so. On the contrary, it lays before him the consequences of refusal. It thunders in his ear the terrible sanctions of the law. It points him to the coming doom that awaits his refusal to comply with its demands. But behold, in the face of all this, the sinner, unhesitatingly, in the face of these affirmations, demands, and threatenings, turns away and consecrates himself to the gratification of his desires with the certainty that he could not do greater despite to his own nature than in this most mad, most preposterous, most blasphemous choice. Why do not sinners consider that it is impossible for them to offer a greater insult to God, who gave them reason, or more truly and deeply to shame and degrade themselves, than they do in their beastly selfishness? Total, universal, and shameless unreasonableness, is the universal characteristic of every selfish mind.

(5.) *Interestedness* is another attribute of selfishness.

By interestedness is meant self-interestedness. It is not the disinterested choice of good, that is, it is not the choice of the good of being in general as an end, but it is the choice of self-good, of good to self. Its relation to self is the condition of the choice of this good. But for its being the good of self, it would not be chosen. The fundamental reason, or that which should induce choice, to wit, the intrinsic value of good, is rejected as insufficient; and the secondary reason, namely, its relation to self, is the condition of determining the will in this direction. This is really making self-good the supreme end. In other words, it is making self-gratification the end. Nothing is practically regarded as worthy of choice, except as it sustains to self the relation of a means of self-gratification.

This attribute of selfishness secures a corresponding state of the sensibility. The sensibility, under this indulgence, attains to a monstrous developement, either generally, or in some particular directions. Selfishness is the committal of the will to the indulgence of the propensities. But from this it by no means follows, that all of the propensities will be indiscriminately indulged, and thereby greatly developed. Sometimes one propensity, and sometimes another, has the greatest natural strength, and thereby gains the ascendancy in the control of the will. Sometimes circumstances tend more strongly to the developement of one appetite or passion than another. Whatever propensity is most indulged, will gain the greatest developement. The propensities cannot all be indulged at once, for they are often opposed to each other. But they may all be indulged and developed in their turn. For example, the licentious propensities, and various other propensities, cannot be indulged consistently with the simultaneous indulgence of the avaricious propensities, the desire of reputation and of ultimate happiness. Each of these, and even all the propensities, may come in for a share, and in some instances may gain so equal a share of indulgence, as upon the whole to be about equally developed. But in general, either from constitutional temperament, or from circumstances, some one or more of the propensities will gain so uniform a control of the will, as to occasion its monstrous developement. It may be the love of reputation; and then there will be at least a public decent exterior, more or less strict, according to the state of morals in the society in which the individual dwells. If it be amativeness that gains the ascendency over the other propensities, licentiousness will be the result. If it be alimentiveness, then gluttony and Epicurism will be the result. The result of selfishness must be, to develope in general, or in particular, the propensities of the sensibility, and to beget a corresponding exterior. If avarice take the control of the will, we have the haggard and ragged miser. All the other propensities wither under the reign of this detestable one. Where the love of knowledge prevails, we have the scholar, the philosopher, the man of learning. This is one of the most decent and respectable forms of selfishness, but is nevertheless as absolutely selfishness as any other form. When compassion, as a feeling, prevails, we have, as a result, the philanthropist, and often the reformer; not the reformer in a virtuous sense, but the selfish reformer. Where love of kindred prevails, we often have the kind husband, the affectionate father, mother, brother, sister, and so on. These are the amiable sinners, especially among their own kindred. When the love of country prevails, we have the patriot, the statesman, and the soldier. This picture might be drawn at full length, but with these traits I must leave you to fill up the outline. I would only add, that several of these forms of selfishness so nearly resemble certain forms of virtue, as often to be confounded with them, and mistaken for them. Indeed, so far as the outward life is concerned, they are right, in the letter, but as they do not proceed from disinterestedly benevolent intention, they are only specious forms of selfishness.

(6.) *Partiality* is another attribute of selfishness. It consists in giving the preference to certain interests, on account of their being either directly the interests of self, or so connected with self-interest as to be preferred on that account. It matters not, whether the interest to which the preference is given be of greater or of less value, if so be it is preferred, not for the reason of its greater value, but because of its relation to self. In some instances the practical preference may justly be given to a less interest, on account of its sustaining such a relation to us that we can secure it, when the greater interest could not be secured by us. If the reason of the preference, in such case, be, not that it is self-interest, but an interest that can be secured while the greater cannot, the preference is a just one, and not partiality. My family, for example, sustain such relations to me, that I can more readily and surely secure their interests, than I can those of my neighbour, or of a stranger. For this reason I am under obligation to give the practical preference to the interests of my own family, not because they are my own, nor because their interests sustain such a relation to my own, but because I can more readily secure their interests than those of any other family.

The question in such a case turns upon the amount I am able to secure, and not on their intrinsic value merely. It is a general truth, that we can secure more readily and certainly the interests of those to whom we sustain certain relations; and, therefore, God and reason point out these interests as particular objects of our attention and effort. This is not partiality but impartiality. It is treating interests as they should be treated.

But selfishness is always partial. If it gives any interest whatever the preference, it is because of its relation to self. It always, and, continuing to be selfishness, necessarily, lays the greatest stress upon, and gives the preference to, those interests the promotion of which will gratify self.

Here care should be taken to avoid delusion. Oftentimes selfishness appears to be very disinterested and very impartial. For example: here is a man whose compassion, as a mere feeling or state of the sensibility, is greatly developed. He meets a beggar, an object that strongly excites his ruling passion. He empties his pockets, and even takes off his coat and gives it to him, and in his paroxysm he will divide his all with him, or even give him all. Now this would generally pass for most undoubted virtue, as a rare and impressive instance of moral goodness. But there is no virtue, no benevolence in it. It is the mere yielding of the will to the control of feeling, and has nothing in it of the nature of virtue. Innumerable examples of this might be adduced, as illustrations of this truth. It is only an instance and an illustration of selfishness. It is the will seeking to gratify the feeling of compassion, which for the time is the strongest desire.

We constitutionally desire not only our own happiness, but also that of men in general, when their happiness in no way conflicts with our own. Hence selfish men will often manifest a deep interest in the welfare of those, whose welfare will not interfere with their own. Now, should the will be yielded up to the gratification of this desire, this would often be regarded as virtue. For example: a few years since much interest and feeling were excited in this country by the cause and sufferings of the Greeks, in their struggle for liberty; and since in the cause of the Poles. A spirit of enthusiasm appeared, and many were ready to give and do almost anything for the cause of liberty. They gave up their will to the gratification of this excited state of feeling. This, they may have supposed, was virtue; but it was not, nor was there a semblance of virtue about it, when it is once understood, that virtue consists in yielding the will to the law of the intelligence, and not to the impulse of excited feelings.

Some writers have fallen into the strange mistake of making virtue to consist in seeking the gratification of certain desires, because, as they say, these desires are virtuous. They make some of the desires selfish, and some benevolent. To yield the will to the control of the selfish propensities is sin; to yield the will to the control of the benevolent desires, such as the desire of my neighbour's happiness and of the public happiness, is virtue, because these are good desires, while the selfish desires are evil. Is not this the doctrine taught by Bishop Butler? Now this is, and has been, a very common view of virtue and vice. But it is fundamentally erroneous. None of the constitutional desires are good or evil in themselves; they are all alike involuntary, and all alike terminate on their correlated objects. To yield the will to the control of any one of them, no matter which, is sin; it is following a blind feeling, desire, or impulse of the sensibility, instead of yielding to the demands of the intelligence, as the law affirming power. To will the good of my neighbour, or of my country, and of God, because of the intrinsic value of those interests, that is, to will them as an end, and in obedience to the law of the reason, is virtue; but to will them to gratify a constitutional but blind desire, is selfishness and sin. The desires terminate on their respective objects, but the will, in this case, seeks the objects, not for their own sake, but because they are desired, that is, to gratify the desires. This is choosing them, not as an end, but as a means of self-gratification. This is making self-gratification the end after all. This must be a universal truth, when a thing is chosen merely in obedience to desire. The benevolence of these writers is sheer selfishness, and their virtue is vice.

The choice of any thing whatever, because it is desired, irrespective of the demands of the reason, is selfishness and sin. It matters not what it is. The very statement, that I choose a thing because I desire it, is only another form of saying, that I choose it for my own sake, or for the sake of appeasing the desire, and not on account of its own intrinsic value. All such choice is always and necessarily partial. It is giving one interest the preference over another, not because of its perceived intrinsic and superior value, but because it is an object of desire. If I yield to mere desire in any case, it must be to gratify the desire. This is, and in the case supposed must be, the end for which the choice is made. To deny this is to deny that the will seeks the object because it is desired. Partiality consists in giving one thing the preference over another for no good reason. That is, not because the intelligence demands this preference, but because the sensibility demands it. Partiality is therefore always and necessarily an attribute of selfishness.

(7.) *Impenitence* is another modification of selfishness. Perhaps it is more proper to say, that impenitence is only another name for selfishness. Penitence, or repentance, is the turning of the heart from selfishness to benevolence. Impenitence is the heart's cleaving to the commission of sin under light, or under the pressure of affirmed obligation or, more properly, cleaving to that, the willing and doing of which is sin. But this we shall more fully see in another place.

(8.) *Unbelief* is another modification or attribute of selfishness. Unbelief is not a mere negation, or the mere absence of faith. Faith, as an attribute of benevolence, is that quality which commits it to truth and to the God of truth, to veracity as a condition of securing its end. Unbelief, as an attribute of selfishness, is that quality that withholds confidence, and refuses to trust in God, or to commit itself to truth. Faith, as an attribute of benevolence, is the quality, in the nature of benevolence, that causes it to commit itself to truth in specific executive acts. This attribute of benevolence causes it to commit the life and the whole being to be moulded and influenced by truth. Unbelief, as an attribute of selfishness, is that quality that causes it to withhold specific acts of confidence in God and in truth. It is saying--I will take care of my own interests and let God take care of his. "Who is God that I should serve him? and what profit should I have, if I pray unto Him?" It is that in selfishness which is the ground of the refusal to commit ourselves to the guidance of God, and which leads us to trust in our own guidance. It is self-trust, self-dependence; and what is this but selfishness and our own self-seeking? Christ says to the Jews, "How can ye believe which seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" This assumes that unbelief is a modification of selfishness; that their regard to their reputation with men, rendered faith, while that self-seeking spirit was indulged, impossible. They withheld confidence in Christ, because it would cost them their reputation with men to believe. So every sinner, who ever heard the gospel and has not embraced it, withholds confidence from Christ, because it will cost self too much to yield this confidence. This is true in every case of unbelief. Confidence is withheld, because to yield it involves and implies the denying of ourselves all ungodliness and every worldly lust. Christ requires the abandonment of every form and degree of selfishness. To believe is to receive with the heart Christ's instruction and requirements; to trust in them,--to commit our whole being to be moulded by them. Unbelief, then, is only a selfish withholding of this confidence, this committal. The fact is, that faith implies and consists in the renunciation of selfishness; and unbelief is only selfishness, contemplated in its relation to Christ and his gospel.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

(9.) *Efficiency* is another attribute of selfishness.

Desire never produces action until it influences the will. It has no efficiency or causality in itself. It cannot, without the concurrence of the will, command the attention of the intellect, or move a muscle of the body. The whole causality of the mind resides in the will. In it resides the power of accomplishment.

Again: the whole efficiency of the mind, as it respects accomplishment, resides in the choice of an end, or in the ultimate intention. All action of the will, or all willing, must consist in choosing either an end, or the means of accomplishing an end. If there is choice, something is chosen. That something is chosen for some reason. To deny this is a denial that any thing is chosen. The ultimate reason for the choice and the thing chosen, are identical. This we have repeatedly seen.

Again: we have seen that the means cannot be chosen until the end is chosen. The choice of the end is distinct from the volitions or endeavours of the mind to secure the end. But although the choice of an end is not identical with the subordinate choices and volitions to secure the end, yet it necessitates them. The choice once made, secures or necessitates the executive volitions to secure the end. By this it is not intended that the mind is not free to relinquish its end, and of course to relinquish the use of the means to accomplish it; but only that, while the choice or intention remains, the choice of the end by the will is efficient in producing volitions to realize the end. This is true both of benevolence and selfishness. They are both choices of an end, and are necessarily efficient in producing the use of the means to realize this end. They are choices of opposite ends, and, of course, will produce their respective results.

The Bible represents sinners as having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; that while the will is committed to the indulgence of the propensities, they cannot cease from the indulgence. There is no way, therefore, for the sinner to escape from the commission of sin, but to cease to be selfish. While selfishness continues, you may change the form of outward manifestation, you may deny one appetite or desire for the sake of indulging another; but it is and must be sin still. The desire to escape hell, and to obtain heaven may become the strongest, in which case, selfishness will take on a most sanctimonious type. But if the will is following desire, it is selfishness still; and all your religious duties, as you call them, are only selfishness robed in the stolen habiliments of loving obedience to God.

Be it remembered, then, that selfishness is, and must be, efficient in producing its effects. It is cause: the effect must follow. The whole life and activity of sinners is founded in it. It constitutes their life, or rather their spiritual death. They are dead in trespasses and in sins. It is in vain for them to dream of doing anything good, until they relinquish their selfishness. While this continues, they cannot act at all, except as they use the means to accomplish a selfish end. It is impossible, while the will remains committed to a selfish end, or to the promotion of self-interest or self-gratification, that it should use the means to promote a benevolent end. The first thing is to change the end, and then the sinner can cease from outward sin. Indeed, if the end be changed, many of the same acts which were before sinful will become holy. While the selfish end continues, whatever a sinner does, is selfish. Whether he eats, or drinks, or labours, or preaches, or, in short, whatever he does, is to promote some form of self-interest. The end being wrong, all is, and must be, wrong.

But let the end be changed; let benevolence take the place of selfishness, and all is right. With this end in view the mind is absolutely incapable of doing anything or of choosing anything, except as a means of promoting the good of the universe.

I wish to impress this truth deeply upon the mind, and, therefore, give the substance of the preceding remarks in the form of definite propositions.

i. All action consists in, or results from, choice.

ii. All choice must respect or consist in the choice of an end or of means. The mind is incapable of choosing unless it has an object of choice, and that object must be regarded by the mind either as an end or as a means.

iii. The mind can have but one ultimate end at the same time.

iv. It cannot choose the means until it has chosen the end.

v. It cannot choose one end and use means to accomplish another, at the same time.

vi. Therefore, while the will is benevolent or committed to the glory of God and the good of being, it cannot use the means of self-gratification in a selfish sense, or, in other words, it cannot put forth selfish volitions.

vii. When the will is committed to self-indulgence it cannot use the means designed to glorify God and promote the good of men as an end. This is impossible.

viii. The carnal heart or mind cannot but sin; "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," because it is "enmity against God."

ix. The new or regenerate heart cannot sin. It is benevolence, love to God and man. This cannot sin. These are both ultimate choices or intentions. They are from their own nature efficient, each excluding the other, and each securing, for the time being, the exclusive use of means to promote its end. To deny this, is the same as to maintain either that the will can, at the same time, choose two opposite ends, or that it can choose one end only, but, at the same time, choose the means to accomplish another end, not yet chosen. Now either alternative is absurd. Then holiness and sin can never co-exist in the same mind, at the same time. Each, as has been said, for the time being, necessarily excludes the other. Selfishness and benevolence co-exist in the same mind! A greater absurdity and a more gross contradiction was never conceived or expressed. No one for a moment ever supposed that selfishness and benevolence could co-exist in the same mind, who had clearly defined ideas of what they are. When desire is mistaken on the one hand for benevolence, and on the other for selfishness, the mistake is natural, that selfishness and benevolence can co-exist in the same mind. But as soon as it is seen, that benevolence and selfishness are supreme ultimate opposite choices, the affirmation is instantaneous and irresistible, that they can neither co-exist, nor can one use means to promote the other. While benevolence remains, the mind's whole activity springs from it as from a fountain. This is the philosophy of Christ. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Mat 12:33, Mat 12:35. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." Jam 3:11-12. "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." Luk 6:43-45.

(10.) *Opposition* to benevolence, or to virtue, or to holiness and true religion, is one of the attributes of selfishness; this quality belongs to the nature of selfishness.

Selfishness is not, in its relations to benevolence, a mere negation. It cannot be. It is the choice of self-gratification as the supreme and ultimate end of life. While the will is committed to this end, and benevolence, or a mind committed to an opposite end, is contemplated, the will cannot remain in a state of indifference to benevolence. It must either yield its preference of self-indulgence, or resist the benevolence which the intellect perceives. The will cannot remain in the exercise of this selfish choice, without as it were bracing and girding itself against that virtue, which it does not imitate. If it does not imitate it, it must be because it refuses to do so. The intellect does, and must, strongly urge the will to imitate benevolence, and to seek the same end. The will must yield or resist, and the resistance must be more or less resolute and determined, as the demands of the intellect are more or less emphatic. This resistance to benevolence or to the demands of the intellect in view of it, is what the Bible calls, hardening the heart. It is obstinacy of will, under the light and the presence of true religion and the admitted claims of benevolence.

This opposition to benevolence or true religion, must be developed in specific action, whenever the mind apprehends true religion, or selfishness must be abandoned. Not only must this opposition be developed, or selfishness abandoned, under such circumstances, but it must increase as true religion displays more and more of its loveliness. As the light from the radiant sun of benevolence is poured more and more upon the darkness of selfishness, the opposition of this principle of action must of necessity manifest itself in the same proportion, or selfishness must be abandoned. Thus selfishness remaining under light, must manifest more and more opposition, just in proportion as light increases, and the soul has less the colour of an apology for its opposition.

This peculiarity of selfishness has always been manifested just in proportion as it has been brought into the light of true religion. This accounts for all the opposition that has been made to true religion since the world began. It also proves that where there are impenitent sinners, and they retain their impenitence, and manifest no hostility to the religion which they witness, that there is something defective in the professed piety which they behold; or at least they do not contemplate all the attributes of a true piety. It also proves, that persecution will always exist where much true religion is manifested to those who hold fast their selfishness.

It is indeed true, that selfishness and benevolence are just as much opposed to each other, and just as much and as necessarily at war with each other, as God and Satan, as heaven and hell. There can never be a truce between them; they are essential and eternal opposites. They are not merely opposites, but they are opposite efficient causes. They are essential activities. They are the two, and the only two, great antagonistic principles in the universe of mind. Each is heaving and energizing like an earthquake to realize its end. A war of mutual and uncompromising extermination necessarily exists between them. Neither can be in the presence of the other, without repulsion and opposition. Each puts forth all its energy to subdue and overcome the other; and already selfishness has shed an ocean of the blood of saints, as well as the precious blood of the Prince of life. There is not a more gross and injurious mistake, than to suppose that selfishness ever, under any circumstances, becomes reconciled to benevolence. The supposition is absurd and contradictory; since for selfishness to become reconciled to benevolence, were the same thing as for selfishness to become benevolence. Selfishness may change the mode of attack or of its opposition, but its real opposition it can never change, while it retains its own nature and continues to be selfishness.

This opposition of the heart to benevolence often begets deep opposition of feeling. The opposition of the will engages the intellect in fabricating excuses, and cavils, and lies, and refuges, and often greatly perverts the thoughts, and excites the most bitter feelings imaginable toward God and toward the saints. Selfishness will strive to justify its opposition, and to shield itself against the reproaches of conscience, and will resort to every possible expedient to cover up its real hostility to holiness. It will pretend that it is not holiness, but sin that it opposes. But the fact is, it is not sin but holiness to which it stands for ever opposed. The opposition of feeling is only developed when the heart is brought into a strong light, and makes deep and strong resistance. In such cases, the sensibility sometimes boils over with feelings of bitter opposition to God, and Christ, and all good.

The question is often asked, May not this opposition exist in the sensibility, and those feelings of hostility to God exist, when the heart is in a truly benevolent state? To this inquiry, I would reply: If it can, it must be produced by infernal or some other influence that misrepresents God, and places his character before the mind in a false light. Blasphemous thoughts may be suggested, and, as it were, injected into the mind. These thoughts may have their natural effect in the sensibility, and feelings of bitterness and hostility may exist without the consent of the will. The will may all the while be endeavouring to repel these suggestions, and divert the attention from such thoughts, yet Satan may continue to hurl his fiery darts, and the soul may be racked with torture under the poison of hell, which seems to be taking effect in the sensibility. The mind, at such times, seems to itself to be filled, so far as feeling is concerned, with all the bitterness of hell. And so it is, and yet it may be, that in all this there is no selfishness. If the will holds fast its integrity; if it holds out in the struggle, and where God is maligned and misrepresented by the infernal suggestions, it says with Job, "Although he slay me, yet will I trust in him." However sharp the conflict in such cases, we can look back and say, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." In such cases it is the selfishness of Satan, and not our own selfishness, that kindled up those fires of hell in our sensibility. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life."

(11.) *Cruelty* is another attribute of selfishness.

This term is often used to designate a state of the sensibility. It then represents that state of feeling which has a barbarous or savage pleasure in the misery of others.

Cruelty, as a phenomenon of the will, or as an attribute of selfishness, consists, first, in a reckless disregard of the well-being of God and the universe, and secondly, in persevering in a course that must ruin the souls of the subjects of it, and, so far as they have influence, ruin the souls of others. What should we think of a man who was so intent on securing some petty gratification, that he would not give the alarm if a city were on fire, and the sleeping citizens in imminent danger of perishing in the flames? Suppose that sooner than deny himself some momentary gratification, he would jeopard many lives. Should we not call this cruelty? Now there are many forms of cruelty. Because sinners are not always brought into circumstances where they exercise certain forms of it, they flatter themselves that they are not cruel. But selfishness is always and necessarily cruel--cruel to the soul and highest interests of the subject of it; cruel to the souls of others in neglecting to care and act for their salvation; cruel to God, in abusing him in ten thousand ways; cruel to the whole universe. If we should be shocked at the cruelty of him who should see his neighbour's house on fire, and the family asleep, and neglect to give them warning, because too self-indulgent to rise from his bed, what shall we say of the cruelty of one, who shall see his neighbour's soul in peril of eternal death, and yet neglect to give him warning?

Sinners are apt to possess very good dispositions, as they express it. They suppose they are the reverse of being cruel. They possess tender feelings, are often very compassionate in their feelings toward those who are sick and in distress, and who are in circumstances of any affliction. They are ready to do many things for them. Such persons would be shocked, should they be called cruel. And many professors would take their part, and consider them abused. Whatever else, it would be said, is an attribute of their character, surely cruelty is not. Now, it is true that there are certain forms of cruelty with which such persons are not chargeable. But this is only because God has so moulded their constitution, that they are not delighted with the misery of their fellow men. However, there is no virtue in their not being gratified at the sight of suffering, nor in their painstaking to prevent it while they continue selfish. They follow the impulses of their feelings, and if their temperament were such that it would gratify them to inflict misery on others; if this were the strongest tendency of their sensibility; their selfishness would instantly take on that type. But though cruelty, in all its forms, is not common to all selfish persons, it is still true that some form of cruelty is practised by every sinner. God says, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The fact that they live in sin, that they set an example of selfishness, that they do nothing for their own souls, nor for the souls of others; these are really most atrocious forms of cruelty, and infinitely exceed all those comparatively petty forms that relate to the miseries of men in this life.

(12.) *Injustice* is another attribute of selfishness.

Justice, as an attribute of benevolence, is that quality that disposes it to regard and treat every being and interest with exact equity.

Injustice is the opposite of this. It is that quality of selfishness which disposes it to treat the persons and interests of others inequitably, and a disposition to give the preference to self-interest, regardless of the relative value of the interests. The nature of selfishness demonstrates, that injustice is always and necessarily one of its attributes, and one that is universally and constantly manifested.

There is the utmost injustice in the end chosen. It is the practical preference of a petty self-interest over infinite interests. This is injustice as great as possible. This is universal injustice to God and man. It is the most palpable and most flagrant piece of injustice possible to every being in the universe. Not one known by him to exist who has not reason to bring against him the charge of most flagrant and shocking injustice. This injustice extends to every act and to every moment of life. He is never, in the least degree, just to any being in the universe. Nay, he is perfectly unjust. He cares nothing for the rights of others as such; and never, even in appearance, regards them except for selfish reasons. This, then, is, and can be, only the appearance of regarding them, while in fact, no right of any being in the universe is, or can be, respected by a selfish mind, any further than in appearance. To deny this, is to deny his selfishness. He performs no act whatever but for one reason, that is, to promote his own gratification. This is his end. For the realization of this end every effort is made, and every individual act and volition put forth. Remaining selfish, it is impossible that he should act at all, but with reference directly or indirectly to this end. But this end has been chosen, and must be pursued, if pursued at all, in the most palpable and outrageous violation of the rights of God and of every creature in the universe. Justice demands that he should devote himself to the promotion of the highest good of God and the universe, that he should love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. Every sinner is openly, an universally, and as perfectly unjust as possible, at every moment of his impenitence.

It should, therefore, always be understood, that no sinner at any time is at all just to any being in the universe. All his paying of his debts, and all his apparent fairness and justice, are only a specious form of selfishness. He has, and, if a sinner, it is impossible that he should not have, some selfish reason for all he does, is, says, or omits. His entire activity is selfishness, and, while he remains impenitent, it is impossible for him to think, or act, or will, or do, or be, or say, anything more or less than he judges expedient to promote his own interests. He is not just. He cannot be just, nor begin in any instance, or in the least degree, to be truly just, either to God or man, until he begins life anew, gives God his heart, and consecrates his entire being to the promotion of the good of universal being. This, all this, justice demands. There is no beginning to be just, unless the sinner begins here. Begin and be just in the choice of the great end of life, and then you cannot but be just in the use of means. But be unjust in the choice of an end, and it is impossible for you, in any instance, to be otherwise than totally unjust in the use of means. In this case your entire activity is, and can be, nothing else than a tissue of the most abominable injustice.

The only reason why every sinner does not openly and daily practise every species of outward commercial injustice, is, that he is so circumstanced that, upon the whole, he judges it not for his interest to practise this injustice. This is the reason universally, and no thanks to any sinner for abstaining, in any instance, from any kind or degree of injustice in practice, for he is only restrained and kept from it by selfish considerations. That is, he is too selfish to do it. His selfishness, and not the love of God or man, prevents.

He may be prevented by a constitutional or phrenological conscientiousness, or sense of justice. But this is only a feeling of the sensibility, and, if restrained only by this, he is just as absolutely selfish as if he had stolen a horse in obedience to acquisitiveness. God so tempers the constitution as to restrain men, that is, that one form of selfishness shall prevail over and curb another. Approbativeness is, in most persons, so large, that a desire to be applauded by their fellow-men so modifies the developements of their selfishness, that it takes on a type of outward decency and appearance of justice. But this is no less selfishness than if it took on altogether a different type.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXIX.

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

(13.) *Oppression* is another attribute of selfishness.

Oppression is the spirit of slaveholding. It is that quality of selfishness that disposes it, in practice, to deprive others of their rights. It is in the nature of selfishness to do this for the purpose of contributing to our own interest or gratification. To define it comprehensively: it is the disposition, inherent in the very nature of selfishness, to enslave God and all the universe; to make them all give up their interest, and happiness, and glory, and seek and live for ours. It is a willingness that all beings should live to and for us; that all interests should bend and be sacrificed to ours. It is a practical denial of all rights but our own, and a practical setting up of the claim that all beings are ours, our goods, and chattels, our property. It is a spirit that aims at making all beings serve us, and all interests subserve our own.

This must be an attribute of selfishness. Self-interest is the ultimate end; and such is the nature of the selfish choice of this end that the whole life, and activity, and aim, and effort, is to secure this end without any disinterested regard to the right, or personal liberty, of any being in existence. The sinner, while he remains such, has absolutely no other end in view, and no other ultimate motive in any thing he does. Selfishness, or self-gratification, under some form, is the reason for every volition, action, and omission. For this end alone he lives, and moves, and has his being. This being his only end, it is impossible that oppression should not be an attribute of his intention. The whole of oppression is included in the choice of this end of life. Nothing can be more oppressive to the whole universe than for a being to set up his own interest as the sole good, and account all other interests as of no value, except as they contribute to his own. This is the perfection of oppression, and it matters not what particular course it takes to secure its end. They are all equally oppressive. If he does not seek the good of others for its own sake, but simply as a means of securing his own, it matters not at all, so far as his character is concerned, whether he pamper and fatten his slaves, or whether he starve them, whether he work them hard or let them lounge, whether he lets them go naked, or arrays them in costly attire. All is done for one and but one ultimate reason, and that is to promote self-interest, and not at all for the intrinsic value of any interest but that of self. If such an one prays to God, it is because he is unable to command and govern Him by authority, and not at all out of any true regard to the rights, or character, or relations of God. He desires and solicits God's services, just because he cannot get them by force. God's interests and rights are practically treated as of no value by every sinner in the universe. They care nothing for God, except to enslave him; that is to make him serve them without any service in return. They have no design to live to and for him, but that he should live to and for them. They regard all other beings just in the same manner. If there is, in any instance, the semblance, of a regard to their interest for its own sake, it is only a semblance, and not a reality. It is not, and it cannot be, a reality. The assertion, that it is any thing more than hypocritical pretence, is absurd, and contradicts the supposition that he is a sinner, or selfish.

There are innumerable specious forms of oppression, that, to a superficial observer, appear very like a regard to the real interest of the oppressed for its own sake.

It may be gratifying to pride, to ambition, or to some other feeling of a slaveholder, to see his slaves well fed, well clad, full fleshed, cheerful, contented, attached to their master. For the same reason he might feed his dog, provide him a warm kennel, and an ornament his neck with a brazen collar. He might show a similar affection to his horse and his swine. But what is the reason of all this? Only to gratify himself. God has so moulded his constitution, that it would give him pain to whip his slave, or his dog, or his horse, or to see them hungry or neglected. It would trouble his conscience, and endanger his peace and his soul. There may often be the appearance of virtue in a slaveholder and in slaveholding; but it can absolutely be only an appearance. If it be properly slaveholding, it is and must be oppression; it is and must be selfishness. Can it be that slaveholding is designed to promote the good of the slave for its own sake? But this could not be slaveholding.

Should an individual be held to service for his own benefit; should the law of benevolence really demand it; this could no more be the crime of slaveholding and oppression, than it is murder or any other crime. It would not be selfishness, but benevolence, and therefore no crime at all, but virtue. But selfishness embodies and includes every element of oppression. Its end, its means, and its every breath, form but an incessant denial of all rights but those of self. All sinners are oppressors and slaveholders in heart and in fact. They practise continual oppression, and nothing else. They make God serve them without wages, and, as He says, "they make him to serve with their sins." God, all men, and all things and events are, as far as possible, made to serve them without the return of the least disinterested regard to their interests. Disinterested regard! Why the very terms contradict the supposition that he is a sinner. He has, he can have, in no instance, any other than selfish aims in appearing to care for any one's interest for its own sake.

All unconverted abolitionists are slaveholders in heart, and, so far as possible, in life. There is not one of them who would not enslave every slave at the south, and his master too, and all at the north, and the whole universe, and God himself, so far as he could. Indeed, he does it in spirit, and, remaining selfish, he cannot but aim to enslave all beings, make them as far as possible contribute to his interest and pleasure, without the least disinterested regard to their interest, in return.

Oppression is an essential attribute of selfishness, and always developes itself according to circumstances. When it has power and inclination, it uses the chain and the whip. When it has not power, it resorts to other means of securing the services of others without disinterested return. Sometimes it supplicates; but this is only because it is regarded as necessary or expedient. It is oppression under whatever form it assumes. It is in fact a denial of all rights but those of self, and a practical claiming of God and of all beings and events as ours. It is, to all intents, the chattel principle universally applied. So that all sinners are both slaves and slaveholders; in heart and endeavour, they enslave God and all men; and other sinners, in heart and endeavour, enslave them. Every sinner is endeavouring, in heart, to appropriate to himself all good.

(14.) *Hostility*, open or secret, is another attribute of selfishness.

Selfishness is a spirit of strife. It is opposed to peace or amity. Selfishness, on the very face of it, is a declaration of war with all beings. It is setting up self-interest in opposition to all other interests. It is a deliberate intention, prompting to an attempt to seize upon, and subordinate, all interests to our own. It is impossible that there should not be a state of perpetual hostility between a selfish being and all benevolent beings. They are mutually and necessarily opposed to each other. The benevolent are seeking the universal good, and the selfish are seeking their own gratification without the least voluntary regard to any interest but that of self. Here is opposition and war, of course and of necessity.

But it is no less true, that every selfish being is at war with every other selfish being. Each is seeking, and is fully consecrated to, his own interest, and is at the same time denying all rights but his own. Here is, and must be, strife and hostility. There is no use in talking of putting away slavery or war from earth, while selfishness is in it; for they both inhere in the very nature of selfishness; and every selfish being is, in spirit and principle, an oppressor, a slaveholder, a tyrant, a warrior, a duellist, a pirate, and all that is implied in making war upon all beings. This is no railing accusation, but sober verity. The forms of war and of oppression may be modified indefinitely. The bloody sword may be sheathed. The manacle and the lash may be laid aside, and a more refined mode of oppression and of war may be carried on; but oppression and war must continue under some form so long as selfishness continues. It is impossible that it should not. Nor will the more refined and specious, and, if you please, baptized forms of oppression and war, that may succeed those now practised, involve less guilt, or be less displeasing to God than the present. No, indeed. As light increases, and compels selfishness to lay aside the sword, and bury the manacle and the whip, and profess the religion of Christ, the guilt of selfishness increases every moment. The form of manifestation is changed, compelled by increasing light and advancing civilization and Christianization. Oppression and war, although so much changed in form, are not at all abandoned in spirit. Nay, they are only strengthened by increasing light. Nor can it be told with certainty, whether the more refined modifications of oppression and war that may succeed, will upon the whole be a less evil to mankind. Guilt will certainly increase as light increases. Sin abounds, and becomes exceeding sinful, just in proportion as the light of truth is poured upon the selfish mind.

Do you ask, then, what shall we do? Shall we do nothing, but let things go on as they are? I answer, No, by no means. Do, if possible, ten times more than ever to put away these and all the evils that are under the sun. But aim, not only at outward reforms, but also at the annihilation of selfishness; and when you succeed in reforming the heart, the life cannot but be reformed. Put away selfishness, and oppression and war are no more. But engage in bringing about any other reform, and you are but building dams of sand. Selfishness will force for itself a channel; and who can say, that its desolations may not be more fearful and calamitous, in this new modification, than before? Attempting to reform selfishness, and teach it better manners, is like damming up the waters of the Mississippi. It will only, surely, overflow its banks, and change its channel, and carry devastation and death in its course. I am aware, that many will regard this as heresy. But God seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. All the wars and filthiness of heathenism God winks at, as comparatively a light thing when put into the scale against the most refined form of intelligent but heartless Christianity that ever existed.

But to return. Let it be for ever understood, that selfishness is at war with all nations and with all beings. It has no element of peace in it, any further than all beings, and all interests, are yielded to the gratification of self. This is its essential, its unalterable, nature. This attribute cannot cease while selfishness remains.

All selfish men, who are advocates of peace principles, are necessarily hypocrites. They say, and do not. They preach, but do not practise. Peace is on their lips, but war is in their hearts. They proclaim peace and good-will to men, while, under their stolen robe of peace, they conceal their poisoned implements of war against God and the universe. This is, this must be. I am anxious to make the impression, and lodge it deep in your inmost hearts, so that you shall always practically hold, and teach, and regard, this as a fundamental truth, both of natural and revealed religion, that a selfish man, be he who he may, instead of being a Christian, a man of peace, and a servant of the Prince of peace, is, in heart, in character, in spirit, in fact, a rebel, an enemy, a warrior, truly and in fact at war with God and with all beings.

(15.) *Unmercifulness* is another attribute of selfishness.

Mercy is an attribute of benevolence; and, as such, has been defined to be that quality that disposes it to pardon crime. It will, and must, manifest itself in efforts to secure the conditions upon which crime can be reasonably forgiven, if such conditions can be secured. Unmercifulness is that attribute of selfishness that indisposes it to forgive sin; and, of course, it manifests itself, either by resisting efforts to secure its forgiveness, or by treating such efforts with coldness or contempt. The manner in which sinners treat the plan of salvation, the atonement of Christ, the means used by God the Saviour to bring about the pardon of sin, demonstrates that their tender mercies are cruelty. The apostle charges them with being "implacable, unmerciful." Their opposition to the gospel, to revivals of religion, and to all the exhibitions of his mercy which he has made to our world, show that unmercifulness is an attribute of their character.

Sinners generally profess to be the friends of mercy. They, with their lips, extol the mercy of God. But how do they treat it? Do they embrace it? Do they honour it as something which they favour? Do they hold it forth to all men as worthy of all acceptation? Or do they wage an unrelenting war with it? How did they treat Christ when he came on his errand of mercy? They brought forth the appalling demonstration, that unmercifulness is an essential attribute of their character. They persecuted unto death the very impersonation and embodiment of mercy. And this same attribute of selfishness has always manifested itself under some form, whenever a developement and an exhibition of mercy has been made. Let the blood of prophets and apostles, the blood of millions of martyrs--and above all, let the blood of the God of mercy speak. What is their united testimony? Why, this--that the perfection of unmercifulness is one of the essential and eternal attributes of selfishness.

Whenever, therefore, a selfish being appears to be of a merciful disposition, it is, it can be, only in appearance. His feelings may be sensitive, and he may sometimes, nay often, or always yield to them, but this is only selfishness. The reason, and the only reason why every sinner does not exhibit every appalling form of unmercifulness and cruelty is, that God has so tempered his sensibility, and so surrounded him with influences as to modify the manifestation of selfishness, and to develope other attributes more prominently than this. Unmerciful he is, and unmerciful he must be, while he remains in sin. To represent him as other than an unmerciful wretch, were to misrepresent him. No matter who it is. That delicate female, who would faint at the sight of blood, if she is a sinner, she is spurning and scorning the mercy of God. She lets others go down to hell unpardoned, without an effort to secure their pardon. Shall she be represented as other than unmerciful? No language can describe the hardness of her heart. See! the cup of salvation is presented to her lips by a Saviour's bleeding hand. She, nevertheless, dashes it from her, and tramples its contents beneath her feet. It passes from lip to lip; but she offers no prayer that it may be accepted; or if she does, it is only the prayer of a hypocrite, while she rejects it herself. No, with all her delicacy, her tender mercies are utter cruelty. With her own hands she crucifies the Son of God afresh, and would put him to open shame! O monstrous! A woman murdering the Saviour of the world! Her hands and garments all stained with blood! And call her merciful! O shame, where is thy blush?

(16.) *Falsehood*, or *lying*, is another attribute of selfishness.

Falsehood may be objective or subjective. Objective falsehood is that which stands opposed to truth. Subjective falsehood is a heart conformed to error and to objective falsehood. Subjective falsehood is a state of mind, or an attribute of selfishness. It is the will in the attitude of resisting truth, and embracing error and lies. This is always and necessarily an attribute of selfishness.

Selfishness consists in the choice of an end opposed to all truth, and cannot but proceed to the realization of that end, in conformity with error or falsehood, instead of truth. If at any time it seize upon objective truth, as it often does, it is with a false intention. It is with an intention at war with the truth, the nature, and the relations of things.

If any sinner, at any time, and under any circumstances, tell the truth, it is for a selfish reason; it is to compass a false end. He has a lie in his heart, and a lie in his right hand. He stands upon falsehood. He lives for it, and if he does not uniformly and openly falsify the truth, it is because objective truth is consistent with subjective falsehood. His heart is false, as false as it can be. It has embraced and sold itself to the greatest lie in the universe. The selfish man has practically proclaimed that his good is the supreme good; nay, that there is no other good but his own; that there are no other rights but his own, that all are bound to serve him, and that all interests are to yield to his. Now all this, as I said, is the greatest falsehood that ever was or can be. Yet this is the solemn practical declaration of every sinner. His choice affirms that God has no rights, that he ought not to be loved and obeyed, that he has no right to govern the universe, but that God and all beings ought to obey and serve the sinner. Can there be a greater, a more shameless falsehood than all this? And shall such an one pretend to regard the truth? Nay, verily. The very pretence is only an instance and an illustration of the truth, that falsehood is an essential element of his character.

If every sinner on earth does not openly and at all times falsify the truth, it is not because of the truthfulness of his heart, but for some purely selfish reason. This must be. His heart is utterly false. It is impossible that, remaining a sinner, he should have any true regard to the truth. He is a liar in his heart; this is an essential and an eternal attribute of his character. It is true that his intellect condemns falsehood and justifies truth, and that oftentimes through the intellect, a deep impression is or may be made on his sensibility in favour of the truth; but if the heart is unchanged, it holds on to lies, and perseveres in the practical proclamation of the greatest lies in the universe, to wit, that God ought not to be trusted; that Christ is not worthy of confidence; that one's own interest is the supreme good; and that all interests ought to be accounted of less value than one's own.

(17.) *Pride* is another attribute of selfishness.

Pride is a disposition to exalt self above others, to get out of one's proper place in the scale of being, and to climb up over the heads of our equals or superiors. Pride is a species of injustice, on the one hand, and is nearly allied to ambition on the other. It is not a term of so extensive an import as either injustice or ambition. It sustains to each of them a near relation, but is not identical with either. It is a kind of self-praise, self-worship, self-flattery, self-adulation, a spirit of self-consequence, of self-importance. It is a tendency to exalt, not merely one's own interest, but one's person above others, and above God, and above all other beings. A proud being supremely regards himself. He worships and can worship no one but self. He does not, and remaining selfish, he cannot, practically admit that there is any one so good and worthy as himself. He aims at conferring supreme favour upon himself, and, practically, admits no claim of any being in the universe to any good or interest, that will interfere with his own. He can stoop to give preference to the interest, the reputation, the authority of no one, no, not of God himself, except outwardly and in appearance. His inward language is, "Who is Jehovah, that I should bow down to him?" It is impossible that a selfish soul should be humble. Sinners are represented in the Bible as proud, as "flattering themselves in their own eyes."

Pride is not a vice distinct from selfishness, but is only a modification of selfishness. Selfishness is the root, or stock, in which every form of sin inheres. This it is important to show. Selfishness has been scarcely regarded by many as a vice, much less as constituting the whole of vice; consequently, when selfishness has been most apparent, it has been supposed and assumed that there might be along with it many forms of virtue. It is for this reason that I make this attempt to show what are the essential elements of selfishness. It has been supposed that selfishness might exist in any heart without implying every form of sin; that a man might be selfish and yet not proud. In short, it has been overlooked, that, where selfishness is, there must be every form of sin; that where there is one form of selfishness manifested, it is virtually a breach of every commandment of God, and implies, in fact, the real existence of every possible form of sin and abomination in the heart. My object is fully to develope the great truth that where selfishness is, there must be, in a state either of developement or of undevelopement, every form of sin that exists in earth or hell; that all sin is a unit, and consists of some form of selfishness; and that where this is, all sin virtually is and must be.

The only reason that pride, as a form of selfishness, does not appear in all sinners, in the most disgusting forms, is only this, that their constitutional temperament, and providential circumstances, are such as to give a more prominent developement to some other attribute of selfishness. It is important to remark, that where any one form of unqualified sin exists, there selfishness must exist, and there of course every form of sin must exist, at least in embryo, and waiting only for circumstances to develope it. When, therefore, you see any form of sin, know assuredly that selfishness, the root, is there; and expect nothing else, if selfishness continues, than to see developed, one after another, every form of sin as the occasion shall present itself. Selfishness is a volcano, sometimes smothered, but which must have vent. The providence of God cannot but present occasions upon which its lavatides will burst forth and carry desolation before them.

That all these forms of sin exist, has been known and admitted. But it does not appear to me, that the philosophy of sin has been duly considered by many. It is important that we should get at the fundamental or generic form of sin, that form which includes and implies all others, or, more properly, which constitutes the whole of sin. Such is selfishness. "Let it be written with the point of a diamond and engraved in the rock for ever," that it may be known, that where selfishness is, there every precept of the law is violated, there is the whole of sin. Its guilt and ill desert must depend upon the light with which the selfish mind is surrounded. But sin, the whole of sin, is there. Such is the very nature of selfishness that it only needs the providential occasions, and to be left without restraint, and it will show itself to have embodied, in embryo, every form of iniquity.

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LECTURE XXX.

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

(18.) *Enmity* against God is also an attribute of selfishness.

Enmity is hatred. Hatred may exist either as a phenomenon of the sensibility, or as a state or attitude of the will. Of course I am now to speak of enmity of heart or will. It is selfishness viewed in its relations to God. That selfishness is enmity against God will appear--

(i.) From the Bible. The apostle Paul expressly says that "the carnal mind (minding the flesh) is enmity against God." It is fully evident that the apostle, by the carnal mind, means obeying the propensities or gratifying the desires. But this, as I have defined it, is selfishness.

(ii.) Selfishness is directly opposed to the will of God as expressed in his law. That requires benevolence. Selfishness is its opposite, and therefore enmity against the Lawgiver.

(iii.) Selfishness is as hostile to God's government as it can be. It is directly opposed to every law, and principle, and measure of his government.

(iv.) Selfishness is opposition to God's existence. Opposition to a government, is opposition to the will of the governor. It is opposition to his existence in that capacity. It is, and must be, enmity against the existence of the ruler, as such. Selfishness must be enmity against the existence of God's government, and as he does and must sustain the relation of Sovereign Ruler, selfishness must be enmity against his being. Selfishness will brook no restraint in respect to securing its end. There is nothing in the universe it will not sacrifice to self. This is true, or it is not selfishness. If then God's happiness, or government, or being, come into competition with it, they must be sacrificed, were it possible for selfishness to affect it.

(v.) But God is the uncompromising enemy of selfishness. It is the abominable thing his soul hateth. He is more in the way of selfishness than all other beings. The opposition of selfishness to him is, and must be, supreme and perfect.

(vi.) That selfishness is mortal enmity against God, is not left to conjecture, nor to a mere deduction or inference. God once took to himself human nature, and brought Divine benevolence into conflict with human selfishness. Men could not brook his presence upon earth, and they rested not until they had murdered him.

(vii.) Again: selfishness is supreme enmity against God. That is, it is more opposed to God than to all other beings.

(*a*.) This must be, because God is more opposed to it, and more directly and eternally in its way. Selfishness must be relinquished, or put itself in supreme opposition to God.

(*b*.) Enmity against any body or thing besides God can be overcome more easily than against him. All earthly enmities can be overcome by kindness, and change of circumstances; but what kindness, what change of circumstances, can change the human heart, can overcome the selfishness or enmity to God that reigns there?

(viii.) Selfishness offers all manner and every possible degree of resistance to God. It disregards God's commands. It contemns his authority. It spurns his mercy. It outrages his feelings. It provokes his forbearance. Selfishness, in short, is the universal antagonist and adversary of God. It can no more be reconciled to God or subject to his law, than it can cease to be selfishness.

(19.) *Madness* is another attribute of selfishness.

Madness is used sometimes to mean anger, sometimes to mean intellectual insanity, and sometimes to mean moral insanity. I speak of it now in the last sense.

Moral insanity is not insanity of the intellect, but of the heart. Insanity of the intellect destroys, for the time being, moral agency and accountability. Moral insanity is a state in which the intellectual powers are not deranged, but the heart refuses to be controlled by the law of the intellect, and acts unreasonably, as if the intellect were deranged. That madness or moral insanity is an attribute of selfishness, is evident--

(i.) From the Bible. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live."-- Ecc 9:3.

(ii.) It has been shown that sinners, or selfish persons, act in every instance, in direct opposition to right reason. Indeed, nothing can be plainer than the moral insanity of every selfish soul. He chooses to seek his own interest as an end, and, in so doing, prefers a straw to a universe. But not only so: he does this with the certain knowledge, that in this way he can never secure his own highest interest. What an infinitely insane course that must be, first to prefer his own petty gratification to the infinite interests of God and of the universe, and secondly, to do this with the knowledge, that in this way nothing can be ultimately gained even to self; and that, if the course is persisted in, it must result in endless evil to self, the very thing which is supremely dreaded! Sin is the greatest mystery, and the greatest absurdity, and the greatest contradiction, in the universe.

But madness is an essential element or attribute of selfishness. All sinners, without any exception, are and must be morally mad. Their choice of an end is madness. It is infinitely unreasonable. Their pursuit of it is madness persisted in. Their treatment of everything that opposes their course is madness. All, all is madness--infinite. This world is a moral bedlam, an insane hospital, where sinners are under regimen. If they can be cured, well: if not, they must be confined in the mad-house of the universe for eternity.

The only reason why sinners do not perceive their own and each other's madness is, that they are all mad together; and their madness is all of one type. Hence they imagine that they are sane, and pronounce Christians mad. This is no wonder. What other conclusion can they come to, unless they can discover that they are mad?

But let it not be forgotten, that their madness is of the heart, and not of the intellect. It is voluntary and not unavoidable. If it were unavoidable, it would involve no guilt. But it is a choice made and persisted in, while in the integrity of their intellectual powers, and, therefore, they are without excuse.

Most sinners are supposed to act rationally on many subjects. But this is an evident mistake. They do everything for the same ultimate reason, and are as wholly irrational in one thing as another. There is nothing in their whole history and life, not an individual thing, that is not entirely and infinitely unreasonable. The choice of the end is madness; the choice of means is madness; all, all is madness and desperation of spirit. They no doubt appear so to angels, and so they do to saints; and were it not so common and familiar a sight, their conduct would fill the saints and angels with utter amazement and horror.

(20.) *Impatience* is another attribute of selfishness.

This term expresses both a state of the sensibility and of the will. Impatience is a resistance of providence. When this term is used to express a state of the sensibility, it designates fretfulness, ill temper, anger, in the form of emotion. It is an unsubmissive and rebellious state of feeling, in regard to those trials that occur under the administration of the providential government of God.

When the term is used to express a state of the will, it designates an attitude of resistance to God's providential dispensations. Selfishness has no faith in God, no confidence in his wisdom and goodness; and being set upon self-gratification, is continually exposed to disappointment. God is infinitely wise and benevolent. He also exercises a universal providence. He is conducting everything with reference to the greatest good of the whole universe. He, of course, will often interfere with the selfish projects of those who are pursuing an opposite end to that which he pursues. They will, of course, be subject to almost continual disappointment under the providence of One, who disposes of all events in accordance with a design at war with their own. It is impossible that the schemes of selfishness, under such a government, should not frequently be blown to the winds, and that the selfish person, whoever he may be, should not be the subject of incessant disappointments, vexations, and trials. Self-will cannot but be impatient under a benevolent government. Selfishness would of course have everything so disposed as to favour self-interest and self-gratification. But infinite wisdom and benevolence cannot accommodate themselves to this state of mind. The result must be a constant rasping and collision between the selfish soul and the providence of God. Selfishness must cease to be selfishness, before the result can be otherwise.

A selfish state of will must, of course, not only sustain crosses and disappointments, but must also produce a feverish and fretful state of feeling, in relation to the trials incident to life. Nothing but deep sympathy with God, and that confidence in his wisdom and goodness, and universal providence, that annihilates self-will, and produces universal and unqualified submission to him, can prevent impatience. Impatience is always a form of selfishness. It is resistance to God. It is self-will, arraying itself against whatever thwarts or opposes its gratification. Selfishness must, of course, either be gratified or displeased. It should always be understood, that when trials produce impatience of heart, the will is in a selfish attitude. The trials of this life are designed to develope a submissive, confiding, and patient state of mind. A selfish spirit is represented in the Bible as being, under the providence of God, like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," restive, self-willed, impatient, and rebellious.

When selfishness or self-will is subdued, and benevolence is in exercise, we are in a state not to feel disappointments, trials, and crosses. Having no way or will of our own about anything, and having deep sympathy with, and confidence in God, we cannot be disappointed in any such sense, as to vex the spirit and break the peace of the soul.

The fact is, that selfishness must be abandoned, or there is, there can be no peace for us. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." An impressive figure this to represent the continually agitated state in which a selfish mind must be, under a perfectly benevolent providence. Selfishness demands partiality in providence that will favour self. But divine benevolence will not bend to its inclinations. This must produce resistance and fretting, or selfishness must be abandoned. Let it then be borne in mind, that impatience is an attribute of selfishness, and will always be developed under crosses and trials.

Selfishness will, of course, be patient while providence favours its schemes, but when crosses come, then the peace of the soul is broken.

(21.) *Intemperance* is also a form or attribute of selfishness.

Selfishness is self-indulgence not sanctioned by the reason. It consists in the committal of the will to the indulgence of the propensities. Of course some one, or more, of the propensities must have taken the control of the will. Generally, there is some ruling passion or propensity, the influence of which becomes overshadowing, and overrules the will for its own gratification. Sometimes it is acquisitiveness or avarice, the love of gain; sometimes alimentiveness or Epicurianism; sometimes it is amativeness or sexual love; sometimes philoprogenitiveness or the love of our own children; sometimes self-esteem or a feeling of confidence in self; sometimes one and sometimes another of the great variety of the propensities, is so largely developed, as to be the ruling tyrant, that lords it over the will and over all the other propensities. It matters not which of the propensities, or whether their united influence gains the mastery of the will: whenever the will is subject to them, this is selfishness. It is the carnal mind.

Intemperance consists in the undue or unlawful indulgence of any propensity. It is, therefore, an essential element or attribute of selfishness. All selfishness is intemperance: of course it is an unlawful indulgence of the propensities. Intemperance has as many forms as there are constitutional and artificial appetites to gratify. A selfish mind cannot be temperate. If one or more of the propensities is restrained, it is only restrained for the sake of the undue and unlawful indulgence of another. Sometimes the tendencies are intellectual, and the bodily appetites are denied, for the sake of gratifying the love of study. But this is no less intemperance and selfishness, than the gratification of amativeness or alimentiveness. Selfishness is always, and necessarily, intemperate. It does not always or generally develope every from of intemperance in the outward life, but a spirit of self-indulgence must manifest itself in the intemperate gratification of some one or more of the propensities.

Some develope self-indulgence most prominently in the form of intemperance in eating; others in sleeping; others in lounging and idleness; others are gossipers; others love exercise, and indulge that propensity; others study and impair health, and induce derangement, or seriously impair the nervous system. Indeed, there is no end to the forms which intemperance assumes, arising from the fact of the great number of propensities natural and artificial, that in their turn seek and obtain indulgence.

It should be always borne in mind, that any form of self-indulgence, properly so called, is equally an instance of selfishness and wholly inconsistent with any degree of virtue in the heart. But it may be asked, are we to have no regard whatever to our tastes, appetites, and propensities? I answer, we are to have no such regard to them, as to make their gratification the end for which we live, even for a moment. But there is a kind of regard to them which is lawful, and therefore, a virtue. For example: I am on a journey for the service and glory of God. Two ways are before me. One affords nothing to regale the senses; the other conducts me through variegated scenery, sublime mountain passes, deep ravines; beside bubbling brooks, and meandering rivulets; through beds of gayest flowers and woods of richest foliage: through aromatic groves and forests vocal with feathered songsters. The two paths are equal in distance, and in all respects that have a bearing upon the business I have in hand. Now, reason dictates and demands, that I should take the path that is most agreeable and suggestive of useful thoughts. But this is not being governed by the propensities, but by the reason. It is its voice which I hear and to which I listen, when I take the sunny path. The delights of this path are a real good. As such they are not to be despised or neglected. But if taking this path would embarrass and hinder the end of my journey, I am not to sacrifice the greater public good for a less one of my own. I must not be guided by my feelings, but by my reason and honest judgment in this and in every case of duty. God has not given us propensities to be our masters and to rule us, but to be our servants and to minister to our enjoyment, when we obey the biddings of reason and of God. They are given to render duty pleasant, and as a reward of virtue; to make the ways of wisdom pleasurable. The propensities are not, therefore, to be despised, nor is their annihilation to be desired. Nor is it true that their gratification is always selfish, but when their gratification is sanctioned and demanded by the intellect, as in the case just supposed, and in myriads of other cases that occur, the gratification is not a sin but a virtue. It is not selfishness, but benevolence. But let it be remembered, that the indulgence must not be sought in obedience to the propensity itself, but in obedience to the law of reason and of God. When reason and the will of God are not only not consulted, but even violated, it must be selfishness.

Intemperance, as a sin, does not consist in the outward act of indulgence, but in the inward disposition. A dyspeptic who can eat but just enough to sustain life, may be an enormous glutton at heart. He may have a disposition, that is, he may not only desire, but he may be willing, to eat all before him, but for the pain indulgence occasions him. But this is only the spirit of self-indulgence. He denies himself the amount of food he craves in order to gratify a stronger propensity, to wit, the dread of pain. So a man who was never intoxicated in his life, may be guilty of the crime of drunkenness every day. He may be prevented from drinking to inebriation only by a regard to reputation or health, or by an avaricious disposition. It is only because he is prevented by the greater power of some other propensity. If a man is in such a state of mind that he would indulge all his propensities without restraint, were it not that it is impossible, on account of the indulgence of some being inconsistent with the indulgence of the others, he is just as guilty as if he did indulge them all. For example: he has a disposition, that is a will, to accumulate property. He is avaricious in heart. He also has a strong tendency to luxury, to licentiousness, and prodigality. The indulgence of these propensities is inconsistent with the indulgence of avarice. But for this contrariety, he would in his state of mind indulge them all. He wishes to do so, but it is impossible. Now he is really guilty of all those forms of vice, and just as blameworthy as if he indulged in them.

Again: that selfishness is the aggregate of all sin, and that he who is selfish, is actually chargeable with breaking the whole law, and of every form of iniquity, will appear, if we consider,

(i.) That it is the committal of the will to self-indulgence; and of course--

(ii.) No one propensity would be denied but for the indulgence of another.

(iii.) But if no better reason than this exists for denying any propensity, then the selfish man is chargeable, in the sight of God, with actually in heart gratifying every propensity.

(iv.) And this conducts to the plain conclusion, that a selfish man is full of sin, and actually in heart guilty of every possible or conceivable abomination.

(v.) "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." He may not have committed the outward act for want of opportunity, or for the reason, that the indulgence is inconsistent with the love of reputation or fear of disgrace, or with some other propensity. Nevertheless, he is in heart guilty of the deed.

Intemperance, as a crime, is a state of mind. It is the attitude of the will. It is an attribute of selfishness. It consists in the choice or disposition to gratify the propensities regardless of the law of benevolence. This is intemperance; and so far as the mind is considered, it is the whole of it. Now, inasmuch as the will is committed to self-indulgence, and nothing but the contrariety there is between the propensities prevents the unlimited indulgence of them all, it follows, that every selfish person, or in other words every sinner, is chargeable in the sight of God with every species of intemperance, actual or conceivable. His lusts have the reign. They conduct him whithersoever they list. He has sold himself to self-indulgence. If there is any form of self-indulgence that is not actually developed in him, no thanks to him. The providence of God has restrained the outward indulgence, while there has been in him a readiness to perpetrate any sin and every sin, from which he was not deterred by some overpowering fear of consequences.

(22.) *Moral recklessness* is another attribute of selfishness. Moral recklessness is carelessness, or a state of mind that seeks to gratify self, regardless of ultimate consequences. It is a spirit of infatuation, a rushing upon ruin heedless of what may be the final issue.

This is one of the most prominent attributes of selfishness. It is universally prominent and manifest. What can be more manifest, and striking, and astonishing, than the recklessness of every sinner? Self-indulgence is his motto; and the only appearance of consideration and moderation about him is, that he is careful to deny one propensity for the sake, and only for the sake, of indulging another. This consideration is only a selfish one. It relates wholly to self-interest, and not at all to the good of being in general. He hesitates not whether he shall indulge himself, but sometimes hesitates and ponders, and deliberates in respect to the particular propensity to be indulged or denied. He is at all times perfectly reckless as it respects self-indulgence in some form. This is settled. Whenever he hesitates about any given course, it is because of the strength of the self-indulgent spirit, and with design upon the whole to realize the greatest amount of self-indulgence. When sinners hesitate about remaining in sin and think of giving up self-indulgence, it is only certain forms of sin that they contemplate relinquishing. They consider what they shall lose to themselves by continuing in sin, and what they shall gain to themselves by relinquishing sin and turning to God. It is a question of loss and gain with them. They have no idea of giving up every form of selfishness; nor do they consider that until they do, they are at every moment violating the whole law, whatever interest of self they may be plotting to secure, whether the interest be temporal or eternal, physical or spiritual. In respect to the denial or indulgence of one or another of the propensities, they may, and indeed cannot but be considerate consistently with selfishness. But in respect to duty; in respect to the commands and threatenings of God; in respect to every moral consideration, they are entirely and universally reckless. And when they appear not to be so, but to be thoughtful and considerate, it is only selfishness plotting its own indulgence and calculating its chances of loss and gain. Indeed, it would appear, when we take into consideration the known consequences of every form of selfishness, and the sinner's pertinacious cleaving to self-indulgence in the face of such considerations, that every sinner is appallingly reckless, and that it may be said that his recklessness is infinite.

(23.) *Unity* is another attribute of selfishness.

By unity is intended that selfishness, and consequently all sin, is a unit. That is, there are not various kinds of sin, nor various kinds of selfishness, nor, strictly speaking, are there various forms of selfishness. Selfishness is always one and but one thing. It has but one, and not diverse ultimate ends. The indulgence of one appetite or passion, or another, does not imply different ultimate ends or forms of selfishness, strictly speaking. It is only one choice, or the choice of one end, and the different forms are only the use of different means to accomplish this one end. Strictly speaking, there is but one form of virtue; and when we speak of various forms, we speak in accommodation to the general notions of mankind. Virtue, as we have before seen, is a unit. It always consists in ultimate intention; and this ultimate intention is always one and the same. It is the choice of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an end. This intention never changes its form, and all the efforts which the mind makes to realize this end, and which we loosely call different forms of virtue, are after all only the one unchanged and unchangeable, uncompounded and indivisible intention, energizing to realize its one great end. Just so with selfishness. It is one choice, or the choice of one and only one end, to wit, self-gratification or self-indulgence. All the various, and ever-varying shifts, and turns, and modes of indulgence, which make up the entire history of the sinner, imply no complexity in the form or substance of his choice. All are resorted to for one and only one reason. They are only this one uncompounded and uncompoundable, this never varying choice of self-indulgence, energizing and using various means to realize its one simple end. The reason why the idea is so common, and why the phraseology of men implies that there are really various forms of sin and of holiness, is, that they unwittingly lose sight of that in which sin and holiness alone consist, and conceive of them as belonging to the outward act, or to the causative volition put forth by the intention to secure its end. Let it but always be remembered, that holiness and sin are but the moral attributes of selfishness and benevolence, and that they are each the choice of one end, and only one; and the delusion that there are various forms and kinds of sin and holiness will vanish for ever.

Holiness is holiness, in form and essence one and indivisible. It is the moral element or quality of disinterested benevolence. Sin is sin, in form and essence one and indivisible; and is the moral attribute of selfishness, or of the choice of self-indulgence as the end of life. This conducts us to the real meaning of those scriptures which assert "that all the law is fulfilled in one word, love," that this is the whole of virtue, and comprises all that we loosely call the different virtues, or different forms of virtue. And it also explains this, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." That is, offending in one point implies the real commission of all sin. It implies, and is, selfishness, and this is the whole of sin. It is of the greatest importance, that religious teachers should understand this, and no longer conceive of sin as original and actual; as sins of heart and sins of life; as sins of omission and commission; as sins of licentiousness and gluttony, intemperance and the like. Now such notions and such phraseology may do for those who are unable, or have no opportunity, to look deeper into the philosophy of moral government; but it is time that the veil were taken away, and both sin and holiness laid open to the public gaze.

Let it not be inferred, that because there is but one form or kind of sin, or of holiness, strictly speaking, that therefore all sin is equally blameworthy, and that all holiness is equally praiseworthy. This does not follow, as we shall see under its proper head. Neither let it be called a contradiction, that I have so often spoken, and shall so often speak, of the different forms of sin and of holiness. All this is convenient, and, as I judge, indispensable in preparing the way, and to conduct the mind to the true conception and apprehension of this great and fundamental truth; fundamental, in the sense, that it lies at the foundation of all truly clear and just conceptions of either holiness or sin. They are both units, and eternal and necessary opposites and antagonists. They can never dwell together or coalesce, any more than heaven and hell can be wedded to each other.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXI.

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DISOBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

(24.) *Egotism* is another attribute of selfishness.

Egotism, when properly considered, does not consist in actually talking about and praising self; but in that disposition of mind that manifests itself in self-laudation. Parrots talk almost exclusively of themselves, and yet we do not accuse them of egotism, nor feel the least disgust toward them on that account.

Moral agents may be under circumstances that render it necessary to speak much of themselves. God's character and relations are such, and the ignorance of men so great, that it is necessary for him to reveal himself to them, and consequently to speak to them very much about himself. This same is true of Christ. One of Christ's principal objects was to make the world acquainted with himself, and with the nature and design of his mission. Of course he spake much of himself. But whoever thought of accusing either the Father or the Son of egotism?

Real and sinful egotism is a selfish state of the will. It is a selfish disposition. Selfishness cannot but manifest egotism. The natural heart is egotistical, and its language and deportment must be the same.

An egotistical state of mind manifests itself in a great variety of ways; not only in self-commendation and laudation, but also in selfish aims and actions, exalting self in action as well as in word. An egotistical spirit speaks of itself and its achievements, in such a way as reveals the assumption, that self is a very important personage. It demonstrates that self is the end of every thing, and the great idol before which all ought to bow down and worship. This is not too strong language. The fact is, that selfishness is nothing short of a practical setting up of the shameless claim, that self is of more importance than God and the whole universe; that self ought to be universally worshipped; that God and all other beings ought to be entirely consecrated to its interests, and to the promotion of its glory. Now, what but the most disgusting egotism can be expected from such a state of mind as this? If it does not manifest itself in one way, it will and must in another. The thoughts are upon self; the heart is upon self. Self-flattery is a necessary result, or rather attribute of selfishness. A selfish man is always a self-flatterer, and a self-deceiver, and a self-devotee.

Self may speak very sparingly of self, because reason affirms that self-praise must provoke contempt. A man may have a spirit too egotistical to speak out, and may reveal his superlative disposition to be praised, by a studied abstinence from self-commendation. Nay, he may speak of himself in terms the most reproachful and self-abasing, in the spirit of supreme egotism, to evince his humility and the deep self-knowledge which he possesses. Yet this may be hypocritically designed to draw forth admiration and applause. A spirit of self-deification, which selfishness always is, if it does not manifest itself in words, must and will in deeds. The great and supreme importance of self is assumed by the heart, and cannot but in some way manifest itself. It may, and often does, put on the garb of the utmost self-abasement. It stoops to conquer; and, to gain universal praise, affects to be most empty of self.

But this is only a more refined egotism. It is only saying, Come, see my perfect humility and self-emptiness. Indeed, there are myriads of ways in which an egotistical spirit manifests itself, and so subtle and refined are many of them, that they resemble Satan robed in the stolen habiliments of an angel of light.

An egotistical spirit often manifests itself in self-consequential airs, and by thrusting self into the best seat at table, in a stage coach, a railroad carriage, or into the best state room in the steam boat. In short, it manifests in action what it is apt to manifest in word, to wit, a sense of supreme self-importance.

The mere fact of speaking of self is not of itself proof of an egotistical spirit. The thing to be regarded is the manner and manifest design of speaking of self. A benevolent man may speak much of self because it may be important to others that he should do so, on account of his relations. When the design is the benefit of others and the glory of God, it is as far as possible from the spirit of egotism. A benevolent man might speak of himself just as he would of others. He has merged his interests in, or rather identified them with, the interests of others, and, of course, would naturally treat others and speak of them much as he treats and speaks of himself. If he sees and censures the conduct of others, and has ever been guilty of the like, he will censure his own baseness quite as severely as he does the same thing in others. If he commends the virtues of others, it is but for the glory of God; and for the very same reason, he might speak of virtues of which he is conscious in himself, that God may have glory. A perfectly simple-hearted and guileless state of mind might naturally enough manifest itself in this manner. An egotistical spirit in another might, and doubtless would, lead him to misunderstand such open-heartedness and transparency of character. There would be, nevertheless, a radical difference in the spirit with which two such men would speak either of their own faults or virtues. Paul was so circumstanced as to find it necessary to speak in vindication of himself, and to publish the success of his own labours, for the benefit of the church and the glory of God. He was slandered, misrepresented, and his ministry hindered among strangers, by these false representations. He had no one to speak for him. It was his duty to disabuse the public mind. He did so, but who can accuse him of a spirit of egotism? Others have often been similarly situated, and have been subject to the same necessity. They are liable to be misunderstood. The most selfish and egotistical will be the first to judge them by their own spirit. But God will justify them if, in his providence necessity is laid upon them to do as Paul did. But, to a truly pious mind, it is trying to be obliged to speak much of self. If not compelled by circumstances to do so, it is unnatural to a pious mind to think or speak much of self. He is too much engrossed with his work to think much of self, unless peculiar trials place him under a necessity of doing so.

(25.) *Simplicity* is another attribute of selfishness.

By this term it is intended to express two things, to wit:--

(i.) Singleness, unmixed, or unmingled, and--

(ii.) That selfishness is always as intense as under the circumstances it can be. I will consider these two branches of the subject separately, and in order.

(i.) Selfishness is simple in the sense of uncompounded or unmixed. It consists, as we have repeatedly seen, in ultimate choice or intention. It is the choice of an end, of course the supreme as well as the ultimate choice of the soul. Now it must be self-evident that no other and opposing choice can consist with it. Nor can the mind, while in the exercise of this choice of an end, possibly put forth any volitions inconsistent with it. Volitions never are, and never can be, put forth but to secure some end, or, in other words, for some reason. If they could, such volitions would have no moral character, because there would be no intention. Intelligent volitions must, of course, always imply intention. It is, therefore, impossible that benevolent volitions should co-exist with a selfish intention, or that selfish volitions should co-exist with a benevolent intention. Simplicity, in the sense of uncompounded or unmixed, must be an attribute of selfishness. This is evidently the philosophy assumed in the teachings of Christ and of inspiration. "Ye cannot serve two masters"--that is, certainly, at the same time--says Christ. And again: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"--that is, of course at the same time. "Can a fountain at the same place send forth sweet water and bitter?" says James. Thus we see that the Bible assumes, and expressly teaches, the philosophy here maintained.

(ii.) Selfishness is always as intense as under the circumstances it can be.

It is a choice. It is the choice of self-indulgence as an ultimate end. Therefore, if repose is sought, it is only because the propensity to repose at the time preponderates. If energetic, it is to secure some form of self-indulgence, which, at the time, is preferred to ease. If at one time it is more or less intense than at another, it is only because self-gratification at the time demands it. Indeed, it is absurd to say, that it is more intense at one time than at another, except as its intensity is increased by the pressure of motives to abandon it, and become benevolent. If a selfish man gives himself up to idleness, lounging, and sleeping, it is not for want of intensity in the action of his will, but because his disposition to self-indulgence in this form is stronger than in any other. So, if his selfishness take on any possible type, it is only because of the strength of his disposition to indulge self in that particular way. Selfishness lives only for one end, and it is impossible that that end, while it continues to be chosen, should not have the supreme control. Indeed, the choice of an ultimate end implies the consecration of the will to it, and it is a contradiction to say, that the will is not true to the end which it chooses, and that it acts less intensely than is demanded by the nature of the end, and the apprehensions of the mind in regard to the readiest way to realize it. The end is chosen without qualification, or else not at all as an ultimate end. The moment anything should intervene that should cause the mind to withhold the requisite energy to secure it, that moment it would cease to be chosen as an ultimate end. That which has induced the will to withhold the requisite energy, has become the supreme object of regard. It is palpably absurd to say, that the spirit of self-indulgence should not always be as intense as will most tend, under all circumstances, to indulge self. The intensity of the spirit of self-indulgence is always just what it is, and as it is, because, and only because, self is the most indulged and gratified thereby. If upon the whole, self would be more indulged and gratified by greater or less intensity, it is impossible that that should not be. The presence of considerations inducing to benevolence must either annihilate or strengthen selfishness. The choice must be abandoned, or its intensity and obstinacy must increase with, and in proportion to, increasing light. But at every moment, the intensity of the selfish choice must be as great as is consistent with its nature, that is, with its being the choice of self-indulgence.

(26.) *Total moral depravity* is implied in selfishness as one of its attributes. By this I intend that every selfish being is at every moment as wicked and as blameworthy as with his knowledge he can be. To establish this proposition, I must,

(i.) Remind you of that in which moral character consists.

(ii.) Of the foundation of moral obligation.

(iii.) Of the conditions of moral obligation.

(iv.) Show the unity of moral obligation.

(v.) The unity of virtue and of vice.

(vi.) How to measure moral obligation.

(vii.) The guilt of transgression to be equal to the degree of obligation.

(viii.) Moral agents are at all times either as holy or as sinful as with their knowledge they can be.

(ix.) Consequently, total moral depravity is an attribute of selfishness in the sense that every sinner is as wicked as with his present light he can be.

(1.) *In what moral character consists.*

It has been repeatedly shown that moral character belongs only to ultimate intention, or that it consists in the choice of an ultimate end, or the end of life.

(2.) *The foundation of moral obligation.*

(*a.*) Moral character implies moral obligation.

(*b.*) Moral obligation respects ultimate intention.

(*c.*) Ultimate choice or intention is the choice of an ultimate end, or the choice of something for its own sake.

(*d.*) The foundation of the obligation to choose or intend an end or something for its own sake, must consist in the intrinsic value of the thing to be chosen.

(*e.*) The highest good or well-being of God and of the universe is of intrinsic and infinite value.

(*f.*) Therefore, the highest well-being of God and of the universe of sentient beings, is the foundation of moral obligation, that is, this is the ultimate end to which all moral agents ought to consecrate themselves.

(iii.) *Conditions of moral obligation.*

(*a.*) The powers of moral agency: intellect, sensibility, and free-will.

(*b.*) The existence and perception of the end that ought to be chosen.

(*c.*) Obligation to will the conditions and means of the good of being, and to make executive efforts to secure this good, is conditioned as above, and also upon the knowledge that there are means and conditions of this good, and what they are, and upon the necessity, possibility, and assumed utility, of executive efforts.

(iv.) *Unity of moral obligation.*

(*a.*) Moral obligation strictly belongs only to the ultimate intention.

(*b.*) It requires but one ultimate choice or intention.

(*c.*) It requires universally and only, that every moral agent should, at all times, and under all circumstances, honestly will, choose, intend the highest good of being as an end, or for its own intrinsic value, with all the necessary conditions and means thereof. Therefore moral obligation is a unit.

(v.) *Unity of virtue and vice.*

(*a.*) Virtue must be a unit, for it always and only consists in compliance with moral obligation, which is a unit.

(*b.*) It always and only consists in one and the same choice, or in the choice of one and the same end.

(*c.*) It has been fully shown that sin consists in selfishness, and that selfishness is an ultimate choice, to wit, the choice of self-gratification as an end, or for its own sake.

(*d.*) Selfishness is always one and the same choice, or the choice of one and the same end.

(*e.*) Therefore, selfishness or sin must be a unit.

(*f.*) Or, more strictly, virtue is the moral element or attribute of disinterested benevolence or good-willing. And sin or vice is the moral element or attribute of selfishness. Virtue is always the same attribute of the same choice. They are, therefore, always and necessarily units.

(vi.) *How to measure moral obligation.*

(*a.*) It is affirmed, both by reason and revelation, that there are degrees of guilt; that some are more guilty than others; and that the same individual may be more guilty at one time than at another.

(*b.*) The same is true of virtue. One person may be more virtuous than another when both are truly virtuous. And also the same person may be more virtuous at one time than at another, although he may be virtuous at all times. In other words, it is affirmed, both by reason and revelation, that there is such a thing as growth, both in virtue and vice.

(*c.*) It is matter of general belief, also, that the same individual, with the same degree of light or knowledge, is more or less praise or blameworthy, as he shall do one thing or another; or, in other words, as he shall pursue one course or another, to accomplish the end he has in view; or, which is the same thing, that the same individual, with the same knowledge or light, is more or less virtuous or vicious, according to the course of outward life which he shall pursue. This I shall attempt to show is human prejudice, and a serious and most injurious error.

(*d.*) It is also generally held that two or more individuals, having precisely the same degree of light or knowledge, and being both equally benevolent or selfish, may, nevertheless, differ in their degree of virtue or vice, according as they pursue different courses of outward conduct. This also, I shall attempt to show, is a fundamental error.

We can arrive at the truth upon this subject only by clearly understanding how to measure moral obligation, and of course how to ascertain the degree of virtue and sin. The amount or degree of virtue or vice, or of praise or blame-worthiness, is and must be decided by reference to the degree of obligation.

It is very important to remark here, that virtue does not merit so much praise and reward as vice does blame and punishment. This is the universal and necessary affirmation of reason, and the plain doctrine of inspiration. The reason is this: virtue is a compliance with obligation. Christ says, "When you have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done what it was our duty to do." To suppose that virtue is as deserving of reward as vice is of punishment, were to overlook obligation altogether, and make virtue a work of supererogation, or that to which we are under no obligation. Suppose I owe a hundred dollars; when I pay I only discharge my obligation, and lay my creditor under no obligation to me, except to treat me as an honest man, when and as long as I am such. This is all the reward which the discharge of my duty merits.

But suppose I refuse to pay when it is in my power; here my desert of blame, as every body must know, and as the Bible everywhere teaches, is vastly greater than my desert of praise in the former case. The difference lies in this, namely, that virtue is nothing more than a compliance with obligation. It is the doing of that which could not have been neglected without sin. Hence all the reward which it merits is, that the virtuous being, so long as he is virtuous, shall be regarded and treated as one who does his duty, and complies with his obligations.

But vice is violence done to obligation. It is a refusal to do what ought to be done. In this case it is clear, that the guilt is equal to the obligation, that is, the measure of obligation is the measure of guilt. This brings us to the point of inquiry now before us, namely, how is moral obligation to be measured? What is the criterion, the rule, or standard by which the amount or degree of obligation is to be estimated?

And here I would remind you--

(*a.*) That moral obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of the highest well-being of God and the universe; and,--

(*b.*) That the conditions of the obligation are the possession of the powers of moral agency and light, or the knowledge of the end to be chosen.

(*c.*) Hence it follows that the obligation is to be measured by the mind's honest apprehension or judgment of the intrinsic value of the end to be chosen. That this, and nothing else, is the rule or standard by which the obligation, and, consequently, the guilt of violating it, is to be measured, will appear if we consider--

(*a.*) That the obligation cannot be measured by the infinity of God, apart from the knowledge of the infinite value of His interests. He is an infinite being, and his well-being must be of intrinsic and of infinite value. But unless this be known to a moral agent, he cannot be under obligation to will it as an ultimate end. If he knows it to be of some value, he is bound to choose it for that reason. But the measure of his obligation must be just equal to the clearness of his apprehension of its intrinsic value.

Besides, if the infinity of God were alone, or without reference to the knowledge of the agent, the rule by which moral obligation is to be measured, it would follow, that obligation is in all cases the same, and of course that the guilt of disobedience would also in all cases be the same. But this, as has been said, contradicts both reason and revelation. Thus it appears, that moral obligation, and of course guilt, cannot be measured by the infinity of God, without reference to the knowledge of the agent.

(*b.*) It cannot be measured by the infinity of His authority, without reference to the knowledge of the agent, for the same reasons as above.

(*c.*) It cannot be measured by the infinity of his moral excellence, without reference, both to the infinite value of his interests, and of the knowledge of the agent; for his interests are to be chosen as an end, or for their own value, and without knowledge of their value there can be no obligation; nor can obligation exceed knowledge.

(*d.*) If, again, the infinite excellence of God were alone, or without reference to the knowledge of the agent, to be the rule by which moral obligation is to be measured, it would follow, that guilt in all cases of disobedience, is and must be equal. This we have seen cannot be.

(*e.*) It cannot be measured by the intrinsic value of the good, or well-being of God and the universe, without reference to the knowledge of the agent, for the same reason as above.

(*f.*) It cannot be measured by the particular course of life pursued by the agent. This will appear, if we consider that moral obligation has *directly* nothing to do with the outward life. It *directly* respects the ultimate intention only, and that decides the course of outward action or life. The guilt of any outward action cannot be decided by reference to the kind of action, without regard to the intention, for the moral character of the act must be found in the intention, and not in the outward act or life. This leads me to remark that--

(*g.*) The degree of moral obligation, and of course the degree of the guilt of disobedience, cannot be properly estimated by reference to the nature of the intention, without respect to the degree of the knowledge of the agent. Selfish intention is, as we have seen, a unit, always the same; and if this were the standard, by which the degree of guilt is to be measured, it would follow that it is always the same.

(*h.*) Nor can obligation, nor the degree of guilt, be measured by the tendency of sin. All sin tends to infinite evil, to ruin the sinner, and from its contagious nature, to spread and ruin the universe. Nor can any finite mind know what the ultimate results of any sin may be, nor to what particular evil it may tend. As all sin tends to universal and eternal evil, if this were the criterion by which the guilt is to be estimated, all sin would be equally guilty, which cannot be.

Again: That the guilt of sin cannot be measured by the tendency of sin, is manifest from the fact, that moral obligation is not founded in the tendency of action or intention, but in the intrinsic value of the end to be intended. Estimating moral obligation, or measuring sin or holiness, by the mere *tendency* of actions, is the utilitarian philosophy, which we have shown to be false. Moral obligation respects the choice of an end, and is founded upon the intrinsic value of the end, and is not so much as conditionated upon the tendency of the ultimate choice to secure its end. Therefore, tendency can never be the rule by which obligation can be measured, nor, of course, the rule by which guilt can be estimated.

(*i.*) Nor can moral obligation be estimated by the results of a moral action or course of action. Moral obligation respects intention, and respects results no further than they were intended. Much good may result, as from the death of Christ, without any virtue in Judas, but with much guilt. So, much evil may result, as from the creation of the world, without guilt in the Creator, but with great virtue. If moral obligation is not founded or conditionated on results, it follows that guilt cannot be duly estimated by results, without reference to knowledge and intention.

(*j.*) What has been said has, I trust, rendered it evident, that moral obligation is to be measured by the mind's honest apprehension or judgment of the intrinsic value of the end to be chosen, to wit, the highest well-being of God and the universe.

It should be distinctly understood, that selfishness involves the rejection of the interests of God and of the universe, for the sake of one's own. It refuses to will good, but upon condition that it belongs to self. It spurns God's interests and those of the universe, and seeks only self-interest as an ultimate end. It must follow, then, that the selfish man's guilt is just equal to his knowledge of the intrinsic value of those interests that he rejects. This is undeniably the doctrine of the Bible. I will introduce a few paragraphs from one of my reported sermons upon this subject.

(*a.*) The scriptures assume and affirm it.

Acts xvii. 30, affords a plain instance. The apostle alludes to those past ages when the heathen nations had no written revelation from God, and remarks that "those times of ignorance God winked at." This does not mean that God did not regard their conduct as criminal in any degree, but it does mean that he regarded it as a sin of far less aggravation, than that which men would now commit, if they turned away when God commanded them all to repent. True, sin is never absolutely a light thing: but some sins incur small guilt, when compared with the great guilt of other sins. This is implied in the text quoted above.

I next cite, James iv. 17.--"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This plainly implies that knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation; and even more than this is implied, namely, that the guilt of any sinner is always equal to the amount of his knowledge on the subject. It always corresponds to the mind's perception of the value of the end which should have been chosen, but is rejected. If a man knows he ought, in any given case, to do good, and yet does not do it, to him this is sin--the sin plainly lying in the fact of not doing good when he knew that he could do it, and being measured as to its guilt by the degree of that knowledge.

John ix. 41.--"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore, your sin remaineth." Here Christ asserts that men without knowledge would be without sin: and that men who have knowledge, and sin notwithstanding, are held guilty. This plainly affirms, that the presence of light or knowledge is requisite to the existence of sin, and obviously implies that the amount of knowledge possessed is the measure of the guilt of sin.

It is remarkable that the Bible everywhere assumes first truths. It does not stop to prove them, or even assert them--but seems to assume, that every one knows and will admit them. As I have been recently writing on moral government, and studying the Bible as to its teachings on this class of subjects, I have been often struck with this remarkable fact.

John xv. 22-24.--"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hatest me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Christ holds the same doctrine here as in the last passage cited; light essential to constitute sin, and the degree of light constituting the measure of its aggravation.

Let it be observed, however, that Christ probably did not mean to affirm in the absolute sense, that if he had not come, the Jews would have literally had *no* sin; for they would have had some light, if he had not come. He speaks, as I suppose, comparatively. Their sin, if he had not come, would have been so much less as not to justify his strong language of condemnation.

Luk 12:47-48.--"And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more."

Here we have the doctrine laid down and the truth assumed, that men shall be punished according to knowledge. To whom much light is given, of him shall much obedience be required. This is precisely the principle, that God requires of men according to the light they have.

1Ti 1:13.--"Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul had done things in form as bad as they well could be; yet his guilt was far less, because he did them under the darkness of unbelief; hence he obtained mercy, when otherwise, he might not. The plain assumption is, that his ignorance abated from the malignancy of sin, and favoured his obtaining mercy.

In another passage (Act 26:9.) Paul says of himself--"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This had everything to do with the degree of his guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and also with his obtaining pardon.

Luk 23:34.--"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This passage presents to us the suffering Jesus, surrounded with Roman soldiers and malicious scribes and priests, yet pouring out his prayer for them, and making the only plea in their behalf which could be made--"for they know not what they do." This does not imply that they had no guilt, for if this were true, they would not have needed forgiveness; but it did imply that their guilt was greatly palliated by their ignorance. If they had known him to be the Messiah, their guilt might have been unpardonable. Yet they shut their eyes to evidence, and that constituted their ignorance wilful, and consequently sinful.

Mat 11:20-24.--"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." But why does Christ upbraid these cities? Why denounce so fearful a woe on Chorazin and Capernaum? Because most of his mighty works had been wrought there. His oft-repeated miracles which proved him to be the Messiah, had been wrought before their eyes. Among them he had taught daily, and in their synagogues every sabbath-day. They had great light, hence, their great, their unsurpassed guilt. Not even the men of Sodom had guilt to compare with theirs. The city most exalted, even as it were to heaven, must be brought down to the deepest hell. Guilt and punishment, evermore, according to light enjoyed, but resisted.

Luk 11:47-51.--"Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." Now here I ask, on what principle was it, that all the blood of martyred prophets, ever since the world began, was required of that generation? Because they deserved it; for God does no such thing as injustice. It never was known that he punished any people, or any individual, beyond their desert.

But why, and how, did they deserve this fearful and augmented visitation of the wrath of God for past centuries of persecution?

The answer is two-fold: they sinned against accumulated light, and they virtually endorsed all the persecuting deeds of their fathers, and concurred most heartily in their guilt. They had all the oracles of God. The whole history of the nation lay in their hands. They knew the blameless and holy character of those prophets who had been martyred; they could read the guilt of their persecutors and murderers. Yet under all this light, they go straight on and perpetrate deeds of the same sort, but of far deeper malignity.

Again: in doing this, they virtually endorse all that their fathers did. Their conduct towards the Man of Nazareth put into words would read thus: "The holy men whom God sent to teach and rebuke our fathers, they maliciously traduced and put to death; they did right, and we will do the same thing toward Christ." Now, it was not possible for them to give a more decided sanction to the bloody deeds of their fathers. They underwrote for every crime--assumed upon their own consciences all the guilt of their fathers. In intention, they do those deeds over again. They in effect say, "If we had lived then, we should have done and sanctioned all they did."

On the same principle, the accumulated guilt of all the blood and miseries of slavery since the world began, rests on this nation now. The guilt involved in every pang, every tear, every blood drop forced out by the knotted scourge--all lie at the door of this generation.

Why? Because the history of all the past is before the pro-slavery men of this generation, and they endorse the whole by persisting in the practice of the same system, and of the same wrongs. No generation before us ever had the light on the evils and wrongs of slavery that we have: hence our guilt exceeds that of any former generation of slave-holders; and moreover, knowing all the cruel wrongs and miseries of the system from the history of the past, every persisting slave-holder endorses all the crimes, and assumes all the guilt, involved in the system, and evolved out of it, since the world began.

Rom 7:13.--"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The last clause of this verse brings out clearly the principle, that under the light which the commandment, that is, the law, affords, sin becomes exceeding guilty. This is the very principle, which, we have seen, is so clearly taught and implied in numerous passages of scripture.

The diligent reader of the Bible knows that these are only a part of the texts which teach the same doctrine: we need not adduce any more.

(*b.*) I remark, that this is the rule, and the only just rule, by which the guilt of sin can be measured. If I had time to turn the subject over and over--time to take up every other conceivable supposition, I could show that none of them can possibly be true. No supposition can abide a close examination except this, that the rule or measure of guilt is the mind's knowledge pertaining to the value of the end to be chosen.

There can be no other criterion by which guilt can be measured. It is the value of the end that ought to be chosen, which constitutes sin guilty, and the mind's estimate of that value measures its own guilt. This is true according to the Bible, as we have seen; and every man needs only consult his own consciousness faithfully, and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind's own intuitions to be right.

(vii.) The guilt of transgression is just equal to the degree of obligation.

(*a.*) The guilt of sin lies in its being the violation of an obligation.

(*b.*) It must follow, that the degree of the guilt of violation must be just equal to the degree of obligation. This, as we have seen, is not true of virtue, for reasons before stated. But it must be true of vice.

(*c.*) Moral obligation respects the choice of an end. The amount of the obligation must be just equal to the mind's apprehension of the intrinsic value of the end to be chosen. The guilt of transgression is, and must be, just equal to the amount of the obligation. This conducts us to the conclusion or truth to be demonstrated, namely:--

(viii.) That moral agents are, at all times, either as holy or as sinful as with their knowledge they can be.

This will more fully appear, if we consider--

(*a.*) That moral obligation, strictly speaking, respects ultimate intention alone.

(*b.*) That obligation to choose or intend an end is founded in the apprehended intrinsic value of the end.

(*c.*) That, when this end is chosen in accordance with apprehended value, all present obligation is met or complied with, since the choice of the end implies and includes the choice of all the known necessary conditions and means of this end. Virtue is now complete, in the sense that it can only be increased by increased light, in regard to the value of the end. New relations and interests may be discovered, or the mind may come to apprehend more clearly the intrinsic value of those partially known before. In this case, virtue may increase, but not otherwise. It matters not as to the virtue of the choice, what particular course is taken to realize this end. The intention is honest. It is, and to be honest, must be intense according to the mind's apprehension of the intrinsic value of the end. The mind cannot but act in accordance with its best judgment, in regard to the use of means to compass its end. Whatever it does it does for one and the same reason. Its virtue belongs to its intention. The intention remaining, virtue does not, cannot vary, but with varying light. This renders it evident, that the virtuous man is as virtuous as with his present light he can be. Give him more light, and you may increase his virtue, by causing it to be more intense.

The same must be true of sin or selfishness. We have seen in former lectures, that malevolence, in the sense of willing evil for its own sake, is impossible; that selfishness is ultimate intention, or the choice of self-gratification as an end; that the obligation to benevolence is founded in the intrinsic value of the good of God and the universe, that the amount of obligation is equal to the mind's apprehension or knowledge of the value of the end; that sin is a unit, and always consists in violating this obligation by the choice of an opposite end; that the guilt of this violation depends upon, and is equal to, the mind's apprehension of the intrinsic value of the end it ought to choose.

Selfishness is the rejection of all obligation. It is the violation of all obligation. The sin of selfishness is then complete; that is, the guilt of selfishness is as great as with its present light it can be. What can make it greater with present light? Can the course that it takes to realize its end mitigate its guilt? No: for whatever course it takes, it is for a selfish reason, and, therefore, in nowise lessens the guilt of the intention. Can the course it takes to realize its end without more light, increase the guilt of the sin? No: for the sin lies exclusively in having the selfish intention, and the guilt can be measured only by the degree of illumination or knowledge under which the intention is formed and maintained. The intention necessitates the use of the means; and whatever means the selfish person uses, it is for one and the same reason, to gratify himself. As I said in a former lecture, if the selfish man were to preach the gospel, it would be only because, upon the whole, it was most pleasing or gratifying to himself, and not at all for the sake of the good of being, as an end. If he should become a pirate, it would be for exactly the same reason, to wit, that this course is, upon the whole, most pleasing or gratifying to himself, and not at all for the reason that that course is evil in itself. Whichever course he takes, he takes it for precisely the same ultimate reason; and with the same degree of light it must involve the same degree of guilt. If light increase, his guilt must increase, but not otherwise. The proposition is, that every selfish being is, at every moment, as blame-worthy as with his present knowledge he can be. Which of these courses may tend ultimately to the most evil, no finite being can say, nor which shall result in the greatest evil. Guilt is not to be measured by unknown tendencies or results, but belongs to the intention; and its degree is to be measured alone by the mind's apprehension of the reason of the obligation violated, namely, the intrinsic value of the good of God and the universe, which selfishness rejects. Now, it should be remembered, that whichever course the sinner takes to realize his end, it is the end at which he aims. He intends the end. If he become a preacher of the gospel for a selfish reason, he has no right regard to the good of being. If he regards it at all, it is only as a means of his own good. So, if he becomes a pirate, it is not from malice, or a disposition to do evil for its own sake, but only to gratify himself. If he has any regard at all to the evil he may do, it is only to gratify himself that he regards it. Whether, therefore, he preach or pray, or rob and plunder upon the high seas, he does it only for one end, that is, for precisely the same ultimate reason; and of course his sinfulness is complete, in the sense that it can be varied only by varying light. This I know is contrary to common opinion, but it is the truth, and must be known; and it is of the highest importance that these fundamental truths of morality and of immorality should be held up to the minds of all.

Should the sinner abstain from any course of vice because it is wicked, it cannot be because he is benevolent, for this would contradict the supposition that he is selfish, or that he is a sinner. If, in consideration that an act or course is wicked, he abstains from it, it must be for a selfish reason. It may be in obedience to phrenological conscientiousness, or it may be from fear of hell, or of disgrace, or from remorse; at all events, it cannot but be for some selfish reason.

(ix.) Total moral depravity is an attribute of selfishness, in the sense, that every selfish person is at all times just as wicked and blameworthy as with his present light he can be.

(*a.*) He, remaining selfish, can take no other course than to please himself, and only that course which is, upon the whole, most pleasing to him for the time being. If he takes one course of outward conduct, rather than another, it is only to please and gratify himself.

(*b.*) But if, for this reason, he should take any other outward course than he does, it would not vary his guilt, for his guilt lies in the intention, and is measured by the light under which the intention is maintained.

A few inferences may be drawn from our doctrine.

1. Guilt is not to be measured by the nature of the intention; for sinful intention is always a unit--always one and the same thing--being nothing more nor less than an intention to gratify self.

2. Nor can it be measured by the particular type of self-gratification which the mind may prefer. No matter which of his numerous appetites or propensities the man may choose to indulge, whether for food, or strong drink, for power, pleasure, or gain, it is the same thing in the end, self-gratification, and nothing else. For the sake of this he sacrifices every other conflicting interest, and herein lies his guilt. Since he tramples on the greater good of others with equal recklessness, whatever type of self-gratification he prefers, it is clear, that we cannot find in this type the true measure of his guilt.

3. Nor, again, is the guilt to be decided by the amount of evil which the sin may occasion. An agent not enlightened may, by accident, or even with a good intention, do that which will introduce great evil, and yet no guilt attach to this agent. In fact, it matters not how much or how little unforeseen good or evil may result from the deeds of a moral agent, you cannot determine the amount of his guilt, or of his virtue, from this circumstance. God may overrule the greatest sin, so that but little evil shall result from it; or he may leave its tendencies uncounteracted, so that great evils shall result from the least sin. Who can tell how much or how little overruling agency may interpose between any sin, great or small, and its legitimate results?

Satan sinned in tempting Judas, and Judas sinned in betraying Christ. Yet God so overruled these sins, that most blessed results to the universe followed from Christ's betrayal and consequent death. Shall the sins of Satan and Judas be estimated from the evils actually resulting from them? If it should appear that the good immensely overbalanced the evil, does their sin thereby become holiness--meritorious holiness? Is their guilt at all the less for God's wisdom and love in overruling it for good? It is not, therefore, the amount of resulting good or evil which determines the amount of guilt, but the degree of light enjoyed under which the sin is committed.

4. Nor, again, can guilt be measured by the common opinions of men. Men associated in society are wont to form among themselves a sort of public sentiment, which becomes a standard for estimating guilt; yet how often is it erroneous! Christ warns us against adopting this standard, and also against ever judging according to the outward appearance. Who does not know that the common opinions of men are exceedingly incorrect? It is, indeed, wonderful to see how far they diverge in all directions from the Bible standard.

5. The amount of guilt can be determined, as I have said, only by the degree in which those ideas are developed which throw light upon obligation. Just here sin lies, in resisting the light, and acting in opposition to it; and, therefore, the degree of light should naturally measure the amount of guilt incurred.

REMARKS.

1. We see, from this subject, the principle on which many passages of scripture are to be explained. It might seem strange that Christ should charge the blood of all the martyred prophets of past ages on that generation. But the subject before us reveals the principle upon which this is done, and ought to be done.

Whatever of apparent mystery may attach to the fact declared in our text, "The times of this ignorance God winked at," finds in our subject an adequate explanation. Does it seem strange, that for ages God should pass over, almost without apparent notice, the monstrous and reeking abominations of the heathen world? The reason is found in their ignorance. Therefore God winks at those odious and cruel idolatries. For all, taken together, are a trifle, compared with the guilt of a single generation of enlightened men.

2. One sinner may be in such circumstances, as to have more light and knowledge than the whole heathen world. Alas! how little the heathen know! How little compared with what is known by sinners in this land, even by very young sinners!

Let me call up and question some impenitent sinner of Oberlin. It matters but little whom--let it be any sabbath-school child.

What do you know about God? I know that there is one God, and only one. The heathen believe there are hundreds of thousands.

What do you know about God? I know that he is infinitely great and good.--But the heathen think some of their gods are both mean and mischievous, wicked as can be, and the very patrons of wickedness among men.

What do you know about salvation? I know that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in him might live for ever." O, the heathen never heard of that. They would faint away, methinks, in amazement, if they should hear and really believe the startling, glorious fact. And that sabbath-school child knows that God gives his Spirit to convince of sin. He has, perhaps, often been sensible of the presence and power of that Spirit. But the heathen know nothing of this.

You, too, know that you are immortal--that beyond death there is still a conscious unchanging state of existence, blissful or wretched, according to the deeds done here. But the heathen have no just ideas on this subject. It is to them as if all were a blank.

The amount of it, then, is, that you know everything--the heathen almost nothing. You know all you need to know to be saved, to be useful--to honour God, and serve your generation according to his will. The heathen sit in deep darkness, wedded to their abominations, groping, yet finding nothing.

As your light, therefore, so is your guilt immeasurably greater than theirs. Be it so, that their idolatries are monstrous, guilt in your impenitence, and under the light you have, is vastly more so. See that heathen mother dragging her shrieking child and casting it into the Ganges! See her rush with another to throw him into the burning arms of Moloch. Mark! see that pile of wood flashing, lifting up its lurid flames toward heaven. Those men are dragging a dead husband, they leave his senseless corpse on that burning pile. There comes the widow, her hair all dishevelled and flying, gaily decked for such a sacrifice; she dances on; she rends the air with her howls and her wailings; she shrinks, and yet she does not shrink; she leaps on the pile, and the din of music, with the yell of spectators, buries her shrieks of agony: she is gone! O, my blood curdles and runs cold in my veins; my hair stands on end; I am horrified with such scenes; but what shall we say of their guilt? Ah, yes, what do they know of God, of worship, of the claims of God upon their heart and life? Ah, you may well spare your censure of the heathen for their fearful orgies of cruelty and lust, and express it where light has been enjoyed and resisted.

3. You see, then, that often a sinner in some of our congregations may know more than all the heathen world know. If this be true, what follows from it, as to the amount of his comparative guilt? This, inevitably, that such a sinner deserves a direr and deeper damnation than all the heathen world! This conclusion may seem startling; but how can we escape from it? We cannot escape. It is as plain as any mathematical demonstration. This is the principle asserted by Christ when he said, "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Not long since, an ungodly young man, trained in this country, wrote back from the Sandwich Islands, a glowing, and perhaps a just description of their horrible abominations, moralizing on their monstrous enormities, and thanking God that he had been born and taught in a Christian land. Indeed! he might well have spared this censure of the dark-minded heathen! His own guilt, in remaining an impenitent sinner under all the light of Christian America, was greater than the whole aggregate guilt of all those islands.

So we may all spare our expressions of abhorrence at the guilty abominations of idolatry. You are often, perhaps, saying in your heart, Why does God endure these horrid abominations another day? See that rolling car of Juggernaut. Its wheels move axle-deep in the gushing blood and crushed bones of its deluded worshippers! And yet God looks on, and no red bolt leaps from his right hand to smite such wickedness. They are, indeed, guilty; but, O, how small their guilt, compared with the guilt of those who know their duty perfectly, yet never do it! God sees their horrible abominations, yet does he wink at them, because they are done in so much ignorance.

But see that impenitent sinner. Convicted of his sin under the clear gospel light that shines all around him, he is driven to pray. He knows he ought to repent, and almost thinks he is willing to, and will try. Yet still he clings to his sins, and will not give his heart to God. Still he holds his heart in a state of impenitence. Now mark me;--his sin, in thus withholding his heart from God under so much light, involves greater guilt than all the abominations of the heathen world. Put together the guilt of all those widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pile--of those who hurl their children into the Ganges, or into the burning arms of Moloch--all does not begin to approach the guilt of that convicted sinner's prayer, who comes before God under the pressure of his conscience, and prays a heartless prayer, determined all the while to withhold his heart from God. O, why does this sinner thus tempt God, and thus abuse his love, and thus trample on his authority? O, that moment of impenitence, while his prayers are forced by conscience from his burning lips, and yet he will not yield the controversy with his Maker, that moment involves direr guilt than rests on all the heathen world together! He knows more than they all, yet sins despite of all his knowledge. The many stripes belong to him--the few to them.

4. This leads me to remark again, that the Christian world may very well spare their revilings and condemnations of the heathen. Of all the portions of the Earth's population, Christendom is infinitely the most guilty--Christendom, where the gospel peals from ten thousand pulpits--where Christ's praises are sung by a thousand choirs, but where many thousand hearts that know God and duty, refuse either to reverence the one, or perform the other! All the abominations of the heathen world are a mere trifle compared with the guilt of Christendom. We may look down upon the filth, and meanness, and degradation of a heathen people, and feel a most polite disgust at the spectacle--and far be it from me to excuse these degrading, filthy, or cruel practices; but how small their light, and consequently their guilt, compared with our own! We, therefore, ask the Christian world to turn away from the spectacle of heathen degradation, and look nearer home upon the spectacle of Christian guilt! Let us look upon ourselves.

5. Again: let us not fear to say, what you must all see to be true, that the nominal church is the most guilty part of Christendom. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that the church has more light then any other portion; therefore has she more guilt. Of course I speak of the nominal church--not the real church, whom its Lord has pardoned, and cleansed from her sins. But in the nominal church, think of the sinners that live and riot in their corruption. See that backslider. He has tasted the waters of life. He has been greatly enlightened. Perhaps he has really known the Lord by true faith--and then see, he turns way to eat the husks of earthly pleasure! He turns his back on the bleeding Lamb! Now, put together all the guilt of every heathen soul that has gone to hell--of every soul that has gone from a state of utter moral darkness; and your guilt, backsliding Christian, is greater than all theirs!

Do you, therefore, say: may God then have mercy on my soul? So say we all; but we must add, if it be possible; for who can say that such guilt as yours can be forgiven? Can Christ pray for you as he prayed for his murderers--"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Can he plead in your behalf that you know not what you are doing? Awful! awful!! Where is the sounding line that shall measure the ocean-depth of your guilt?

6. Again: if our children remain in sin, we may cease to congratulate ourselves that they were not born in heathenism or slavery! How often have I done this! How often, as I have looked upon my sons and daughters, have I thanked God that they were not born to be thrown into the burning arms of Moloch, or to be crushed under the wheels of Juggernaut! But if they will live in sin, we must suspend our self-congratulations for their having Christian light and privileges. If they will not repent, it were infinitely better for them to have been born in the thickest pagan darkness, better to have been thrown, in their tender years, into the Ganges, or into the fires which idolatry kindles, better be any thing else, or suffer any thing earthly, than have the gospel's light only to shut it out, and go to hell despite of its admonitions.

Let us not then, be hasty in congratulating ourselves, as if this great light enjoyed by us and by our children, were, of course, a certain good to them; but this we may do, we may rejoice that God will honour himself, his mercy if he can, and his justice if he must. God will be honoured, and we may glory in this. But oh, the sinner, the sinner! Who can measure the depth of his guilt, or the terror of his final doom! It will be more tolerable for all the heathen world together than for you.

7. It is time that we all understood this subject fully, and appreciated all its bearings. It is no doubt true, that however moral our children may be, they are more guilty than any other sinners under heaven, if they live in sin, and will not yield to the light under which they live. We may be, perhaps, congratulating ourselves on their fair morality; but if we saw their case in all its real bearings, our souls would groan with agony, our bowels would be all liquid with anguish, our very hearts within us would heave as if volcanic fires were kindled there; so deep a sense should we have of their fearful guilt, and of the awful doom they incur in denying the Lord that bought them, and setting at nought a known salvation. O, if we ever pray, we should pour out our prayers for our offspring, as if nothing could ever satisfy us or stay our importunity, but the blessings of a full salvation realized in their souls.

Let the mind contemplate the guilt of these children. I could not find a sabbath-school child, perhaps not one in all Christendom, who could not tell me more of God's salvation than all the heathen world know. That dear little boy who comes from his sabbath-school knows all about the gospel. He is almost ready to be converted, but not quite ready; yet that little boy, if he knows his duty, and yet will not do it, is covered with more guilt than all the heathen world together. Yes, that boy, who goes alone and prays, yet holds back his heart from God, and then his mother comes and prays over him, and pours her tears on his head, and his little heart almost melts, and he seems on the very point of giving up his whole heart to the Saviour; yet if he will not do it, he commits more sin in that refusal, than all the sin of the heathen world; his guilt is more than the guilt of all the murders, all the drownings of children, and burnings of widows, and deeds of cruelty and violence, in all the heathen world. All this combination of guilt shall not be equal to the guilt of the lad who knows his duty, but will not yield his heart to its righteous claims.

8. "The heathen," says an apostle, "sin without law, and shall therefore perish without law." In their final doom they will be cast away from God: this will be perhaps about all. The bitter reflection, "I had the light of the gospel, and would not yield to it; I knew my duty, yet did it not"--this cannot be a part of their eternal doom. This is reserved for those who gather themselves into our sanctuaries and around our family altars, yet will not serve their own Infinite Father.

9. One more remark. Suppose I should call out a sinner by name--one of the sinners of this congregation, a son of pious parents, and should call up the father also. I might say, Is this your son? Yes. What testimony can you bear about this son of yours? I have endeavoured to teach him all the ways of the Lord. Son, what can you say? I knew my duty--I have heard it a thousand times. I knew I ought to repent, but I never would.

Oh, if we understood this matter in all its bearings, it would fill every bosom with consternation and grief. How would our bowels yearn and our bosoms heave as a volcano. There would be one universal outcry of anguish and terror at the awful guilt and fearful doom of such a sinner!

Young man, are you going away this day in your sins? Then, what angel can compute your guilt? O how long has Jesus held out his hands, yes, his bleeding hands, and besought you to look and live? A thousand times, and in countless varied ways has he called, but you have refused; stretched out his hand, and you have not regarded. Oh, will you not repent? Why not say at once: It is enough that I have sinned so long. I cannot live so any longer! Oh, sinner, why will you live so? Would you go down to hell--ah, to the deepest hell--where, if we would find you, we must work our way down for a thousand years, through ranks of lost spirits less guilty than you, ere we could reach the fearful depth to which you have sunk! Oh, sinner, what a hell is that which can adequately punish such guilt as thine!

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXII.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

I. A RETURN TO OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW IS, AND MUST BE, UNDER EVERY DISPENSATION OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, THE UNALTERABLE CONDITION OF SALVATION.

II. UNDER A GRACIOUS DISPENSATION, A RETURN TO OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW IS NOT DISPENSED WITH AS THE CONDITION OF SALVATION, BUT THAT OBEDIENCE TO LAW IS SECURED BY THE INDWELLING SPIRIT AND GRACE OF CHRIST.

I. A RETURN TO OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW IS, AND MUST BE, UNDER EVERY DISPENSATION OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, THE UNALTERABLE CONDITION OF SALVATION.

1. Salvation upon any other condition is naturally impossible. Without holiness salvation is out of the question. But holiness and full obedience to the moral law are the same thing.

2. The gospel is not a repeal of the law, but designed to establish it.

3. As the moral law is the law of nature, it is absurd to suppose, that a return to entire obedience to it should not be the unalterable condition of salvation, that is, that salvation should be possible upon a less condition than a return, on the part of sinners, to the state of mind required by this law of nature.

4. The Bible everywhere represents the perfect love required by the law as indispensable to salvation. It is naturally indispensable.

Perhaps some one will say, that it is true, indeed, that one cannot enter heaven without first becoming entirely obedient to the divine law, but that this obedience may first take place immediately after death. I reply,--that the uniform representation of the Bible is, that men shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and that the state of mind in which they enter the eternal world, shall decide their destiny for ever. It is nowhere so much as hinted in the Bible, that men shall be saved in consequence or upon condition of a change that takes place after death. But the opposite of this is the unvarying teaching of the Bible. If men are not holy here, they never will be holy. If they are not sanctified by the Spirit and the belief of the truth in this life, there is no intimation in the Bible that they ever will be; but the contrary of this is the plain and unequivocal teaching of the Bible. The work of regeneration and sanctification is always represented as being instrumentally effected by the instrumentality and agency of those means that Christ has provided in this world. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph 4:7-13. This passage is only a specimen of scripture declarations and teachings upon this subject. It unequivocally teaches the entire sanctification of the whole mystical body, or church of Christ, in this life, or by the means which he has provided, and which means relate exclusively to this life.

II. UNDER A GRACIOUS DISPENSATION, A RETURN TO FULL OBEDIENCE TO MORAL LAW IS NOT DISPENSED WITH AS A CONDITION OF SALVATION, BUT THIS OBEDIENCE IS SECURED BY THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF CHRIST RECEIVED BY FAITH TO REIGN IN THE HEART.

In discussing this proposition I shall endeavour to show,--

1. *That salvation by grace does not dispense with a return to full obedience to law as a condition of salvation, and--*

2. *That the grace of the gospel is designed to restore sinners to full obedience to the law.*

3. *That the efficient influence that secures this conformity to law is the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit received into, and reigning in, the heart, by faith.*

1. *Salvation by grace does not dispense with a return to full obedience as a condition of salvation.*

There is a class of scripture texts which have been quoted by antinomians in support of the doctrine, that salvation is not conditionated upon personal holiness, or upon a return to full obedience. It has been found very convenient, by many who were lovers of sin, and never conscious of personal holiness, to adopt the idea of an imputed holiness, contenting themselves with an outward righteousness imputed to them, instead of submitting by faith to have the righteousness of God wrought in them. Unwilling to be personally pious, they betake themselves to an imputed piety. Because the scriptures declare, that men are not saved by works of the law, they infer, that a return to that state of love required by the law, is not even a condition of salvation. The texts above referred to, are such as these. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."-- Gal 2:16. This, and sundry other passages that hold the same language, are grossly misunderstood and misapplied by antinomians. They merely declare, that men are not justified and saved by their own works, which of course they cannot be, if they have committed even one sin. But they do not intimate, and there is no passage rightly understood that does intimate, that men are saved or justified upon conditions short of personal holiness, or a return to full obedience to the moral law.

Again: James wrote his epistle to establish this point. Grace cannot save by dispensing with personal holiness, or a return to full obedience to the law. Grace must not only pardon, but secure personal holiness, or the soul is not fitted, either for the employments or enjoyments of heaven. It is naturally impossible for grace to save the soul, but upon condition of entire sanctification.

2. *The grace of the gospel was designed to restore to full obedience to the moral law.*

This is abundantly evident from almost every part of the Bible. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."-- Deu 30:6. "And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."-- Jer 24:7. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."-- Jer 31:31-34. "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh."-- Eze 11:19. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you."-- Eze 36:25. "For, finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."-- Heb 8:8-12. "And he shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins."-- Mat 1:21. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."-- 1Th 5:23-24. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."-- Rom 6:14. These, and many other passages of like import, plainly teach the truth of the proposition we are considering, namely, that grace was designed to secure personal holiness, and full return to the love required by the law, and not to dispense with this holiness or obedience, as a condition of salvation.

3. *The efficient influence that secures this return to full obedience to the law, is the Holy Spirit received to reign in the heart by faith.*

That God writes his law in the heart by his indwelling Spirit, is abundantly taught in the Bible. Writing his law in the heart, is begetting the spirit of love required by the law in the heart.

By his reigning in the heart, is intended his setting up, and continuing his dominion in the heart, by writing his law there, or, as is said just above, by begetting the love, required by the law, in the heart.

Also by reigning in the heart, is intended, that he leads, guides, and controls the soul, by enlightening and drawing it into conformity with his will in all things. Thus it is said, "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

By the assertion, that the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Christ, is received by faith, to reign in the heart, it is intended, that he is actually trusted in, or submitted to by faith, and his influence suffered to control us. He does not guide and control us, by irresistible power or force, but faith confides the guidance of our souls to him. Faith receives and confides in him, and consents to be governed and directed by him. As his influence is moral, and not physical, it is plain that he can influence us no farther than we have confidence in him; that is, no farther than we trust or confide in him. But I must cite some passages that sustain these positions. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."-- Gal 3:14. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."-- Isa 32:15. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."-- Isa 44:3. "But this shall be the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people."-- Jer 31:33. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."-- Jer 32:40. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."-- Zec 12:10. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."-- Rom 8:1, Rom 8:5, Rom 8:9, Rom 8:11, Rom 8:13-16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"-- 1Co 3:16. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"-- 1Co 6:19. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."-- Gal 5:22, Gal 5:25. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."-- Eph 3:17. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."-- Eph 2:8. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."-- Phi 3:9.

These passages abundantly support the position for the establishment of which they are quoted. It is only necessary to remark here,--

1. That the Holy Spirit controls, directs, and sanctifies the soul, not by a physical influence, nor by impulses nor by impressions made on the sensibility, but by enlightening and convincing the intellect, and thus quickening the conscience.

2. The fundamentally important doctrine of an indwelling Christ, that the Spirit of Christ must be received by faith to reign in the heart, has been extensively overlooked. "Christ our sanctification!" said a minister to me a few months since, "I never heard of such a thing." Also said a Doctor of Divinity to me, "I never heard Christ spoken of as our sanctification until the Perfectionists affirmed it." Indeed, it is amazing to see how this blessed truth has been overlooked. Christ, by his Spirit, must actually dwell within and reign over us, and this is an unalterable condition of salvation. He is our king. He must be received by faith, to set up and establish his kingdom in the heart, or salvation is impossible.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXIII.

MORAL GOVERNMENT.

SANCTIONS OF MORAL LAW, NATURAL AND GOVERNMENTAL.

In the discussion of this subject, I shall show--

I. *What constitutes the sanctions of law.*

II. *That there can be no law without sanctions.*

III. *In what light the sanctions of law are to be regarded.*

IV. *The end to be secured by law, and the execution of penal sanctions.*

V. *The rule by which sanctions ought to be graduated.*

I. *What constitutes the sanctions of law.*

1. The sanctions of law are the motives to obedience, that which is to be the natural and the governmental consequence or result of obedience and of disobedience.

2. They are remuneratory, that is, they promise reward to obedience.

3. They are vindicatory, that is, they threaten the disobedient with punishment.

4. They are natural, that is--

(1.) All moral law is that rule of action which is in exact accordance with the nature and relations of moral beings.

(2.) Happiness is to some extent naturally connected with, and the necessary consequence of, obedience to moral law.

(3.) Misery is naturally and necessarily connected with, and results from, disobedience to moral law, or from acting contrary to the nature and relations of moral beings.

5. Sanctions are governmental. By governmental sanctions are intended:

(1.) The favour of the government as due to obedience.

(2.) A positive reward bestowed upon the obedient by government.

(3.) The displeasure of government towards the disobedient.

(4.) Direct punishment inflicted by the government as due to disobedience.

6. All happiness and misery resulting from obedience or disobedience, either natural, or from the favour, or frown, of government, are to be regarded as constituting the sanctions of law.

II. *There can be no law without sanctions.*

1. It has been said, in a former lecture, that precepts without sanctions are only counsel or advice, and not law.

2. Nothing is moral law, but the rule of action which is founded in the nature and relations of moral beings. It is therefore absurd to say, that there should be no natural sanctions to this rule of action. It is the same absurdity as to say, that conformity to the laws of our being would not produce happiness, and that disconformity to the laws of our being would not produce misery. What do we mean by acting in conformity to the laws of our being, but that course of conduct in which all the powers of our being will sweetly harmonize, and produce happiness? And what do we mean by disconformity to the laws of our being, but that course of action which creates mutiny among our powers themselves, which produces discord instead of harmony, misery instead of happiness?

3. A precept, to have the nature and the force of law, must be founded in reason, that is, it must have some reason for its existence. And it were unreasonable to hold out no motives to obedience, where a law is founded in a necessity of our nature.

4. But whatever is unreasonable is no law. Therefore a precept without a sanction is not law.

5. Necessity is the fundamental condition of all rightful government. There would be, and could be, no just government, but for the necessities of the universe. But these necessities cannot be met, the great end of government cannot be secured, without motives or sanctions: therefore, that is no government, no law, that has no sanctions.

III. *In what light sanctions are to be regarded.*

1. Sanctions are to be regarded as an expression of the benevolent regard of the lawgiver for his subjects: the motives which he exhibits to induce in the subjects the course of conduct that will secure their highest well-being.

2. They are to be regarded as an expression of his estimation of the justice, necessity, and value of the precept to the subjects of his government.

3. They are to be regarded as an expression of the amount or strength of his desire to secure the happiness of his subjects.

4. They are to be regarded as an expression of his opinion in respect to the desert of disobedience.

The natural sanctions are to be regarded as a demonstration of the justice, necessity, and perfection of the precept.

IV. *The end to be secured by law, and the execution of penal sanctions.*

1. The ultimate end of all government is blessedness.

2. This is the ultimate end of the precept, and of the sanction attached to it.

3. This can be secured only by the prevention of sin and the promotion of holiness.

4. Confidence in the government is the *sine quà non* of all virtue.

5. Confidence results from a revelation of the lawgiver to his subjects. Confidence in God results from a revelation of himself to his creatures.

6. The moral law, in its precepts and sanctions, is a revelation of God.

7. The execution of penal sanctions is also a revelation of the mind, will, and character of the lawgiver.

8. The highest and most influential sanctions of government are those motives that most fully reveal the true character of God, and the true end of his government.

V. *By what rule sanctions ought to be graduated.*

1. We have seen, in a former lecture, that moral obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of the well-being of God and of the universe, and conditionated upon the perception of its value.

2. That guilt ought always to be measured by the perceived value of the end which moral beings ought to choose.

3. The sanctions of law should be graduated by the intrinsic merit and demerit of holiness and sin.

SANCTIONS OF GOD'S LAW.

I. *God's law has sanctions.*

II. *What constitutes the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God.*

III. *The perfection and duration of the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God.*

IV. *What constitutes the vindicatory sanctions of the law of God.*

V. *Their duration.*

I. *God's law has sanctions.*

1. That sin, or disobedience to the moral law, is attended with, and results in, misery, is a matter of consciousness.

2. That virtue or holiness is attended with, and results in happiness, is also attested by consciousness.

3. Therefore that God's law has natural sanctions, both remuneratory and vindicatory, is a matter of fact.

4. That there are governmental sanctions added to the natural, must be true, or God, in fact, has no government but that of natural consequences.

5. The Bible expressly, and in every variety of form, teaches that God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

II. *What constitutes the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God.*

1. The happiness that is naturally and necessarily connected with, and results from, holiness or obedience.

2. The merited favour, protection, and blessing of God.

3. All the natural and governmental rewards of virtue.

III. *The perfection and duration of the remuneratory sanctions of the law of God.*

1. The perfection of the natural reward is, and must be, proportioned to the perfection of virtue.

2. The duration of the remuneratory sanction must be equal to the duration of obedience. This cannot possibly be otherwise.

3. If the existence and virtue of man are immortal, his happiness must be endless.

4. The Bible most unequivocally asserts the immortality, both of the existence and virtue of the righteous, and also that their happiness shall be endless.

5. The very design and end of government make it necessary that governmental rewards should be as perfect and as unending as virtue.

IV. *What constitutes the vindicatory sanctions of the law of God.*

1. The misery naturally and necessarily connected with, and resulting from, disobedience to moral law. Here again, let it be understood, that moral law is nothing else than that rule of action which accords with the nature and relations of moral beings. Therefore, the natural vindicatory sanction of the law of God is misery, resulting from a violation of man's own nature.

2. The displeasure of God, the loss of his protection and governmental favour, together with that punishment which it is his duty to inflict upon the disobedient.

3. The rewards of holiness, and the punishment of sin, are described in the Bible in figurative language. The rewards of virtue are called eternal life. The punishment of vice is called death. By life, in such a connexion, is intended, not only existence, but that happiness that makes life desirable, and without which it would be no blessing. By death is intended, not annihilation, but that misery which renders existence an evil. It is the opposite of happy existence, called eternal life, and is, therefore, denominated eternal death.

V. *Duration of the penal sanctions of the law of God.*

FIRST. Examine the question in the light of natural theology.

SECONDLY. In the light of revelation.

FIRST. *In examining it in the light of natural theology, I shall,--*

1. Inquire into the meaning of the term infinite.

2. Show that infinities may differ indefinitely in amount.

3. Remind you of the rule by which the degrees of guilt are to be estimated.

4. That all and every sin must, from its very nature, involve infinite guilt, in the sense of deserving endless punishment.

5. That notwithstanding all sin deserves endless punishment, yet the guilt of different persons may vary indefinitely, and that punishment, although always endless in duration, may, and must, and ought to, vary in degree, in proportion as guilt varies.

6. That the duration of penal inflictions under the government of God, will be endless.

1. *Inquire into the meaning of the term infinite.*

It literally and properly means not finite, not limited, not bounded, unlimited, boundless. A thing may be infinite in a particular sense, and not in the absolute sense. For example, a line may be of infinite length, but of finite breadth. Anything which is boundless, in any one sense or direction, is in that sense or direction infinite. We shall soon illustrate the truth of these statements.

2. *Infinites may differ indefinitely in amount.*

(1.) This is the doctrine of Sir Isaac Newton, and of natural and mathematical science, as most persons at all acquainted with this subject know.

(2.) It is a plain matter of fact. For example: suppose that from this point radiate mathematical lines endlessly in every direction. Let each two of these lines make an angle of one degree, and let the points be sufficiently numerous to fill up the whole circle. Now as these lines extend endlessly in every direction, every pair of them form the legs of a triangle, whose sides extend endlessly, and which has no base, or which has no bound in one direction. It is self-evident, that the superficial area contained between any two of these radii is infinite in the sense that its superficial quantity is unlimited. Thus the whole of space is no more than infinite, in the absolute sense of the term, by which is meant an amount which admits of no increase in any sense of direction, and yet there is, in the sense of unlimited in quantity, an infinite amount of space between every two of those radii.

The same would be true upon the supposition of parallel mathematical lines of infinite length, no matter how near together: the superfices or area between them must be infinite in amount. Anything is infinite which has no whole, which is boundless in any sense. In the sense in which it is boundless, it is infinite. For example, in the cases supposed, the area between any two of the radii of the circle, or of the parallel lines, is not infinite in the sense that it has no bounds in any direction. For it is bounded on its sides. But it is infinite in the sense of its superficial measure or contents. So, endless happiness or misery may be finite in one sense, and infinite in another. They may be infinite in amount, taking into view their endlessness, however small they may be in degree. So that in degree they may, and with finite creatures must be, finite in degree, but infinite in amount. There is and can be no whole of them, and, therefore, in amount they are infinite. God's happiness may be, and is, infinite both in degree and in duration, which amounts to infinite in the absolute sense. It should be remarked, that practically no creature, nor all creatures together, will ever have either enjoyed infinite happiness, or endured infinite misery. Indeed, the period can never arrive in which they will not have fallen infinitely short of it. They will never have completed endless duration either in enjoyment or misery. Nor can they approach at all nearer to it than at first; so that they can really, in fact, never approach at all nearer an infinite amount of enjoyment or of suffering, than when they first began to enjoy or suffer. At any possible period of the future it will be true that they have only enjoyed or suffered a finite amount, and an amount infinitely less than infinite, because they have enjoyed or suffered infinitely less that eternally. Any finite amount they could and would reach, but an infinite amount they can never so much as approach, because it has no bound in that direction. Endless happiness can never have been enjoyed, nor endless misery endured, by any creature. Nay, creatures must, at any possible period, have fallen infinitely short of it, as an eternity of bliss or misery is, and always will be, still before them.

3. *I must remind you of the rule by which degrees of guilt are to be estimated.*

And here let it be remembered--

(1.) That moral obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of those interests which moral agents are bound to choose as an end.

(2.) That the obligation is conditionated upon the knowledge of this end, and--

(3.) That the degree of obligation is just equal to the apprehended intrinsic value of those interests which they are bound to choose.

(4.) That the guilt of refusal to will these interests is in proportion, or is equal to the amount of the obligation, and--

(5.) That consequently, the mind's honest apprehension or judgment of the value of those interests which it refuses to will, is, and must be, the rule by which the degree of guilt involved in that refusal ought to be measured.

4. *That all and every sin must from its very nature involve infinite guilt in the sense of deserving endless punishment.*

(1.) Sin implies moral obligation.

(2.) Moral obligation implies moral agency.

(3.) Moral agency implies the apprehension of the end that moral agents ought to will.

(4.) This end is the highest well-being of God and of the universe. This end, the reason of every moral agent must affirm to be of infinite value, in the sense that its value is unlimited.

(5.) The idea or apprehension of this end implies the knowledge, that the intrinsic value of those endless interests must be infinite.

If the idea of God and of the good of being be developed, which is implied in moral agency, there must be in the mind the idea or first truth, that the good of God and of the universe is infinitely valuable. The idea may not have come into so full developement as is possible. Nevertheless, it is, and must be, in the mind. If this is so, it follows that every refusal to will the highest well-being of God and of the universe involves infinite guilt. Every moral agent must be able to affirm, and indeed must affirm to himself, that the intrinsic value of the happiness of God and the universe must be boundless, unlimited, infinite. By this affirmation, or by the apprehension that necessitates this affirmation, his guilt ought to be measured, if he refuses to consecrate himself to the promotion of those interests.

5. *Notwithstanding all sin deserves endless punishment, yet the guilt of different persons may vary indefinitely, and punishment, although always endless in duration, may vary, and ought to vary, in degree, according to the guilt of each individual offender.*

It has been affirmed, that every moral agent has, from the first, as full and clear an idea of the infinite as is possible for him ever to have. But what thoughtful mind does not know that this is untrue? What Christian has not, at times, had so clear an apprehension of the infinity of God's attributes, as almost to overcome him. At all times he has within him the affirmation, or idea, that God is infinite,--that duration is eternal,--that happiness and misery are endless. Those ideas he has at all times; but at some times these ideas seem to be illuminated, and to mean so much, that the soul and body both are ready to faint in the presence of them. The ideas of the reason are, doubtless, capable, in finite minds, of endless developement. The ideas of the infinite, the eternal, the absolute, the perfect, and indeed all the ideas of the pure reason, will, I apprehend, continue to develope more and more to all eternity. They are, no doubt, capable of such a developement as would at once destroy our earthly existence. Christians, who have always had their ideas in a state of partial developement, have sometimes, of a sudden, had so great an increase of their developement, as to be overcome by them,--their bodily strength gone,--and, for the time, they were unable to realize that they had had these ideas at all before. This has been true of the idea of the infinite guilt of sin, the infinite love of God, the omnipresence, the omnipotence, the infinite holiness, and infinite blessedness of God.

The guilt of different persons may vary indefinitely.--This also may be true of the same person at different periods of life. Observe: the degree of guilt depends on the degree of intellectual developement on moral subjects, upon the clearness with which the mind apprehends moral relations, especially the intrinsic value of those interests which it ought to choose. These apprehensions vary, as every moral agent is conscious, almost continually. The obligation to will an end lies in the intrinsic value of the end. The obligation is greater or less, as the mind's honest estimate of the value of it is greater or less. Every moral agent knows that the value of the end is unbounded. Yet some have an indefinitely larger conception of what infinite or boundless means. Some minds mean indefinitely more by such language than others do. As light increases, and the mind obtains enlarged conceptions of God, of the universe, of endless happiness or misery, and of all those great truths that cluster around these subjects, its obligation increases in exact proportion to increasing light, and so does the guilt of selfishness.

6. *That penal inflictions under the government of God must be endless.*

Here the inquiry is, what kind of death is intended, where death is denounced against the transgressor, as the penalty of the law of God?

(1.) It is not merely natural death, for--

(i.) This would, in reality, be no penalty at all. But it would be offering a reward to sin. If natural death is all that is intended, and if persons, as soon as they are naturally dead, have suffered the penalty of the law, and their souls go immediately to heaven, the case stands thus: if your obedience is perfect and perpetual, you shall live in this world for ever; but if you sin, you shall die and go immediately to heaven. "This would be hire and salary," and not punishment.

(ii.) If natural death be the penalty of God's law, the righteous, who are forgiven, should not die a natural death.

(iii.) If natural death be the penalty of God's law, there is no such thing as forgiveness, but all must actually endure the penalty.

(iv.) If natural death be the penalty, than infants and animals suffer this penalty, as well as the most abandoned transgressors.

(v.) If natural death be the penalty, and the only penalty, it sustains no proportion whatever to the guilt of sin.

(vi.) Natural death would be no adequate expression of the importance of the precept.

(2.) The penalty of God's law is not spiritual death.

(i.) Because spiritual death is a state of entire sinfulness.

(ii.) To make a state of entire sinfulness the penalty of the law of God, would be to make the penalty and the breach of the precept identical.

(iii.) It would be making God the author of sin, and would represent him as compelling the sinner to commit one sin as the punishment for another,--as forcing him into a state of total and perpetual rebellion, as the reward of his first transgression.

(3.) But the penal sanction of the law of God is *endless death*, or that state of endless suffering which is the natural and governmental result of sin or of spiritual death.

Before I proceed to the proof of this, I will notice an objection which is often urged against the doctrine of endless punishment. The objection is one, but it is stated in three different forms. This, and every other objection to the doctrine of endless punishment, with which I am acquainted, is levelled against the justice of such a governmental infliction.

(i.) It is said that endless punishment is unjust, because life is so short, that men do not live long enough in this world to commit so great a number of sins as to deserve endless punishment. To this I answer--

(*a.*) That it is founded in ignorance or disregard of a universal principle of government, viz., that one breach of the precept always incurs the penalty of the law, whatever that penalty is.

(*b.*) The length of time employed in committing a sin, has nothing to do with its blameworthiness or guilt. It is the design which constitutes the moral character of the action, and not the length of time required for its accomplishment.

(*c.*) This objection takes for granted, that it is the number of sins, and not the intrinsic guilt of sin, that constitutes its blameworthiness, whereas it is the intrinsic desert or guilt of sin, as we shall soon see, that renders it deserving of endless punishment.

(ii.) Another form of this objection is, that a finite creature cannot commit an infinite sin. But none but an infinite sin can deserve endless punishment: therefore, endless punishments are unjust.

(*a.*) This objection takes for granted that man is so diminutive a creature, so much less than the Creator, that he cannot deserve his endless frown.

(*b.*) Which is the greater crime, for a child to insult his playfellow, or his parent? Which would involve the most guilt, for a man to smite his neighbour and his equal, or his lawful sovereign?

(*c.*) The higher the ruler is exalted above the subject in his nature, character, and rightful authority, the greater is the obligation of the subject to will his good, to render to him obedience, and the greater is the guilt of transgression in the subject. Therefore, the fact that man is so infinitely below his Maker, does but enhance the guilt of his rebellion, and render him all the more worthy of his endless frown.

(iii.) A third form of the objection is, that sin is not an infinite evil; and therefore, does not deserve endless punishment.

This objection may mean either, that sin would not produce infinite mischief if unrestrained, or that it does not involve infinite guilt. It cannot mean the first, for it is agreed on all hands, that misery must continue as long as sin does, and, therefore, that sin unrestrained would produce endless evil. The objection, therefore, must mean, that sin does not involve infinite guilt. Observe then, the point at issue is, what is the intrinsic demerit or guilt of sin? What does all sin in its own nature deserve? They who deny the justice of endless punishment, manifestly consider the guilt of sin as a mere trifle. They who maintain the justice of endless punishment, consider sin as an evil of *immeasurable* magnitude, and, in its own nature, deserving of endless punishment. Proof:--

(*a.*) Should a moral agent refuse to choose that as an ultimate end which is of no intrinsic value, he would thereby contract no guilt, because he would violate no obligation. But should he refuse to will the good of God and of his neighbour, he would violate an obligation, and of course contract guilt. This shows that guilt attaches to the violation of obligation, and that a thing is blameworthy because it is the violation of an obligation.

(*b.*) We have seen that sin is selfishness, that it consists in preferring self-gratification to the infinite interests of God and of the universe. We have also seen that obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of that good which moral agents ought to will to God and to the universe, and is equal to the affirmed value of that good. We have also seen that every moral agent, by a law of his own reason, necessarily affirms that God is infinite, and that the endless happiness and well-being of God and of the universe, is of infinite value. Hence it follows, that refusal to will this good is a violation of infinite or unlimited obligation, and, consequently, involves unlimited guilt. It is as certain that the guilt of any sin is unlimited, as that obligation to will the good of God and of the universe is unlimited. To deny consistently that the guilt of sin is unlimited, it must be shown, that obligation to will good to God is limited. To maintain consistently this last, it must be shown, that moral agents have not the idea that God is infinite. Indeed, to deny that the guilt of sin is in any instance less than boundless, is as absurd as to deny the guilt of sin altogether.

Having shown that moral obligation is founded in the intrinsic value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, and that it is always equal to the soul's knowledge of the value of those interests, and having shown also, that every moral agent necessarily has the idea more or less clearly developed, that the value of those interests is infinite, it follows:--

That the law is infinitely unjust, if its penal sanctions are not endless. Law must be just in two respects.

The precept must be in accordance with the law of nature.

The penalty must be equal to the importance of the precept. That which has not these two peculiarities is not just, and therefore, is not and cannot be law. Either, then, God has no law, or its penal sanctions are endless.

1. That the penal sanctions of the law of God are endless, is evident from the fact, that a less penalty would not exhibit as high motives as the nature of the case admits, to restrain sin and promote virtue.

2. Natural justice demands that God should exhibit as high motives to secure obedience as the value of the law demands, and the nature of the case admits.

3. The moral law, or law of God's reason, must require justice, holiness, and benevolence, in God; and demands, also, that the penal sanctions of his law should be endless; and if they are not, God cannot be just, holy, or benevolent.

4. Unless the penal sanctions of the law of God are endless, they are virtually and really no penalty at all. If a man be threatened with punishment for one thousand, or ten thousand, or ten millions, or ten hundred millions of years, after which he is to come out as a matter of justice, and go to heaven, there is beyond an absolute eternity of happiness. Now, there is no sort of proportion between the longest finite period that can be named, or even conceived, and endless duration. If, therefore, limited punishment, ending in an eternity of bliss, be the penalty of God's law, the case stands thus: Be perfect, and you live here for ever; sin, and receive finite suffering, with an eternity of blessedness. This would be, after all, offering reward for sin.

5. Death is eternal in its nature. The fact, therefore, that this figure is used to express the future punishment of the wicked, affords a plain inference, that it is endless.

6. The tendency of sin to perpetuate and aggravate itself, affords another strong inference, that the sinfulness and misery of the wicked will be eternal.

7. The fact, that punishment has no tendency to originate disinterested love in a selfish mind towards him who inflicts the punishment, also affords a strong presumption, that future punishment will be eternal.

8. The law of God makes no provision for terminating future punishment.

9. Sin deserves endless punishment just as fully as it deserves any punishment at all. If, therefore, it is not forgiven, if it be punished at all with penal suffering, the punishment must be endless.

10. To deny the justice of eternal punishments, involves the same principle as a denial of the justice of any degree of punishment.

11. To deny the justice of endless punishment, is virtually to deny the fact of moral evil. But to deny this, is to deny moral obligation. To deny moral obligation, is to deny moral agency. But of both moral obligation and moral agency we are absolutely conscious. Therefore, it follows to a demonstration, not only that moral evil does exist, but that it deserves endless punishment.

SECONDLY. *Examine this question in the light of revelation.*

The Bible, in a great many ways, represents the future punishment of the wicked as eternal, and never once represents it otherwise. It expresses the duration of the future punishment of the wicked by the same terms, and, in every way, as forcibly as it expresses the duration of the future happiness of the righteous.

I will here introduce, without comment, some passages of scripture confirmatory of this last remark. "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish."-- Pro 10:28. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth."-- Pro 11:7. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."-- Dan 12:2. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."-- Mat 25:41-42, Mat 25:46. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."-- Mar 9:43-44. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor; and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."-- Luk 3:17. "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."-- Luk 16:26. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."-- Joh 3:36. "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."-- 2Th 1:7-9. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."-- Jud 1:6-7, Jud 1:13. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."-- Rev 14:9-11. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."-- Rev 20:10. But there is scarcely any end to the multitude of passages that teach directly, or by inference, both the fact and the endlessness of the future punishment of the wicked. But the fuller consideration of this subject belongs more appropriately to a future place in this course of instruction; my object here being only to consider the penal sanctions of moral law didactically, reserving the polemic discussion of the question of endless punishment for a future occasion.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXIV.

ATONEMENT.

We come now to the consideration of a very important feature of the moral government of God; namely, the atonement.

In discussing this subject, I will--

I. CALL ATTENTION TO SEVERAL WELL-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT, IN THE LIGHT OF WHICH OUR INVESTIGATION WILL PROCEED.

II. DEFINE THE TERM ATONEMENT AS USED IN THIS DISCUSSION.

III. INQUIRE INTO THE TEACHINGS OF NATURAL THEOLOGY, OR INTO THE *À PRIORI* AFFIRMATIONS OF REASON UPON THIS SUBJECT.

IV. SHOW THE FACT OF ATONEMENT.

V. THE DESIGN OF ATONEMENT.

VI. EXTENT OF ATONEMENT.

VII. ANSWER OBJECTIONS.

I. *I will call attention to several well-established principles of government.*

1. We have already seen that moral law is not founded in the mere arbitrary will of God or of any other being, but that it has its foundation in the nature and relations of moral agents, that it is that rule of action or of willing which is imposed on them by the law of their own intellect.

2. As the will of no being can create moral law, so the will of no being can repeal or alter moral law. It being just that rule of action that is agreeable to the nature and relations of moral agents, it is as immutable as those natures and relations.

3. There is a distinction between the letter and the spirit of moral law. The letter relates to the outward life or action; the spirit respects the motive or intention from which the act should proceed. For example: the spirit of the moral law requires disinterested benevolence, and is all expressed in one word--love. The letter of the law is found in the commandments of the decalogue, and in divers other precepts relating to outward acts.

4. To the letter of the law there may be many exceptions, but to the spirit of moral law there can be no exception. That is, the spirit of the moral law may sometimes admit and require, that the letter of the law shall be disregarded or violated; but the spirit of the law ought never to be disregarded or violated. For example: the letter of the law prohibits all labour on the sabbath day. But the spirit of the law often requires labour on the sabbath. The spirit of the law requires the exercise of universal and perfect love or benevolence to God and man, and the law of benevolence often requires that labour shall be done on the sabbath; as administering to the sick, relieving the poor, feeding animals; and in short, whatever is plainly the work of necessity or mercy, in such a sense that enlightened benevolence demands it, is required by the spirit of moral law upon the sabbath, as well as all other days. This is expressly taught by Christ, both by precept and example. So again, the letter of the law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" but the spirit of the law admits and requires that upon certain conditions, to be examined in their proper place, the soul that sinneth shall live. The letter of the law is inexorable; it condemns and sentences to death all violators of its precepts, without regard to atonement or repentance. The spirit of moral law allows and requires that upon condition of satisfaction being made to public justice, and the return of the sinner to obedience, he shall live and not die.

5. In establishing a government and promulgating law, the lawgiver is always understood as pledging himself duly to administer the laws in support of public order, and for the promotion of public morals, to reward the innocent with his favour and protection, and to punish the disobedient with the loss of his protection and favour.

6. Laws are public property in which every subject of the government has an interest. Every obedient subject of government is interested to have law supported and obeyed, and wherever the law is violated, every subject of the government is injured, and his rights are invaded; and each and all have a right to expect the government duly to execute the penalties of law when it is violated.

7. There is an important distinction between retributive and public justice. Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly. Public justice, in its exercise, consists in the promotion and protection of the public interests, by such legislation and such an administration of law, as is demanded by the highest good of the public. It implies the execution of the penalties of law where the precept is violated, unless something else is done that will as effectually secure the public interests. When this is done, public justice demands, that the execution of the penalty shall be dispensed with by extending pardon to the criminal. Retributive justice makes no exceptions, but punishes without mercy in every instance of crime. Public justice makes exceptions, as often as this is permitted or required by the public good. Public justice is identical with the spirit of the moral law, and in its exercise, regards only the spirit of the law. Retributive justice cleaves to the letter, and makes no exceptions to the rule, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

8. The design of legal penalties is to secure obedience to the precept. The same is also the reason for executing them when the precept is violated. The sanctions are to be regarded as an expression of the views of the lawgiver, in respect to the importance of his law; and the execution of penalties is designed and calculated to evince his sincerity in enacting, and his continued adherence to, and determination to abide by, the principles of his government as revealed in the law; his abhorrence of all crime; his regard to the public interests; and his unalterable determination to carry out, support, and establish, the authority of his law.

9. It is a fact well established by the experience of all ages and nations, that the exercise of mercy in setting aside the execution of penalties is a matter of extreme delicacy and danger. The influence of law, as might be expected, is found very much to depend upon the certainty felt by the subjects that it will be duly executed. It is found in experience, to be true, that the exercise of mercy in every government where no atonement is made, weakens government, by begetting and fostering a hope of impunity in the minds of those who are tempted to violate the law. It has been asserted, that the same is true when an atonement has been made, and that therefore, the doctrines of atonement and consequent forgiveness tend to encourage the hope of impunity in the commission of sin, and for this reason, are dangerous doctrines subversive of high and sound morality. This assertion I shall notice in its appropriate place.

10. Since the head of the government is pledged to protect and promote the public interests, by a due administration of law, if in any instance where the precept is violated, he would dispense with the execution of penalties, public justice requires that he shall see, that a substitute for the execution of law is provided, or that something is done that shall as effectually secure the influence of law, as the execution of the penalty would do. He cannot make exceptions to the spirit of the law. Either the soul that sinneth must die, according to the letter of the law, or a substitute must be provided in accordance with the spirit of the law.

11. Whatever will as fully evince the lawgiver's regard for his law, his determination to support it, his abhorrence of all violations of its precepts, and withal guard as effectually against the inference, that violaters of the precept might expect to escape with impunity, as the execution of the penalty would do, is a full satisfaction of public justice. When these conditions are fulfilled, and the sinner has returned to obedience, public justice not only admits, but absolutely demands, that the penalty shall be set aside by extending pardon to the offender. The offender still deserves to be punished, and upon the principles of retributive justice, might be punished according to his deserts. But the public good admits and requires that upon the above conditions he should live, and hence, public justice, in compliance with the public interests and the spirit of the law of love, spares and pardons him.

12. If mercy or pardon is to be extended to any who have violated law, it ought to be done in a manner and upon some conditions that will settle the question, and establish the truth, that the execution of penalties is not to be dispensed with merely upon condition of the repentance of the offender. In other words, if pardon is to be extended, it should be known to be upon a condition not within the power of the offender. Else he may know, that he can violate the law, and yet be sure to escape with impunity, by fulfilling the conditions of forgiveness, which are, upon the supposition, all within his own power.

13. So, if mercy is to be exercised, it should be upon a condition that is not to be repeated. The thing required by public justice is, that nothing shall be done to undermine or disturb the influence of law. Hence it cannot consent to have the execution of penalties dispensed with, upon any condition that shall encourage the hope of impunity. Therefore, public justice cannot consent to the pardon of sin but upon condition of an atonement, and also upon the assumption that atonement is not to be repeated, nor to extend its benefits beyond the limits of the race for whom it was made, and that only for a limited time. If an atonement were to extend its benefits to all worlds and to all eternity, it would nullify its own influence, and encourage the universal hope of impunity, in case the precepts of the law were violated. This would be indefinitely worse than no atonement; and public justice might as well consent to have mercy exercised, without any regard to securing the authority and influence of law.

14. The spirit of the moral law can no more be dispensed with by the lawgiver than it can be repealed. The spirit of the law requires that, when the precept is violated, the penalty shall be executed, or that something shall be done that will as effectually and impressively negative the inference or assumption, that sin can escape with impunity under the government of God, beyond the limits of the race for whom the atonement was especially made, as the execution of the law would do. The following things must be true under a perfect government, as has been said above.

(1.) That sin cannot be forgiven merely upon condition of repentance; for this condition is within the power of the subject, so that he might then be sure of impunity.

(2.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that shall be repeated, for this would encourage the hope of impunity.

(3.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that will extend to all worlds, and throughout all eternity, for this would be equivalent to forgiving sin merely upon condition of repentance, without any reference to the authority of law or to public justice.

(4.) Hence it is evident that it must originate in sovereign clemency, subject to the previous conditions.

II. *Define the term Atonement.*

The English word atonement is synonymous with the Hebrew word *cofer*. This is a noun from the verb *caufar*, to cover. The *cofer* or cover, was the name of the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant, and constituted what was called the mercy-seat. The Greek word rendered atonement is *katallage*. This means reconciliation to favour, or more strictly, the means or conditions of reconciliation to favour; from *katallasso*, to "change, or exchange." The term properly means substitution. An examination of these original words, in the connection in which they stand, will show that the atonement is the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners. It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings.

III. *I am to inquire into the teachings of natural theology, or into the à priori affirmations of reason upon this subject.*

The doctrine of atonement has been regarded as so purely a doctrine of revelation as to preclude the supposition, that reason could, *à priori*, make any affirmations about it. It has been generally regarded as lying absolutely without the pale of natural theology, in so high a sense, that, aside from revelation, no assumption could be made, nor even a reasonable conjecture indulged. But there are certain facts in this world's history, that render this assumption exceedingly doubtful. It is true, indeed, that natural theology could not ascertain and establish the fact, that an atonement had been made, or that it certainly would be made; but if I am not mistaken, it might have been reasonably inferred, the true character of God being known and assumed, that an atonement of some kind would be made to render it consistent with his relations to the universe, to extend mercy to the guilty inhabitants of this world. The manifest necessity of a divine revelation has been supposed to afford a strong presumptive argument, that such a revelation has been or will be made. From the benevolence of God, as affirmed by reason, and manifested in his works and providence, it has been, as I suppose, justly inferred, that he would make arrangements to secure the holiness and salvation of men, and as a condition of this result, that he would grant them a further revelation of his will than had been given in creation and providence. The argument stands thus:--

1. From reason and observation we know that this is not a state of retribution; and from all the facts in the case that lie open to observation, this is evidently a state of trial or probation.

2. The providence of God in this world is manifestly disciplinary, and designed to reform mankind.

3. These facts, taken in connection with the great ignorance and darkness of the human mind on moral and religious subjects, afford a strong presumption that the benevolent Creator will make to the inhabitants of this world who are so evidently yet in a state of trial, a further revelation of his will. Now, if this argument is good, so far as it goes, I see not why we may not reasonably go still further.

Since the above are facts, and since it is also a fact that when the subject is duly considered, and the more thoroughly the better, there is manifestly a great difficulty in the exercise of mercy without satisfaction being made to public justice; and since the benevolence of God would not allow him on the one hand to pardon sin at the expense of public justice, nor on the other to punish or execute the penalty of law, if it could be wisely and consistently avoided, these facts being understood and admitted, it might naturally have been inferred, that the wisdom and benevolence of God would devise and execute some method of meeting the demands of public justice, that should render the forgiveness of sin possible. That the philosophy of government would render this possible is to us very manifest. I know, indeed, that with the light the gospel has afforded us, we much more clearly discern this, than they could who had no other light than that of nature. Whatever might have been known to the ancients, and those who have not the Bible, I think that, when the facts are announced by revelation, we can see that such a governmental expedient was not only possible, but just what might have been expected of the benevolence of God. It would of course have been impossible for us, *à priori*, to have devised, or reasonably conjectured, the plan that has been adopted. So little was known or knowable on the subject of the Trinity of God without revelation, that natural theology could, perhaps, in its best estate, have taught nothing further than that, if it was possible, some governmental expedient would be resorted to, and was in contemplation, for the ultimate restoration of the sinning race, who were evidently spared hitherto from the execution of law, and placed under a system of discipline.

But since the gospel has announced the fact of the atonement, it appears that natural theology or governmental philosophy can satisfactorily explain it; that reason can discern a divine philosophy in it.

Natural theology can teach--

1. That the human race is in a fallen state, and that the law of selfishness, and not the law of benevolence, is that to which unconverted men conform their lives.

2. It can teach that God is benevolent, and hence that mercy must be an attribute of God. And that this attribute will be manifested in the actual pardon of sin, when this can be done with safety to the divine government.

3. Consequently that no atonement could be needed to satisfy any implacable spirit in the divine mind; that he was sufficiently and infinitely disposed to extend pardon to the penitent, if this could be wisely, benevolently, and safely done.

4. It can also abundantly teach, that there is a real and a great difficulty and danger in the exercise of mercy under a moral government, and supremely great under a government so vast and so enduring as the government of God; that, under such a government, the danger is very great, that the exercise of mercy will be understood as encouraging the hope of impunity in the commission of sin.

5. It can also show the indispensable necessity of such an administration of the divine government as to secure the fullest confidence throughout the universe, in the sincerity of God in promulging his law with its tremendous penalty, and of his unalterable adherence to its spirit, and determination not to falter in carrying out and securing its authority at all events. That this is indispensable to the well-being of the universe, is entirely manifest.

6. Hence it is very obvious to natural theology, that sin cannot be pardoned without something is done to forbid the otherwise natural inference, that sin will be forgiven under the government of God upon condition of repentance alone, and of course upon a condition within the power of the sinner himself. It must be manifest, that to proclaim throughout the universe that sin would be pardoned universally upon condition of repentance alone, would be a virtual repeal of the divine law. All creatures would instantly perceive, that no one need to fear punishment, in any case, as his forgiveness was secure, however much he might trample on the divine authority, upon a single condition which he could at will perform.

7. Natural theology is abundantly competent to show, that God could not be just to his own intelligence, just to his character, and hence just to the universe, in dispensing with the execution of the Divine law, except upon the condition of providing a substitute of such a nature as to reveal as fully, and impress as deeply, the lessons that would be taught by the execution, as the execution itself would do. The great design of penalties is prevention, and this is of course the design of executing penalties. The head of every government is pledged to sustain the authority of law, by a due administration of rewards and punishments, and has no light in any instance to extend pardon, except upon conditions that will as effectually support the authority of law as the execution of its penalties would do. It was never found to be safe, or even possible, under any government, to make the universal offer of pardon to violators of law, upon the bare condition of repentance, for the very obvious reason already suggested, that it would be a virtual repeal of all law. Public justice, by which every executive magistrate in the universe is bound, sternly and peremptorily forbids that mercy shall be extended to any culprit, without some equivalent being rendered to the government, that is, without something being done that will fully answer as a substitute for the execution of penalties. This principle God fully admits to be binding upon him; and hence he affirms that he gave his Son to render it just in him to forgive sin. Rom 3:24-26 : "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

8. All nations have felt the necessity of expiatory sacrifices. This is evident from the fact that all nations have offered them. Hence *antipscucha*, or ransoms for their souls, have been offered by nearly every nation under heaven. (See Buck's Theo. Dic. p. 539.)

9. The wisest heathen philosophers, who saw the intrinsic inefficacy of animal sacrifices, held that God could not forgive sin. This proves to a demonstration, that they felt the necessity of an atonement, or expiatory sacrifice. And having too just views of God and his government, to suppose that either animal, or merely human, sacrifices, could be efficacious under the government of God, they were unable to understand upon what principles sin could be forgiven.

10. Public justice required, either that an atonement should be made, or that the law should be executed upon every offender. By public justice is intended, that due administration of law, that shall secure in the highest manner, which the nature of the case admits, private and public interests, and establish the order and well-being of the universe. In establishing the government of the universe, God had given the pledge, both impliedly and expressly, that he would regard the public interests, and by a due administration of the law, secure and promote, as far as possible, public and individual happiness.

11. Public justice could strictly require only the execution of law; for God had neither expressly nor impliedly given a pledge to do anything more for the promotion of virtue and happiness, than to administer due rewards to the righteous, and due punishment to the wicked. Yet an atonement, as we shall see, would more fully meet the necessities of government, and act as a more efficient preventive of sin, and a more powerful persuasive to holiness, than the infliction of the legal penalty would do.

12. An atonement was needed for the removal of obstacles to the free exercise of benevolence toward our race. Without an atonement, the race of man after the fall sustained to the government of God the relation of rebels and outlaws. And before God, as the great executive magistrate of the universe, could manifest his benevolence toward them, an atonement must be decided upon and made known, as the reason upon which his favourable treatment of them was conditionated.

13. An atonement was needed to promote the glory and influence of God in the universe. But more of this hereafter.

14. An atonement was needed to present overpowering motives to repentance.

15. An atonement was needed, that the offer of pardon might not seem like connivance at sin.

16. An atonement was needed to manifest the sincerity of God in his legal enactments.

17. An atonement was needed to make it safe to present the offer and promise of pardon.

18. Natural theology can inform us, that, if the lawgiver would or could condescend so much to deny himself, as to attest his regard to his law, and his determination to support it by suffering its curse, in such a sense as was possible and consistent with his character and relations, and so far forth as emphatically to inculcate the great lesson, that sin was not to be forgiven upon the bare condition of repentance in any case, and also to establish the universal conviction, that the execution of law was not to be dispensed with, but that it is an unalterable rule under his divine government, that where there is sin there must be inflicted suffering--this would be so complete a satisfaction of public justice, that sin might safely be forgiven.

IV. *The fact of atonement.*

This is purely a doctrine of revelation, and in the establishment of this truth appeal must be made to the scriptures alone.

1. The whole Jewish scriptures, and especially the whole ceremonial dispensation of the Jews, attest, most unequivocally, the necessity of an atonement.

2. The New Testament is just as unequivocal in its testimony to the same point. The apostle Paul expressly asserts, that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

I shall here take it as established, that Christ was properly "God manifest in the flesh," and proceed to cite a few out of the great multitude of passages, that attest the fact of his death, and also its vicarious nature; that is, that it was for us, and as a satisfaction to public justice for our sins, that his blood was shed. I will first quote a few passages to show that the atonement and redemption through it, was a matter of understanding and covenant between the Father and the Son. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah."-- Psa 89:3-4. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."-- Isa 53:10-12. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."-- Joh 6:37-39. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."-- Joh 17:6, Joh 17:9, Joh 17:11.

I will next quote some passages to show, that, if sinners were to be saved at all, it must be through an atonement. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."-- Act 4:12. "Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Act 13:38-39. "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom 3:19-20. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."-- Gal 2:16, Gal 2:21. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid, for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."-- Gal 3:10-12, Gal 3:18-21, Gal 3:24. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

I will now cite some passages that establish the fact of the vicarious death of Christ, and redemption through his blood. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."-- Isa 53:5-6. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."-- Mat 20:28. "For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."-- Mat 26:28. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."-- Joh 3:14-15. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."-- Joh 6:51. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."-- Act 20:28. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."-- Rom 3:24-26; Rom 5:9-11, Rom 5:18-19. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."-- 1Co 5:7; 1Co 15:3. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."-- Gal 2:20; Gal 3:13-14. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."-- Eph 2:13; Eph 5:2. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."-- Heb 9:12-14, Heb 9:22-28. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."-- Heb 10:10-14. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrate for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh," &c.-- Heb 10:19-20. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."-- 1Pe 1:18-19. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."-- 1Pe 2:24. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."-- 1Pe 3:18. "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."-- 1Jo 1:7. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."-- 1Jo 3:5. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."-- 1Jo 4:9-10.

These, as every reader of the Bible must know, are only some of the passages that teach the doctrine of atonement and redemption by the death of Christ. It is truly wonderful in how many ways this doctrine is taught, assumed, and implied in the Bible. Indeed, it is emphatically the great theme of the Bible. It is expressed or implied upon nearly every page of Divine inspiration.

V. *The next inquiry is into the design of the atonement*.

The answer to this inquiry has been, already, in part, unavoidably anticipated. Under this head I will show,--

1. That Christ's obedience to the moral law as a covenant of works, did not constitute the atonement.

(1.) Christ owed obedience to the moral law, both as God and man. He was under as much obligation to be perfectly benevolent as any moral agent is. It was, therefore, impossible for him to perform any works of supererogation; that is, so far as obedience to law was concerned, he could, neither as God nor as man, do anything more than fulfil its obligations.

(2.) Had he obeyed for us, he would not have suffered for us. Were his obedience to be substituted for our obedience, he need not certainly have both fulfilled the law for us, as our substitute, under a covenant of works, and at the same time have suffered as a substitute, in submitting to the penalty of the law.

(3.) If he obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine quà non* of our salvation?

(4.) The idea that any part of the atonement consisted in Christ's obeying the law for us, and in our stead and behalf, represents God as requiring:--

(i.) The obedience of our substitute.

(ii.) The same suffering, as if no obedience had been rendered.

(iii.) Our repentance.

(iv.) Our return to personal obedience.

(v.) And then represents him as, after all, ascribing our salvation to grace. Strange grace this, that requires a debt to be paid several times over, before the obligation is discharged!

2. I must show that the atonement was not a commercial transaction.

Some have regarded the atonement simply in the light of the payment of a debt; and have represented Christ as purchasing the elect of the Father, and paying down the same amount of suffering in his own person that justice would have exacted of them. To this I answer--

(1.) It is naturally impossible, as it would require that satisfaction should be made to retributive justice. Strictly speaking, retributive justice can never be satisfied, in the sense that the guilty can be punished as much and as long as he deserves; for this would imply that he was punished until he ceased to be guilty, or became innocent. When law is once violated, the sinner can make no satisfaction. He can never cease to be guilty, or to deserve punishment, and no possible amount of suffering renders him the less guilty or the less deserving of punishment; therefore, to satisfy retributive justice is impossible.

(2.) But, as we have seen in a former lecture, retributive justice must have inflicted on him eternal death. To suppose, therefore, that Christ suffered in amount, all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that he suffered an eternal punishment multiplied by the whole number of the elect.

3. The atonement of Christ was intended as a satisfaction of public justice.

(1.) The moral law did not originate in the divine will, but is founded in his self-existent and immutable nature. He cannot therefore repeal or alter it. To the letter of the moral law there may be exceptions, but to the spirit of the law no being can make exceptions. God cannot repeal the precept, and just for this reason, he cannot set aside the spirit of the sanctions. For to dispense with the sanctions were a virtual repeal of the precept. He cannot, therefore, set aside the execution of the penalty when the precept has been violated, without something being done that shall meet the demands of the true spirit of the law. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom 3:24-26. This passage assigns the reason, or declares the design, of the atonement, to have been to justify God in the pardon of sin, or in dispensing with the execution of law.

Isa 53:10-12 : "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

(2.) Public justice requires,--

(i.) That penalties shall be annexed to laws that are equal to the importance of the precept.

(ii.) That when these penalties are incurred, they shall be inflicted for the public good, as an expression of the lawgiver's regard to law, of his determination to support public order, and by a due administration of justice, to secure the highest well-being of the public. A leading design of the sanctions of law is prevention; and the execution of penal sanctions is demanded by public justice. The great design of sanctions, both remuneratory and vindicatory, is to prevent disobedience, and secure obedience and universal happiness. This is done by such a revelation of the heart of the lawgiver, through the precept, sanctions, and execution of his law, as to beget awe on the one hand, and the most entire confidence and love on the other.

(iii.) Whatever can as effectually reveal God, make known his hatred to sin, his love of order, his determination to support government, and to promote the holiness and happiness of his creatures, as the execution of his law would do, is a full satisfaction of public justice.

(iv.) Atonement is, therefore, a part, and a most influential part, of moral government. It is an auxiliary to a strictly legal government. It does not take the place of the execution of law, in such a sense as to exclude penal inflictions from the universe. The execution of law still holds a place, and makes up an indispensable part of the great circle of motives essential to the perfection of moral government. Fallen angels, and the finally impenitent of this world, will receive the full execution of the penalty of the divine law. Atonement is an expedient above the letter, but in accordance with the spirit of law, which adds new and vastly influential motives to induce obedience. I have said, it is an auxiliary to law, adding to the precept and sanctions of law an overpowering exhibition of love and compassion.

(v.) The atonement is an illustrious exhibition of commutative justice, in which the government of God, by an act of infinite grace, commutes or substitutes the sufferings of Christ for the eternal damnation of sinners.

(vi.) An atonement was needed, and therefore doubtless designed, to contradict the slander of Satan. He had seduced our first parents by the insinuation that God was selfish, in prohibiting their eating the fruit of a certain tree. Now, the execution of the penalty of his law, would not so thoroughly refute this abominable slander, as would the great self-denial of God exhibited in the atonement.

(vii.) An atonement was needed to inspire confidence in the offers and promises of pardon, and in all the promises of God to man. Guilty, selfish man finds it difficult, when thoroughly convicted of sin, to realize and believe, that God is actually sincere in his promises and offers of pardon and salvation. But whenever the soul can apprehend the reality of the atonement, it can then believe every offer and promise as the very thing to be expected from a being who could give his Son to die for enemies.

An atonement was needed, therefore, as the great and only means of sanctifying sinners--

Rom 8:3-4. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The law was calculated, when once its penalty was incurred, to shut the sinner up in a dungeon, and only to develope more and more his depravity. Nothing could subdue his sin, and cause him to love, but the manifestation to him of disinterested benevolence. The atonement is just the thing to meet this necessity, and subdue rebellion.

(viii.) An atonement was needed, not to render God merciful, but to reconcile pardon with a due administration of justice. This has been virtually said before, but needs to be repeated in this connection.

Rom 3:22-26. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

I present several further reasons why an atonement in the case of the inhabitants of this world was preferable to punishment, or to the execution of the divine law. Several reasons have already been assigned, to which I will add the following, some of which are plainly revealed in the Bible; others are plainly inferrible from what the Bible does reveal; and others still are plainly inferrible from the very nature of the case.

(1.) God's great and disinterested love to sinners themselves was a prime reason for the atonement.

Joh 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

(2.) His great love to the universe at large must have been another reason, inasmuch as it was impossible that the atonement should not exert an amazing influence over moral beings, in whatever world they might exist, and where the fact of atonement should be known.

(3.) Another reason for substituting the sufferings of Christ in the place of the eternal damnation of sinners, is, that an infinite amount of suffering might be prevented. The relation of Christ to the universe rendered his sufferings so infinitely valuable and influential, as an expression of God's abhorrence of sin on the one hand, and his great love to his subjects on the other, that an infinitely less amount of suffering in him than must have been inflicted on sinners, would be equally, and no doubt vastly more, influential in supporting the government of God, than the execution of the law upon them would have been. Be it borne in mind, that Christ was the lawgiver, and his suffering in behalf of sinners is to be regarded as the lawgiver and executive magistrate suffering in the behalf and stead of a rebellious province of his empire. As a governmental expedient it is easy to see the great value of such a substitute; that on the one hand it fully evinced the determination of the ruler not to yield the authority of his law, and on the other, to evince his great and disinterested love for his rebellious subjects.

(4.) By this substitution, an immense good might be gained, the eternal happiness of all that can be reclaimed from sin, together with all the augmented happiness of those who have never sinned, that must result from this glorious revelation of God.

(5.) Another reason for preferring the atonement to the punishment of sinners must have been, that sin had afforded an opportunity for the highest manifestation of virtue in God: the manifestation of forbearance, mercy, self-denial, and suffering for enemies that were within his own power, and for those from whom he could expect no equivalent in return.

It is impossible to conceive of a higher order of virtues than are exhibited in the atonement of Christ.

It was vastly desirable that God should take advantage of such an opportunity to exhibit his true character, and show to the universe what was in his heart. The strength and stability of any government must depend upon the estimation in which the sovereign is held by his subjects. It was therefore indispensable, that God should improve the opportunity, which sin had afforded, to manifest and make known his true character, and thus secure the highest confidence of his subjects.

(6.) Another reason for preferring atonement was, God's desire to lay open his heart to the inspection and imitation of moral beings.

(7.) Another reason is, because God is love, and prefers mercy when it can be safely exercised. The Bible represents him as delighting in mercy, and affirms that "judgment is his strange work."

Because he so much prefers mercy to judgment as to be willing to suffer as the sinner's substitute, to afford himself the opportunity to exercise pardon, on principles that are consistent with a due administration of justice.

(8.) In the atonement God consulted his own happiness and his own glory. To deny himself for the salvation of sinners, was a part of his own infinite happiness, always intended by him, and therefore always enjoyed. This was not selfishness in him, as his own well-being is of infinitely greater value than that of all the universe besides, he ought so to regard and treat it, because of its supreme and intrinsic value.

(9.) In making the atonement, God complied with the laws of his own intelligence, and did just that, all things considered, in the highest degree promotive of the universal good.

(10.) The atonement would present to creatures the highest possible motives to virtue. Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. If God, or any other being, would make others benevolent, he must manifest benevolence himself. If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless.

(11.) It would produce among creatures the highest kind and degree of happiness, by leading them to contemplate and imitate his love.

(12.) The circumstances of his government rendered an atonement necessary; as the execution of law was not, as a matter of fact, a sufficient preventive of sin. The annihilation of the wicked would not answer the purposes of government. A full revelation of mercy, blended with such an exhibition of justice, was called for by the circumstances of the universe.

(13.) To confirm holy beings. Nothing could be more highly calculated to establish and confirm the confidence, love, and obedience of holy beings, than this disinterested manifestation of love to sinners and rebels.

(14.) To confound his enemies. How could anything be more directly calculated to silence all cavils, and to shut every mouth, and for ever close up all opposing lips, than such an exhibition of love and willingness to make sacrifices for sinners?

(15.) A just and necessary regard to his own reputation made him prefer atonement to the punishment of sinners.

A desire to sustain his own reputation, as the only moral power that could support his own moral government, must have been a leading reason for the atonement.

The atonement was preferred as the best, and perhaps only way to inspire an affectionate confidence in God.

It must have been the most agreeable to God, and the most beneficial to the universe.

(16.) Atonement would afford him an opportunity always to gratify his love in his kindness to sinners, in using means for their salvation, in forgiving and saving them when they repent, without the danger of its being inferred in the universe, that he had not a sufficient abhorrence for their sin.

(17.) Another reason for the atonement was, to counteract the influence of the devil, which was so extensively and powerfully exerted in this world for the promotion of selfishness.

(18.) To make the final punishment of the wicked more impressive in the light of the infinite love, manifest in the atonement.

(19.) The atonement is the highest testimony that God can bear against selfishness. It is the testimony of his own example.

(20.) The atonement is a higher expression of his regard for the public interest than the execution of law. It is, therefore, a fuller satisfaction to public justice.

(21.) The atonement so reveals all the attributes of God, as to complete the whole circle of motives needed to influence the minds of moral beings.

(22.) By dying in human nature, Christ exhibited his heart to both worlds.

(23.) The fact, that the execution of the law of God on rebel angels had not arrested, and could not arrest, the progress of rebellion in the universe, proves that something more needed to be done, in support of the authority of law, than would be done in the execution of its penalty upon rebels. While the execution of law may have a strong tendency to prevent the beginning of rebellion among loyal subjects, and to restrain rebels themselves; yet penal inflictions do not, in fact, subdue the heart, under any government, whether human or divine.

As a matter of fact, the law was only exasperating rebels, without confirming holy beings. Paul affirmed, that the action of the law upon his own mind, while in impenitence, was to beget in him all manner of concupiscence. One grand reason for giving the law was, to develope the nature of sin, and to show that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The law was therefore given that the offence might abound, that thereby it might be demonstrated, that without an atonement there could be no salvation for rebels under the government of God.

(24.) The nature, degree, and execution of the penalty of the law, made the holiness and the justice of God so prominent, as to absorb too much of public attention to be safe. Those features of his character were so fully revealed, by the execution of his law upon the rebel angels, that to have pursued the same course with the inhabitants of this world, without the offer of mercy, might have had, and doubtless would have had, an injurious influence upon the universe, by creating more of fear than of love to God and his government.

Hence, a fuller revelation of the love and compassion of God was necessary, to guard against the influence of slavish fear.

4. His taking human nature, and obeying unto death, under such circumstances, constituted a good reason for our being treated as righteous.

(1.) It is a common practice in human governments, and one that is founded in the nature and laws of mind, to reward distinguished public service by conferring favours on the children of those who have rendered this service, and treating them as if they had rendered it themselves. This is both benevolent and wise. Its governmental importance, its wisdom and excellent influence, have been most abundantly attested in the experience of nations.

(2.) As a governmental transaction, this same principle prevails, and for the same reason, under the government of God. All that are Christ's children and belong to him, are received for his sake, treated with favour, and the rewards of the righteous are bestowed upon them for his sake. And the public service which he has rendered to the universe, by laying down his life for the support of the divine government, has rendered it eminently wise, that all who are united to him by faith should be treated as righteous for its sake.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXV.

EXTENT OF ATONEMENT.

VI. *The extent of the atonement.*

In discussing this part of the subject, I must inquire briefly into the governmental value and bearings of the atonement.

1. It is valuable only as it tends to promote the glory of God, and the virtue and happiness of the universe.

2. In order to understand, in what the value of the atonement consists, we must understand:--

(1.) That happiness is an ultimate good.

(2.) That virtue is indispensable to happiness.

(3.) That the knowledge of God is indispensable to virtue.

(4.) That Christ, who made the atonement, is God.

(5.) That the work of atonement was the most interesting and impressive exhibition of God that ever was made in this world, and probably in the universe.

(6.) That, therefore, the atonement is the highest means of promoting virtue that exists in this world, and perhaps in the universe. And that it is valuable only, and just so far, as it reveals God, and tends to promote virtue and happiness.

(7.) That the work of atonement was a gratification of the infinite benevolence of God.

(8.) It was a work eternally designed by him, and, therefore, eternally enjoyed.

(9.) The design to make an atonement, together with the foreseen results which were, in an important sense, always present to him, have eternally caused no small part of the happiness of God.

(10.) The developement, or carrying out of this design, in the work of atonement, highly promotes, and will for ever promote, his glory in the universe.

(11.) Its value consists in its adaptedness to promote the virtue and happiness of holy angels, and all moral agents who have never sinned. As it is a new and most stupendous revelation of God, it must of course greatly increase their knowledge of God, and be greatly promotive of their virtue and happiness.

(12.) Its value consists in its adaptedness to prevent further rebellion against God in every part of the universe. The atonement exhibits God in such a light, as must greatly strengthen the confidence of holy beings in his character and government. It is therefore calculated, in the highest degree, to confirm holy beings in their allegiance to God, and thus prevent the further progress of rebellion. Let it be remembered, the value of the atonement consists in its moral power, or tendency, to promote virtue and happiness. Moral power is the power of motive.

The highest moral power is the influence of example. Advice has moral power. Precept has moral power. Sanction has moral power. But example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted by any being. Moral beings are so created as to be naturally influenced by the example of each other. The example of a child, as a moral influence, has power upon other children. The example of an adult, as a moral influence, has power. The example of great men and of angels, has great moral power. But the example of God is the highest moral influence in the universe.

The word of God has power. His commands, threatenings, promises; but his example is a higher moral influence than his precepts or his threatenings.

Virtue consists in benevolence. God requires benevolence; threatens all his subjects with punishment if they are not benevolent, and promises them eternal life if they are. All this has power. But his example, his own benevolence, his own disinterested love, as expressed in the atonement, has a vastly higher moral influence than his word, or any other of his manifestations.

Christ is God. In the atonement, God has given us the influence of his own example, has exhibited his own love, his own compassion, his own self-denial, his own patience, his own long-suffering, under abuse from enemies. In the atonement he has exhibited all the highest and most perfect forms of virtue, has united himself with human nature, has exhibited these forms of virtue to the inspection of our senses, and laboured, wept, suffered, bled, and died for man. This is not only the highest revelation of God that could be given to man; but is giving the whole weight of his own example in favour of all the virtues which he requires of man.

This is the highest possible moral influence. It is properly moral omnipotence; that is, the influence of the atonement, when apprehended by the mind, will accomplish whatever is within the compass of moral power to effect. Moral power cannot compel a moral agent, nor set aside his freedom, for this is not an object of moral power; but it will do all that motive can, in the nature of the case, accomplish. It is the highest and most weighty motive that the mind of a moral being can conceive. It is the most moving, impressive, and influential consideration in the universe.

Its value may be estimated, by its moral influence in the promotion of holiness among all holy beings.

1. Their complacent love to God must depend upon their knowledge of him.

2. As he is infinite, and all creatures are finite, finite beings know him only as he is pleased to reveal himself.

3. The atonement has disclosed or revealed to the universe of holy beings, a class and an order of virtues, as resident in the divine mind, which, but for the atonement, would probably have for ever remained unknown.

4. As the atonement is the most impressive revelation of God of which we have any knowledge, or can form any conception, we have reason to believe, that it has greatly increased the holiness and happiness of all holy creatures, that it has done more than any other, and perhaps every other, revelation of God, to exalt his character, strengthen his government, enlighten the universe, and increase its happiness.

5. The value of the atonement may be estimated by the amount of good it has done, and will do, in this world. The atonement is an exhibition of God suffering as a substitute for his rebellious subjects. His relation to the law and to the universe, is that which gives his sufferings such boundless value. I have said, in a former lecture, that the utility of executing penal sanctions consists in the exhibition it makes of the true character and designs of the lawgiver. It creates public confidence, makes a public impression, and thus strengthens the influence of government, and is in this way promotive of order and happiness. The atonement is the highest testimony that God could give of his holy abhorrence of sin; of his regard to his law; of his determination to support it; and, also, of his great love for his subjects; his great compassion for sinners; and his willingness to suffer himself in their stead; rather, on the one hand, than to punish them, or, on the other, than to set aside the penalty without satisfaction being made to public justice.

6. The atonement may be viewed in either of two points of light.

(1.) Christ may be considered as the lawgiver, and attesting his sincerity, love of holiness, hatred of sin, approbation of the law, and compassion for his subjects, by laying down his life as their substitute.

(2.) Or Christ may be considered as the Son of the Supreme Ruler; and then we have the spectacle of a sovereign, giving his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, his greatest treasure, to die a shameful and agonizing death, in testimony of his great compassion for his rebellious subjects, and of his high regard for public justice.

7. The value of the atonement may be estimated, by considering the fact, that it provides for the pardon of sin, in a way that forbids the hope of impunity in any other case. This, the good of the universe imperiously demanded. If sin is to be forgiven at all under the government of God it should be known to be forgiven upon principles that will by no means encourage rebellion, or hold out the least hope of impunity, should rebellion break out in any other part of the universe.

8. The atonement has settled the question, that sin can never be forgiven, under the government of God, simply on account of the repentance of any being. It has demonstrated, that sin can never be forgiven without full satisfaction being made to public justice, and that public justice can never be satisfied with anything less than an atonement made by God himself. Now, as it can never be expected, that the atonement will be repeated, it is for ever settled, that rebellion in any other world than this, can have no hope of impunity. This answers the question so often asked by infidels, "If God was disposed to be merciful, why could he not forgive without an atonement?" The answer is plain; he could not forgive sin, but upon such principles as would for ever preclude the hope of impunity, should rebellion ever break out among free agents in any other part of the universe.

9. From these considerations it is manifest, that the value of the atonement is infinite. We have reason to believe, that Christ, by his atonement, is not only the Saviour of this world, but the Saviour of the universe in an important sense. Rebellion once broke out in heaven, and upon the rebel angels God executed his law, and sent them down to hell. It next broke out in this world; and as the execution of law was found by experience not to be a sufficient preventive of rebellion, there was no certainty that rebellion would not have spread until it had ruined the universe, but for that revelation of God which Christ has made in the atonement. This exhibition of God has proved itself not merely able to prevent rebellion among holy beings, but to reclaim and reform rebels. Millions of rebels have through it been reclaimed and reformed. This world is to be turned back to its allegiance to God, and the blessed atonement of Christ has so unbosomed God before the universe, as, no doubt, not only to save other worlds from going into rebellion, but to save myriads of our already rebellious race from the depths of an eternal hell.

Let us now inquire for whose benefit the atonement was intended.

1. God does all things for himself; that is, he consults his own glory and happiness, as the supreme and most influential reason for all his conduct. This is wise and right in him, because his own glory and happiness are infinitely the greatest good in and to the universe. He made the atonement to satisfy himself. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God himself, then, was greatly benefited by the atonement: in other words, his happiness has in a great measure resulted from its contemplation, execution, and results.

2. He made the atonement for the benefit of the universe. All holy beings are, and must be, benefited by it, from its very nature, as it gives them a higher knowledge of God than ever they had before, or ever could have gained in any other way. The atonement is the greatest work that he could have wrought for them, the most blessed, and excellent, and benevolent thing he could have done for them. For this reason, angels are described as desiring to look into the atonement. The inhabitants of heaven are represented as being deeply interested in the work of atonement, and those displays of the character of God that are made in it. The atonement is then no doubt one of the greatest blessings that ever God conferred upon the universe of holy beings.

3. The atonement was made for the benefit particularly of the inhabitants of this world, from its very nature, as it is calculated to benefit all the inhabitants of this world; as it is a most stupendous revelation of God to man. Its nature is adapted to benefit all mankind. All mankind can be pardoned, if they are rightly affected and brought to repentance by it, as well as any part of mankind.

4. The Bible declares that Christ tasted death for every man.

5. All do certainly receive many blessings on account of it. It is probable that, but for the atonement, none of our race, except the first human pair, would ever have had an existence.

6. But for the atonement, it seems not possible for creatures to conceive how man could have been treated with lenity and forbearance any more than the fallen angels could be.

7. All the blessings which mankind enjoy, are conferred on them on account of the atonement of Christ; that is, God could not consistently wait on sinners, and bless, and do all that the nature of the case admits, to save them, were it not for the fact of atonement.

8. That it was made for all mankind, is evident, from the fact that it is offered to all indiscriminately.

9. Sinners are universally condemned for not receiving it.

10. If the atonement is not intended for all mankind, it is impossible for us not to regard God as insincere, in making them the offer of salvation through the atonement.

11. If the atonement were not intended for all, sinners in hell will see and know that their salvation was never possible; that no atonement was made for them; and that God was insincere in offering them salvation.

12. If the atonement is not for all men, no one can know for whom, in particular, it was intended, without direct revelation. Hence--

13. If the atonement was made only for a part, no man can know whether he has a right to embrace it, until by a direct revelation God has made known to him that he is one of that part.

14. If the atonement was made but for a part of mankind, it is entirely nugatory unless a further revelation make known for whom in particular it was made.

15. If it was not made for all men, ministers do not know to whom they should offer it.

16. If ministers do not believe that it was made for all men, they cannot heartily and honestly press its acceptance upon any individual, or congregation in the world; for they cannot assure any individual, or congregation, that there is any atonement for him or them, any more than there is for Satan.

If to this it should be replied, that for fallen angels no atonement has been made, but for some men an atonement has been made, so that it may be true of any individual that it was made for him, and if he will truly believe, he will thereby have the fact revealed, that it was, in fact, made for him: I reply, What is a sinner to believe, as a condition of salvation? Is it merely that an atonement was made for somebody? Is this saving faith? Must he not embrace it, and personally and individually commit himself to it, and to Christ?--trust in it as made for him? But how is he authorized to do this upon the supposition that the atonement was made for some men only, and perhaps for him? Is it saving faith to believe that it was possibly made for him, and by believing this possibility, will he thereby gain the evidence that it was, in fact, made for him? No, he must have the word of God for it, that it was made for him. Nothing else can warrant the casting of his soul upon it. How then is "he truly to believe," or trust in the atonement, until he has the evidence, not merely that it possibly may have been, but that it actually was, made for him? The mere possibility that an atonement has been made for an individual, is no ground of saving faith. What is he to believe? Why, that of which he has proof. But the supposition is, that he has proof only that it is possible that the atonement was made for him. He has a right, then, to believe it possible that Christ died for him. And is this saving faith? No, it is not. What advantage, then, has he over Satan in this respect. Satan knows that the atonement was not made for him; the sinner upon the supposition knows that, possibly, it may have been made for him; but the latter has really no more ground for trust and reliance than the former. He might hope, but he could not rationally believe.

But upon this subject of the extent of the atonement, let the Bible speak for itself: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved." "And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."-- Joh 1:29; Joh 3:16-17; Joh 4:42. "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."-- Rom 5:18. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."-- 2Co 5:14-15. "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."-- 1Ti 2:6; 1Ti 4:10. "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."-- 1Jo 2:2.

That the atonement is sufficient for all men, and, in that sense, general, as opposed to particular, is also evident from the fact, that the invitations and promises of the gospel are addressed to all men, and all are freely offered salvation through Christ. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." -- Isa 45:22; Isa 55:1-3. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage."-- Mat 11:28-30; Mat 22:4. "And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready."-- Luk 14:17. "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."-- Joh 7:37. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."-- Rev 22:17.

Again: I infer that the atonement was made, and is sufficient, for all men, from the fact that God not only invites all, but expostulates with them for not accepting his invitations. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." -- Pro 1:20-23. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."-- Isa 1:18. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."-- Isa 48:17-18. "Say unto them, as I, live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"-- Eze 33:11. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."-- Mic 6:1-3. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"-- Mat 23:37.

Again: the same may be inferred from the professed sincerity of God in his invitations. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"-- Deu 5:29. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"-- Deu 32:29. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee."-- Psa 5:4. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever." -- Psa 81:13-15. "O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."-- Isa 48:18. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."-- Eze 18:32. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."-- Luk 19:41-42. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."-- Joh 3:16-17. "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."-- 1Ti 2:1-4. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."-- 2Pe 3:9.

Again: the same inference is forced upon us by the fact, that God complains of sinners for rejecting his overtures of mercy: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded."-- Pro 1:24. "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass; that, as he cried and they would not hear: so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."-- Zec 7:11-13. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them."-- Mat 22:2-6. "And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come."-- Luk 14:17-20. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."-- Joh 5:40. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."-- Act 7:51. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."-- Act 24:25.

Again, the same is inferrible from the fact, that sinners are represented as having no excuse for being lost and for not being saved by Christ. "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."-- Mat 22:12. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."-- Rom 1:20. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."-- Joh 5:40. "Now, we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."-- Rom 3:19.

VII. *I now proceed to answer objections*.

1. Objection to the fact of atonement. It is said, that the doctrine of atonement represents God as unmerciful. To this I answer,

(1.) This objection supposes that the atonement was demanded to satisfy retributive instead of public justice.

(2.) The atonement was the exhibition of a merciful disposition. It was because God was disposed to pardon, that he consented to give his own Son to die as the substitute of sinners.

(3.) The atonement is infinitely the most illustrious exhibition of mercy ever made in the universe. The mere pardon of sin, as an act of sovereign mercy, could not have been compared, had it been possible; with the merciful disposition displayed in the atonement itself.

2. It is objected that the atonement is unnecessary.

The testimony of the world and of the consciences of all men is against this objection. This is universally attested by their expiatory sacrifices. These, as has been said, have been offered by nearly every nation of whose religious history we have any reliable account. This shows that human beings are universally conscious of being sinners, and under the government of a sin-hating God; that their intelligence demands either the punishment of sinners, or that a substitute should be offered to public justice; that they all own and have the idea that substitution is conceivable, and hence they offer their sacrifices as expiatory.

A heathen philosopher can answer this objection, and rebuke the folly of him who makes it.

3. It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement is inconsistent with the idea of mercy and forgiveness.

(1.) This takes for granted, that the atonement was the literal payment of a debt, and that Christ suffered all that was due to all the sinners for whom he died, so that their discharge or pardon is an act of justice, and not of mercy. But this is by no means the view of God which the nature of the atonement presents. The atonement, as we have seen, had respect simply to public, and not at all to retributive justice. Christ suffered what was necessary, to illustrate the intention of God, in respect to sin, and in respect to his law. But the amount of his sufferings had no respect to the amount of punishment that might have justly been inflicted on the wicked.

(2.) The punishment of sinners is just as much deserved by them, as if Christ had not suffered at all.

(3.) Their forgiveness, therefore, is just as much an act of mercy, as if there had been no atonement.

4. It is objected, that it is unjust to punish an innocent being instead of the guilty.

(1.) Yes, it would not only be unjust, but it is impossible with God to punish an innocent moral agent at all. Punishment implies guilt. An innocent being may suffer, but he cannot be punished. Christ voluntarily "suffered the just for the unjust." He had a right to exercise this self-denial; and as it was by his own voluntary consent, no injustice was done to any one.

(2.) If he had no right to make an atonement, he had no right to consult and promote his own happiness and the happiness of others; for it is said, that "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame."

5. It is objected that the doctrine of atonement is utterly incredible.

To this I have replied in a former lecture; but will here again state, that it would be utterly incredible upon any other supposition, than that God is love. But if God is love, as the Bible expressly affirms that he is, the work of atonement is just what might be expected of him, under the circumstances; and the doctrine of atonement is then the most reasonable doctrine in the universe.

6. It is objected to the doctrine of atonement, that it is of a demoralizing tendency.

(1.) There is a broad distinction between the natural tendency of a thing, and such an abuse of a good thing as to make it the instrument of evil. The best things and doctrines may be, and often are, abused, and their natural tendency perverted.

(2.) Although the doctrine of the atonement may be abused, yet its natural tendency is the direct opposite of demoralizing. Is the manifestation of infinitely disinterested love naturally calculated to beget enmity? Who does not know that the natural tendency of manifested love is to excite love in return?

(3.) Those who have the most cordially believed in the atonement, have exhibited the purest morality that has ever been in this world; while the rejectors of the atonement, almost without exception, exhibit a loose morality. This is, as might be expected, from the very nature and moral influence of atonement.

7. To a *general* atonement, it is objected that the Bible represents Christ as laying down his life for his sheep, or for the elect only, and not for all mankind.

(1.) It does indeed represent Christ as laying down his life for his sheep, and also for all mankind.

1Jo 2:2.--"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Joh 3:17.--"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Heb 2:9. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

(2.) Those who object to the general atonement, take substantially the same course to evade this doctrine, that Unitarians do to set aside the doctrine of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ. They quote those passages that prove the unity of God and the humanity of Christ, and then take it for granted that they have disproved the doctrine of the Trinity and Christ's Divinity. The asserters of limited atonement, in like manner, quote those passages that prove that Christ died for the elect and for his saints, and then take it for granted that he died for none else. To the Unitarian, we reply, we admit the unity of God and the humanity of Christ, and the full meaning of those passages of scripture which you quote in proof of these doctrines; but we insist that this is not the whole truth, but that there are still other passages which prove the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Divinity of Christ. Just so to the asserters of limited atonement, we reply: we believe that Christ laid down his life for his sheep, as well as you; but we also believe that "he tasted death for every man."

Joh 3:16.--"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

8. To the doctrine of general atonement it is objected, that it would be folly in God to provide what he knew would be rejected; and that to suffer Christ to die for those who, he foresaw, would not repent, would be a useless expenditure of the blood and suffering of Christ.

(1.) This objection assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement.

(2.) If sinners do not accept it, in no view can the atonement be useless, as the great compassion of God, in providing an atonement and offering them mercy, will for ever exalt his character, in the estimation of holy beings, greatly strengthen his government, and therefore benefit the whole universe.

(3.) If all men rejected the atonement, it would, nevertheless, be of infinite value to the universe, as the most glorious revelation of God that was ever made.

9. To the general atonement it is objected, that it implies universal salvation.

It would indeed imply this, upon the supposition that the atonement is the literal payment of a debt. It was upon this view of the atonement, that universalism first took its stand. Universalists taking it for granted, that Christ had paid the debt of those for whom he died, and finding it fully revealed in the Bible that he died for all mankind, naturally, and if this were correct, properly, inferred the doctrine of universal salvation. But we have seen, that this is not the nature of atonement. Therefore, this inference falls to the ground.

10. It is objected that, if the atonement was not a payment of the debt of sinners, but general in its nature, as we have mentioned, it secures the salvation of no one.

It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one; but the promise and oath of God, that Christ shall have a seed to serve him, provide that security.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE ATONEMENT.

1. The execution of the law of God on rebel angels must have created great awe in heaven.

2. Its action may have tended too much to fear.

3. The forbearance of God toward men previous to the atonement of Christ, may have been designed to counteract the superabundant tendency to fear, as it was the beginning of a revelation of compassion.

4. Sinners will not give up their enmity against God, nor believe that his love is disinterested, until they realize that he actually died as their substitute: the true and heart-belief of this will effectually subdue their enmity.

5. In this is seen the exceeding strength of unbelief, and of prejudice against God.

6. But faith in the atonement of Christ rolls a mountain weight of crushing and melting considerations upon the heart of the sinner.

7. Thus, the blood of Christ, when apprehended and believed in, cleanses from all sin.

8. God's forbearance toward sinners explained by, and consummated in, the atonement, must increase the wonder, admiration, love, and happiness of the universe.

9. The means which he uses to save mankind must produce the same effect.

10. Beyond certain limits, forbearance is no virtue, but would be manifestly injurious, and therefore wrong. A degree of forbearance that might justly create the impression, that God was not infinitely holy and opposed to sin, would work infinite mischief in the universe.

11. When the forbearance of God has fully demonstrated his great love, and done all it can to sustain the moral government of God, without a fresh display of holiness and justice, he will, no doubt, come forth to the consummation of his moral government, and make parallel displays of justice and mercy for ever, by setting heaven and hell in eternal contrast.

12. Then the law and gospel will be seen to be one harmonious system of moral government, developing in the fullest manner the glorious character of God.

13. From this may be seen the indispensable necessity of faith in the atonement of Christ, and the reason why it is, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation only to every one that believeth. If the atonement is not believed in, it is to that mind no revelation at all, and with such a mind the gospel has no moral power.

14. But the atonement tends, in the highest manner, to produce in the believer the spirit of entire and universal consecration to God.

15. The atonement shows how solid a foundation the saints have for unbroken and eternal repose and confidence in God. If God could make an atonement for men, surely it is infinitely unreasonable to suppose that he will withhold from those that believe anything which could be to them a real good.

16. We see that selfishness is the great hindrance to the exercise of faith. A selfish mind finds it exceedingly difficult to understand the atonement, inasmuch as it is an exhibition of a state of mind which is the direct opposite of all that the sinner has ever experienced. His experience, being wholly selfish, renders it difficult for him to conceive aright what true religion is, and heartily to believe in the infinitely great and disinterested love of God.

17. The atonement renders pardon consistent with the perfect administration of justice.

18. The atonement, as it was made by the lawgiver, magnifies the law, and renders it infinitely more honourable and influential, than the execution of the penalty upon sinners would have done.

19. It is the highest and most glorious expedient of moral government. It is adding to the influence of law the whole weight of the most moving manifestation of God that men or angels ever saw or ever will see.

20. It completes the circle of governmental motives. It is a filling up of the revelation of God. It is a revealing of a department of his character, with which it would seem that nothing else could have made his creatures acquainted. It is, therefore, the highest possible support of moral government.

21. It greatly glorifies God; indeed it does so far above all his other works and ways.

22. It must be to him a source of the purest, most exalted, and eternal happiness.

23. It opens the channels of divine benevolence to state-criminals.

24. It has united God in a new and peculiar way to human nature.

25. It has opened a way of access to God, never opened to any creatures before.

26. It has abolished natural death, by procuring a universal resurrection: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1Co 15:22.

27. It restores the life of God to the soul, by restoring to man the influence of the Holy Spirit.

28. It has introduced a new method of salvation and of moral renovation, and made Christ the head of the new covenant.

29. It has made Christ our surety: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Heb 7:22.

30. It has arrayed such a public sentiment against rebellion, as to crush it whenever the atonement is fairly understood and applied by the Holy Spirit.

31. It has procured the offer of pardon to all sinners of our race.

32. It has, no doubt, added to the happiness of heaven.

33. It has more fully developed the nature and importance of the government of God.

34. It has more fully developed the nature of sin.

35. It has more fully developed the strength of sin.

36. It has more fully developed the total depravity and utter madness of sinners.

37. It has given scope to the long-suffering and forbearance of God.

38. It has formed a more intimate union between God and man, than between him and any other order of creatures.

39. It has elevated human nature, and the saints of God, into the stations of kings and priests to God.

40. It has opened new fields of usefulness, in which the benevolence of God, angels, and men may luxuriate in doing good.

41. It has developed and fully revealed the doctrine of the Trinity.

42. It has revealed the most influential and only efficacious method of government.

43. It has more fully developed those laws of our being upon which the strength of moral government depends.

44. It has given a standing illustration of the true intent, meaning, and excellency of the law of God. In the atonement God has illustrated the meaning of his law by his own example.

45. The atonement has fully illustrated the nature of virtue, and demonstrated that it consists in disinterested benevolence.

46. It has for ever condemned all selfishness, as entirely and infinitely inconsistent with virtue.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXVI.

HUMAN GOVERNMENT.

HUMAN GOVERNMENTS A PART OF THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

In the discussion of this subject I will,--

I. INQUIRE INTO THE ULTIMATE END OF GOD IN THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE.

II. SHOW THAT PROVIDENTIAL AND MORAL GOVERNMENT ARE INDISPENSABLE MEANS OF SECURING THIS END.

III. THAT CIVIL, AND FAMILY GOVERNMENTS ARE INDISPENSABLE TO THE SECURING OF THIS END; AND ARE, THEREFORE, TRULY A PART OF THE PROVIDENTIAL AND MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

IV. INQUIRE INTO THE FOUNDATION OF THE RIGHT OF HUMAN GOVERNMENTS.

V. POINT OUT THE LIMITS, OR BOUNDARIES, OF THIS RIGHT.

VI. MAKE SEVERAL REMARKS RESPECTING FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, THE RIGHT AND DUTY OF REVOLUTION, &C.

VII. APPLY THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES TO THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF GOVERNMENTS AND SUBJECTS, IN RELATION TO THE EXECUTION OF NECESSARY PENALTIES; THE SUPPRESSION OF MOBS, INSURRECTIONS, REBELLION; AND IN RELATION TO WAR, SLAVERY, SABBATH DESECRATION, &C.

I. *The ultimate end of God in creation.*

We have seen in former lectures, that God is a moral agent, the self-existent and supreme; and is therefore himself, as ruler of all, subject to, and observant of, moral law in all his conduct. That is, his own infinite intelligence must affirm that a certain course of willing is suitable, fit, and right in him. This idea, or affirmation, is law to him; and to this his will must be conformed, or he is not good. This is moral law, a law founded in the eternal and self-existent nature of God. This law does, and must, demand benevolence in God. Benevolence is good-willing. God's intelligence must affirm that he ought to will good for its own intrinsic value. It must affirm his obligation to choose the highest possible good as the great end of his being. If God is good, the highest good of himself, and of the universe, must have been the end which he had in view in the work of creation. This is of infinite value, and ought to be willed by God. If God is good, this must have been his end. We have also seen,--

II. *That providential and moral governments are indispensable means of securing the highest good of the universe.*

The highest good of moral agents is conditionated upon their holiness. Holiness consists in conformity to moral law. Moral law implies moral government. Moral government is a government of moral law and of motives. Motives are presented by providential government; and providential government is, therefore, a means of moral government. Providential and moral government must be indispensable to securing the highest good of the universe.

III. *Civil and family governments are indispensable to the securing of this end, and are, therefore, really a part of the providential and moral government of God.*

In the discussion of this question I will show,--

1. That human governments are a necessity of human nature.

2. That this necessity will continue as long as men exist in the present world.

3. That human governments are plainly recognized in the Bible, as a part of the government of God.

4. That it is the duty of all men to aid in the establishment and support of human government.

5. It is absurd to suppose that human government can ever be dispensed with in this world.

6. I shall answer objections.

1. Human governments are a necessity of human nature.

(1.) There must be real estate. Human beings have numerous physical and moral wants that cannot possibly be supplied without the cultivation and improvement of the soil. Buildings must be erected, &c.

(2.) The land and other things must belong to somebody. Somebody must have the right, the care, the responsibility, and therefore the avails of real estate.

(3.) There must, therefore, be all the forms of conveyancing, registry, and, in short, all the forms of legal government, to settle and manage the real estate affairs of men.

(4.) Moral beings will not agree in opinion on any subject without similar degrees of knowledge.

(5.) Hence, no human community exists, or ever will exist, the members of which will agree in opinion on all subjects.

(6.) This creates a necessity for human legislation and adjudication, to apply the great principles of moral law to all human affairs.

(7.) There are multitudes of human wants and necessities that cannot properly be met except through the instrumentality of human governments.

2. This necessity will continue as long as human beings exist in this world.

(1.) This is as certain as that the human body will always need sustenance and clothing; and that the human soul will always need instruction; and that the means of instruction will not come spontaneously, without expense and labour.

(2.) It is as certain as that men of all ages and circumstances will never possess equal talents and degrees of information on all subjects.

If all men were perfectly holy and disposed to do right, the necessity for human governments would not be set aside, because this necessity is founded in the ignorance of mankind, though greatly aggravated by their wickedness.

(3.) The decisions of legislators and judges must be authoritative, so as to settle questions of disagreement in opinion, and at once to bind and protect all parties.

(4.) The Bible represents human governments not only as existing, but as deriving their authority and right to punish evil-doers, and to protect the righteous, from God. But--

3. Human governments are plainly recognized in the Bible as a part of the moral government of God.

(1.) Dan 2:21. "He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

Dan 4:17, Dan 4:25. "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." "They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Dan 5:21. "He was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."

Rom 13:1-7. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Tit 3:1. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."

1Pe 2:13-14. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

These passages prove conclusively, that God establishes human governments, as parts of moral government.

(2.) It is a matter of fact, that God does exert moral influences through the instrumentality of human governments.

(3.) It is a matter of fact, that he often executes his law, punishes vice, and rewards virtue, through the instrumentality of human governments.

(4.) Under the Jewish theocracy, where God was king, it was found indispensable to have not only laws promulged by divine authority, but also to enforce them by the executive department of government.

4. It is the duty of all men to aid in the establishment and support of human government.

(1.) Because human government is plainly a necessity of human beings.

(2.) As all men are in some way dependent upon them, it is the duty of every man to aid in their establishment and support.

(3.) As the great law of benevolence, or universal good-willing, demands the existence of human governments, all men are under a perpetual and unalterable moral obligation to aid in their establishment and support.

(4.) In popular or elective governments, every man having a right to vote, every human being who has moral influence, is bound to exert that influence in the promotion of virtue and happiness. And as human governments are plainly indispensable to the highest good of man, they are bound to exert their influence to secure a legislation that is in accordance with the law of God.

(5.) The obligation of human beings to support and obey human governments, while they legislate upon the principles of the moral law, is as unalterable as the moral law itself.

5. It is absurd to suppose that human governments can ever be dispensed with in the present world.

(1.) Because such a supposition is entirely inconsistent with the nature of human beings.

(2.) It is equally inconsistent with their relations and circumstances.

(3.) Because it assumes that the necessity of government is founded alone in human depravity: whereas the foundation of this necessity is human ignorance, and human depravity is only an additional reason for the existence of human governments. The primary idea of law is to teach; hence law has a precept. It is authoritative, and therefore has a penalty.

(4.) Because it assumes that men would always agree in judgment, if their hearts were right, irrespective of their degrees of information. But this is far from the truth.

(5.) Because it sets aside one of the plainest and most unequivocal doctrines of revelation.

6. I am to answer objections.

Obj. 1. The kingdom of God is represented in the Bible as subverting all other kingdoms.

Ans. This is true, but all that can be meant by it is, that the time shall come when God shall be regarded as the supreme and universal sovereign of the universe, when his law shall be regarded as universally obligatory; when all kings, legislators, and judges shall act as his servants, declaring, applying, and administering the great principles of his law to all the affairs of human beings. Thus God will be the supreme sovereign; and earthly rulers will be governors, kings, and judges under him, and acting by his authority as revealed in the Bible.

Obj. 2. It is alleged, that God only providentially establishes human governments, and that he does not approve of their selfish and wicked administration; that he only uses them providentially, as he does Satan, for the promotion of his own designs.

Ans. 1. God nowhere commands mankind to obey Satan, but he does command them to obey magistrates and rulers.

Rom 13:1. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

1Pe 2:13-14. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

2. He nowhere recognizes Satan as his servant, sent and set by him to administer justice and execute wrath upon the wicked; but he does this in respect to human governments.

Rom 13:2-6. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

3. It is true indeed that God approves of nothing that is ungodly and selfish in human governments. Neither did he approve of what was ungodly and selfish in the scribes and Pharisees; and yet Christ said to his disciples, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatsoever things they command you, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works, for they say, and do not." Here the plain common-sense principle is recognized, that we are to obey when the requirement is not inconsistent with the moral law, whatever may be the character or the motive of the ruler. We are always to obey heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men, and render obedience to magistrates for the honour and glory of God, and as doing service to him.

Obj. 3. It is said that Christians should leave human governments to the management of the ungodly, and not be diverted from the work of saving souls, to intermeddle with human governments.

Ans. 1. To uphold and assist good government is not being diverted from the work of saving souls. The promotion of public and private order and happiness is one of the indispensable means of doing good and saving souls.

2. It is nonsense to admit that Christians are under an obligation to obey human government, and still have nothing to do with the choice of those who shall govern.

Obj. 4. It is affirmed that we are commanded not to avenge ourselves, that "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord." It is said, that if I may not avenge or redress my own wrongs in my own person, I may not do it through the instrumentality of human government.

Ans. 1. It does not follow, that because you may not take it upon yourself to redress your own wrongs by a summary and personal infliction of punishment upon the transgressor, that therefore human governments may not punishment them.

2. Because all private wrongs are a public injury; and irrespective of any particular regard to your personal interest, magistrates are bound to punish crime for the public good.

3. It does not follow, because while God has expressly forbidden you to redress your own wrongs, by administering personal and private chastisement, he has expressly recognized the right, and made it the duty of public magistrates to punish crimes.

Obj. 5. It is alleged, that love is so much better than the law, that where love reigns in the heart, law can be universally dispensed with.

Ans. 1. This supposes that, if there is only love, there need be no rule of duty; no revelation, directing love in its efforts to secure the end upon which it terminates. But this is as untrue as possible.

2. This objection overlooks the fact, that law is in all worlds the rule of duty, and that legal sanctions make up an indispensable part of that circle of motives that are suited to the nature, relations, and government of moral beings.

3. The law requires love; and nothing is law, either human or divine, that is inconsistent with universal benevolence. And to suppose that love is better than law, is to suppose that love needs no direction from superior wisdom.

Obj. 6. It is asserted, that Christians have something else to do besides meddling with politics.

Ans. 1. In a popular government, politics are an important part of religion. No man can possibly be benevolent or religious, to the full extent of his obligations, without concerning himself, to a greater or less extent, with the affairs of human government.

2. It is true, that Christians have something else to do than to go with a party to do evil, or to meddle with politics in a selfish or ungodly manner. But they are bound to meddle with politics in popular government, because they are bound to seek the universal good of all men; and this is one department of human interests, materially affecting all their higher interests.

Obj. 7. It is said that human governments are nowhere expressly authorized in the Bible.

Ans. 1. This is a mistake. Both their existence and lawfulness are as expressly recognized in the above quoted scriptures as they can be.

2. If God did not expressly authorize them, it would still be both the right and the duty of mankind to institute human governments, because they are plainly demanded by the necessities of human nature. It is a first truth, that whatsoever is essential to the highest good of moral beings in any world, they have a right to pursue, and are bound to pursue according to the best dictates of reason and experience. So far, therefore, are men from needing any express authority to establish human governments, that no inference from the silence of scripture could avail to render their establishment unlawful. It has been shown, in these lectures on moral government, that moral law is a unit--that it is that rule of action which is in accordance with the nature, relations, and circumstances of moral beings--that whatever is in accordance with, and demanded by the nature, relations, and circumstances of moral beings, is obligatory on them. It is moral law, and no power in the universe can set it aside. Therefore, were the scriptures entirely silent (which they are not) on the subject of human governments, and on the subject of family government, as they actually are on a great many important subjects, this would be no objection to the lawfulness and expediency, necessity and duty of establishing human governments.

Obj. 8. It is said that human governments are founded in and sustained by force, and that this is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel.

Ans. 1. There cannot be a difference between the spirit of the Old and New Testaments, or between the spirit of the law and the gospel, unless God has changed, and unless Christ has undertaken to make void the law through faith, which cannot be.

Rom 3:31. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

2. Just human governments, and such governments only are contended for, will not exercise force, unless it is demanded to promote the highest public good. If it be necessary to this end, it can never be wrong. Nay, it must be the duty of human governments to inflict penalties, when their infliction is demanded by the public interest.

Obj. 9. It is said, that there should be no laws with penalties.

Ans. This is the same as to say that there should be no law at all; for, as we have before shown, that is no law which has no penalty, but only advice.

Obj. 10. It has been said by some persons, that church government is sufficient to meet the necessities of the world, without secular or state governments.

Ans. What! Church governments regulate commerce, make internal arrangements, such as roads, bridges, and taxation, and undertake to manage all the business affairs of the world! Preposterous and impossible.

Church government was never established for any such end; but simply to regulate the spiritual, in distinction from the secular concerns of men--to try offenders and inflict spiritual chastisement, and never to perplex and embarrass itself with managing the business and commercial interests of the world.

Obj. 11. It is said, that were all the world holy, legal penalties would not be needed.

Ans. Were all men perfectly holy, the execution of penalties would not be needed; but still, if there were law, there must be penalties; and it would be both the right and the duty of magistrates to inflict them, whenever the needful occasion should call for their execution. But the state of the world supposed, is not at hand, and while the world is what it is, laws must remain, and be enforced.

Obj. 12. It is asserted, that family government is the only form of government approved of God.

Ans. This is a ridiculous assertion:--

1. Because God as expressly commands obedience to magistrates as to parents.

2. He makes it as absolutely the duty of magistrates to punish crime, as of parents to punish their own disobedient children.

3. The right of family government, though commanded by God, is not founded in the arbitrary will of God, but in the highest good of human beings; so that family government would be both necessary and obligatory, had God not commanded it.

4. So the right of human government has not its foundation in the arbitrary will of God, but in the necessities of human beings. The larger the community the more absolute the necessity of government. If in the small circle of the family, laws and penalties are needed, how much more in the larger communities of states and nations. Now, neither the ruler of a family, nor any other human ruler, has a right to legislate arbitrarily, or enact, or enforce any other laws, than those that are demanded by the nature, relations, and circumstances of human beings. Nothing can be obligatory on moral beings, but that which is consistent with their nature, relations, and circumstances. But human beings are bound to establish family governments, state governments, national governments, and in short, whatever government may be requisite for the universal instruction, government, virtue, and happiness of the world, or any portion of it.

5. All the reasons therefore for family government, hold equally in favour of the state and national governments.

6. There are vastly higher and weightier reasons for governments over states and nations, than in the small communities of families.

7. On this, as on many other subjects, God has declared what is the common and universal law, plainly recognizing both the right and duty of family an civil governments.

8. Christians therefore have something else to do, than to confound the right of government with the abuse of this right by the ungodly. Instead of destroying human governments, Christians are bound to reform and uphold them.

9. To attempt to destroy, rather than reform human governments, is the same in principle as is often aimed at, by those who are attempting to destroy, rather than to reform, the church. There are those who, disgusted with the abuses of Christianity practised in the church, seem bent on destroying the church altogether, as the means of saving the world. But what mad policy is this!

10. It is admitted that selfish men need, and must feel the restraints of law; but yet it is contended that Christians should have no part in restraining them by law. But suppose the wicked should agree among themselves to have no law, and therefore should not attempt to restrain themselves, nor each other by law; would it be neither the right nor the duty of Christians to attempt their restraint, through the influence of wholesome government?

11. It would be strange, that selfish men should need the restraints of law, and yet that Christians should have no right to meet this necessity, by supporting governments that will restrain them. What is this but admitting, that the world really needs the restraints of governments--that the highest good of the universe demands their existence;--and yet, that it is wrong for Christians to seek the highest good of the world, by meeting this necessity in the establishment and support of human governments! It is right and best that there should be law. It is even absolutely necessary that there should be law. Universal benevolence demands it; can it then be wrong in Christians to have anything to do with it?

IV. *Inquire into the foundation of the right of human governments.*

1. Men are moral agents, and are therefore subjects of moral government and of moral obligation.

2. They are bound to aim at the same end at which God aims, to wit, the highest good of universal being.

3. Since human governments are the indispensable means of promoting the highest good of human beings, they have a right, and it is their duty to establish and maintain them. The right of human governments must be founded in the intrinsic value of the good that is to be secured by them, and conditionated upon the fact that they sustain to the highest good of human beings, and consequently to the glory of God, through them, the relation of a natural and necessary means to this end.

V. *Point out the limits or boundaries of this right.*

1. Observe, the end of government is the highest good of human beings, as a part of universal good. All valid human legislation must propose this as its end, and no legislation can have any authority that has not the highest good of the whole for its end.

2. Observe, no being can arbitrarily create law. All law for the government of moral agents must be moral law: that is, it must be the rule of action best suited to their natures and relations. The moral law, or the law of nature, in other words, the common law of the universe of moral agents, by which God is, and every moral being ought to be governed, is the only law that can be obligatory on human beings. All valid human legislation must be only declaratory of this one only law. Nothing else than this can by any possibility be law. God puts forth no enactments, but such as are declaratory of the common law of the universe; and should he do otherwise, they would not be obligatory. Arbitrary legislation can never be really obligatory.

3. Human governments may declare and apply the great principle of moral law to human conduct, and legislate in accordance with the divine government, so far as this is necessary, but no farther.

4. The right of human government is founded in the intrinsic value of the good of being, and conditionated upon their necessity, as a means to that end. They may therefore extend, and ought to extend, their legislation and control just so far, and no farther, than this necessity goes. This end is the promotion of the highest good. So far as legislation and control are indispensable to this end, so far and no farther does the right to govern extend.

5. Human beings have no right to establish a government upon any other basis than the moral law. No human constitution or law can be obligatory upon human beings, any farther than it is in accordance with, and declaratory of, moral law. All legislation and all constitutions not founded upon this basis, and not recognizing the moral law as the only law of the universe, are null and void, and all attempts to establish and enforce them are odious tyranny and usurpation. Human beings may form constitutions, establish governments, and enact statutes, for the purpose of promoting the highest virtue and happiness of the world, and for the declaration and enforcement of moral law; and just so far human governments are essential to this end, but absolutely no farther.

6. It follows, that no government is lawful or innocent that does not recognize the moral law as the only universal law, and God as the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, to whom nations in their national capacity, as well as all individuals, are amenable. The moral law of God is the only law of individuals and of nations, and nothing can be rightful government but such as is established and administered with a view to its support.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXVII.

HUMAN GOVERNMENT.

VI. *I propose now to make several remarks respecting forms of government, the right and duty of revolution, &c.*

In this lecture I shall show:--

1. The reasons why God has made no particular form of civil governments universally obligatory.

2. The particular forms of civil government must and will depend upon the intelligence and virtue of the people.

3. That form of government is obligatory, that is best suited to meet the necessities of the people.

4. Revolutions become necessary and obligatory, when the virtue and intelligence, or the vice and ignorance, of the people demand them.

5. In what cases human legislation is valid, and in what cases it is null and void.

6. In what cases we are bound to disobey human government.

1. *The reasons why God has made no form of civil government universally obligatory.*

(1.) That God has nowhere in the Bible given directions in regard to any particular form of secular government, is a matter of fact.

(2.) That he did not consider the then existing forms of government, as of perpetual obligation, is certain.

(3.) He did not give directions in regard to particular forms of government,--

(i.) Because no such directions could be given without producing great revolutions and governmental opposition to Christianity. The governments of the world are and always have been exceedingly various in form. To attempt, therefore, to insist upon any particular form, as being universally obligatory, would be calling out great national opposition to religion.

(ii.) Because no particular form of government, either now is, or ever has been, suited to all degrees of intelligence, and all states of society.

(iii.) Because the forms of governments need to be changed, with any great elevations or depressions of society, in regard to their intelligence and virtue.

2. *The particular forms of state government must, and will, depend upon the virtue and intelligence of the people.*

(1.) Democracy is self-government, and can never be safe or useful except so far as there are sufficient intelligence and virtue in the community to impose, by mutual consent, salutary self-restraints, and to enforce by the power of public sentiment, and by the fear and love of God, the practice of those virtues which are indispensable to the highest good of any community.

(2.) Republics are another and less pure form of self-government.

(3.) When there are not sufficient intelligence and virtue among the people to legislate in accordance with the highest good of the state or nation, then both democracies and republics are improper and impracticable, as forms of government.

(4.) When there is too little intelligence and virtue in the mass of the people to legislate on correct principles, monarchies are better calculated to restrain vice and promote virtue.

(5.) In the worst states of society, despotisms, either civil or military, are the only proper and efficient forms of government. It is true, indeed, that a resort to despotic government is an evil, and all that can be truly said is, that in certain states of desperate anarchy, despotic government is the less of two evils.

(6.) When virtue and intelligence are nearly universal, democratic forms of government are well suited to promote the public good.

(7.) In such a state of society, democracy is greatly conducive to the general diffusion of knowledge on governmental subjects; and although, in some respects, less convenient, yet in a suitable state of society, a democracy is in many respects the most desirable form of government.

(i.) It is conducive, as has been already said, to general intelligence.

(ii.) Under a democracy, the people are more generally acquainted with the laws.

(iii.) They are more interested in them.

(iv.) This form of government creates a more general feeling of individual responsibility.

(v.) Governmental questions are more apt to be thoroughly discussed and understood before they are adopted.

(vi.) As the diffusion of knowledge is favourable to individual and public virtue, democracy is highly conducive to virtue and happiness.

(8.) God has always providentially given to mankind those forms of government that were suited to the degrees of virtue and intelligence among them.

(9.) If they have been extremely ignorant and vicious, he has restrained them by the iron rod of human despotism.

(10.) If more intelligent and virtuous, he has given them the milder forms of limited monarchies.

(11.) If still more intelligent and virtuous, he has given still more liberty, and providentially established republics for their government.

(12.) Whenever the general state of intelligence has permitted it, he has put them to the test of self-government and self-restraint, by establishing democracies.

(13.) If the world ever becomes perfectly virtuous, governments will be proportionally modified, and employed in expounding and applying the great principles of moral law.

(14.) God is infinitely benevolent, and, from time to time, gives the people as much liberty as they can bear.

3. *That form of government is obligatory, that is best suited to meet the necessities of the people.*

(1.) This follows as a self-evident truth, from the consideration, that necessity is the condition of the right of human government. To meet this necessity is the object of government; and that government is obligatory and best, which is demanded by the circumstances, intelligence, and morals of the people.

(2.) Consequently, in certain states of society, it would be a Christian's duty to pray for and sustain even a military despotism; in a certain other state of society, to pray for and sustain a monarchy; and in other states, to pray for and sustain a republic; and in a still more advanced stage of virtue and intelligence, to pray for and sustain a democracy; if indeed a democracy is the most wholesome form of self-government, which may admit of doubt. It is ridiculous to set up the claim of a Divine right for any given form of government. That form of government which is demanded by the state of society, and the virtue and intelligence of the people, has of necessity the Divine right and sanction, because it is dictated by reason and the state and nature of things, and none other has or can have.

4. *Revolutions become necessary and obligatory, when the virtue and intelligence, or the vice and ignorance, of the people, demand them.*

(1.) This is a thing of course. When one form of government fails to meet any longer the necessities of the people, it is the duty of the people to revolutionize.

(2.) In such cases, it is vain to oppose revolution; for in some way the benevolence of God will bring it about. Upon this principle alone, can what is generally termed the American Revolution be justified. The intelligence and virtue of our Puritan fore-fathers rendered a monarchy an unnecessary burden, and a republican form of government both appropriate and necessary; and God always allows his children as much liberty as they are prepared to enjoy.

(3.) The stability of our republican institutions must depend upon the progress of general intelligence and virtue. If in these respects the nation falls, if general intelligence, public and private virtue, sink to that point below which self-control becomes practicably impossible, we must fall back into monarchy, limited or absolute; or into civil or military despotism; just according to the national standard of intelligence and virtue. This is just as certain as that God governs the world, or that cause produce their effects.

(4.) Therefore, it is the maddest conceivable policy, for Christians to attempt to uproot human governments, while they ought to be engaged in sustaining them upon the great principles of the moral law. It is certainly the grossest folly, if not abominable wickedness, to overlook either in theory or practice, these plain, common sense and universal truths.

5. *In what cases human legislation is valid, and in what cases it is null and void.*

(1.) Human legislation is valid, when called for by the necessities, that is, by the nature, relations and circumstances of the people.

(2.) Just that kind and degree of human legislation which are demanded by the necessities of the people are obligatory.

(3.) Human legislation is utterly null and void in all other cases whatsoever; and I may add, that divine legislation would be equally null and void, unless demanded by the nature, relations, and necessities of the universe. Consequently, human beings can never legislate in opposition to the moral law. Whatever is inconsistent with supreme love to God, and equal love to our neighbour, can by no possibility be obligatory.

6. *In what cases we are bound to disobey human governments.*

(1.) We may yield obedience, when the thing required does not involve a violation of moral obligation.

(2.) We are bound to yield obedience, when legislation is in accordance with the law of nature.

(3.) We are bound to obey when the thing required has no moral character in itself; upon the principle, that obedience in this case is a less evil than resistance and revolution. But--

(4.) We are bound in all cases to disobey, when human legislation contravenes moral law, or invades the rights of conscience.

VII. *Apply the foregoing principles to the rights and duties of governments and subjects in relation to the execution of the necessary penalties of law:--the suppression of mobs, insurrections, rebellion; and also in relation to war, slavery, sabbath desecration, &c.*

In discussing this branch of the subject I must--

1. Notice some principles that have been settled.

2. Apply these settled principles to the subjects first named.

(1.) Notice some principles that have been settled.

In the preceding lectures it has been shown,--

(1.) That all government is a means to an end, and that the end of all righteous government is, and must be, the highest good of both the ruler and the ruled.

(2.) We have seen that all law is either moral or physical.

(3.) That all law for the government of free moral agents is, and must be, moral law.

(4.) That moral law is that rule of willing and acting that is suited to the natures, relations, and circumstances of moral agents.

(5.) We have seen that the right to govern is founded in the value of the end to be secured by government, and conditionated--

(i.) Upon the necessity of government as a means to this end, and--

(ii.) Upon the natural and moral attributes of the ruler, and also upon his ability and willingness so to administer government as to secure the end of government.

(6.) We have seen that the right to govern implies:--

[Let the reader here recur to what is written under this head in Lecture III. V]

(7.) We have seen that the right to govern is bounded only, but yet absolutely, by the necessity of government; that just that kind and degree of government is lawful which is necessary, as a means of promoting the highest good of both ruler and ruled; that arbitrary legislation is invalid and tyrannical legislation, and that in no case can arbitrary enactments be law.

(8.) We have seen that no unequal or inequitable enactment can be law, and nothing can by any possibility be law but the rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

(9.) We have seen also that human rulers can justly legislate only in support of Divine government, but never against it. That no enactment can by any possibility be law, that contravenes the moral law or law of God.

2. Let us now proceed to apply these immutable and well-established principles.

(1.) To the rights and duties of government in relation to mobs, riots, &c. It is plain that the right and duty to govern for the security and promotion of the public interests, implies the right and duty to use any means necessary to this result. It is absurd to say that the ruler has the right to govern, and yet that he has not a right to use the necessary means. Some have taken the ground of the inviolability of human life, and have insisted to take life is wrong, *per se*, and of course that governments are to be sustained without taking life. Others have gone so far as to assert, that governments have no right to resort to physical force to sustain the authority of law. But this is a most absurd philosophy, and amounts just to this:--The ruler has a right to govern while the subject is pleased to obey; but if the subject refuse obedience, why then the right to govern ceases: for it is impossible that the right to govern should exist when the right to enforce obedience does not exist. This philosophy is, in fact, a denial of the right to use the necessary means for the promotion of the great end for which all moral agents ought to live. And yet, strange to tell, this philosophy professes to deny the right to use force; and to take life in support of government on the ground of benevolence, that is, that benevolence forbids it. What is this but maintaining, that the law of benevolence demands that we should love others too much to use the indispensable means to secure their good? Or that we should love the whole too much to execute the law upon those who would destroy all good? Shame on such philosophy! It overlooks the foundation of moral obligation, and of all morality and religion. Just as if an enlightened benevolence could forbid the due, wholesome, and necessary execution of law. This philosophy impertinently urges the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," as prohibiting all taking of human life. But it may be asked, why say *human* life? The commandment, so far as the letter is concerned, as fully prohibits the killing of animals or vegetables as it does of men. The question is, what kind of killing does this commandment prohibit? Certainly not all killing of human beings, for in the next chapter the Jews were commanded to kill human beings for certain crimes. The ten commandments are precepts, and the Lawgiver, after laying down the precepts, goes on to specify the penalties that are to be inflicted by men for a violation of these precepts. Some of these penalties are death, and the penalty for the violation of the precept under consideration is death. It is certain that this precept was not intended to prohibit the taking of life for murder. A consideration of the law in its tenor and spirit renders it most evident that the precept in question prohibits *murder*, and the penalty of death is added by the lawgiver to the violation of this precept. Now how absurd and impertinent it is, to quote this precept in prohibition of taking life under the circumstances included in the precept!

Men have an undoubted right to do whatever is plainly indispensable to the highest good of man; and, therefore, nothing can, by any possibility be law, that should prohibit the taking of human life, when it became indispensable to the great end of government. This right is every where recognized in the Bible, and if it were not, still the right would exist. This philosophy that I am opposing, assumes that the will of God creates law, and that we have no right to take life, without an express warrant from him. But the facts are,--

(i.) That God did give to the Jews, at least, an express warrant and injunction to take life for certain crimes; and,--

(ii.) If he had not, it would have been duty to do so whenever the public good required it. Let it be remembered, that the moral law is the law of nature, and that everything is lawful and right that is plainly demanded for the promotion of the highest good of being.

The philosophy of which I am speaking lays much stress upon what it call inalienable rights. It assumes that man has a title or right to life, in such a sense, that he cannot forfeit it by crime. But the fact is, there are no rights inalienable in this sense. There can be no such rights. Whenever any individual by the commission of crime comes into such a relation to the public interest, that his death is a necessary means of securing the highest public good, his life is forfeited, and to take the forfeiture at his hands is the duty of the government.

(2.) It will be seen, that the same principles are equally applicable to insurrections, rebellion, &c. While government is right, it is duty, and while it is right and duty, because necessary as a means to the great end upon which benevolence terminates, it must be both the right and the duty of government, and of all the subjects, to use any indispensable means for the suppression of insurrections, rebellion, &c., as also for the due administration of justice in the execution of law.

(3.) These principles will guide us in ascertaining the rights, and of course the duty of governments in relation to war.

War is one of the most heinous and horrible forms of sin, unless it be evidently demanded by, and prosecuted in obedience to the moral law. Observe, war to be in any case a virtue, or to be less than a crime of infinite magnitude, must not only be honestly believe by those who engage in it, to be demanded by the law of benevolence, but it must also be engaged in by them with an eye single to the glory of God, and the highest good of being. That war has been in some instances demanded by the spirit of the moral law, there can be no reasonable doubt, since God has sometimes commanded it, which he could not have done had it not been demanded by the highest good of the universe. In such cases, if those who were commanded to engage in war, had benevolent intentions in prosecuting it as God had in commanding it, it is absurd to say that they sinned. Rulers are represented as God's ministers to execute wrath upon the guilty. If, in the providence of God, he should find it duty to destroy or to rebuke a nation for his own glory, and the highest good of being, he may beyond question command that they should be chastised by the hand of man. But in no case is war anything else than a most horrible crime, unless it is plainly the will of God that it should exist, and unless it be actually undertaken in obedience to his will. This is true of all, both of rulers and of subjects who engage in war. Selfish war is wholesale murder. For a nation to declare war, or for persons to enlist, or in any way designedly to aid or abet, in the declaration or prosecution of war, upon any other conditions than those just specified, involves the guilt of murder.

There can scarcely be conceived a more abominable and fiendish maxim than "our country right or wrong." Recently this maxim seems to have been adopted and avowed in relation to the war of the United States with Mexico.

It seems to be supposed by some, that it is the duty of good subjects to sympathize with, and support government in the prosecution of a war in which they have unjustly engaged, and to which they have committed themselves, upon the ground that since it is commenced it must be prosecuted as the less of two evils. The same class of men seem to have adopted the same philosophy in respect to slavery. Slavery, as it exists in this country, they acknowledge to be indefensible on the ground of right; that it is a great evil and a great sin, but it must be let alone as the less of two evils. It exists, say they, and it cannot be abolished without disturbing the friendly relations and federal union of the States, therefore the institution must be sustained. The philosophy is this: war and slavery as they exist in this nation are unjust, but they exist, and to sustain them is duty, because their existence, under the circumstances, is the less of two evils.

I would ask, do these philosophers intend to admit, that the prosecution of a war unjustly waged is sin, and that the support of slavery in this county is sin, but that the sin of supporting them is less than would be the sin of abandoning them, under the circumstances? If they mean this, to be sure this were singular logic. To repent of a sin and forsake it, were a greater sin than to persist in it!--True and genuine repentance of a sin is sin, and even a greater sin than that repented of! Who does not know that it can never be sin to repent of sin? To repent and forsake all sin is always right, always duty, and can in no case be sin. If war has been unjustly waged, if slavery or anything else exists that involves injustice and oppression, or sin in any form, it cannot be sin to abandon it. To abhor and reject it at once must be duty, and to persevere in it is only to add insult to injury.

Nothing can sanctify any crime but that which renders it no crime, but a virtue. But the philosophers, whose views I am examining, must, if consistent, take the ground, that since war and slavery exist, although their commencement was unjust and sinful, yet since they exist, it is no crime but a virtue to sustain them, as the least of two natural evils. But I would ask, to whom are they the least of two evils? To ourselves or to being in general? The least of two present, or of two ultimate evils? Our duty is not to calculate the evils in respect merely to ourselves, or to this nation and those immediately oppressed and injured, but to look abroad upon the world and the universe, and inquire what are the evils resulting, and likely to result, to the world, to the church, and to the universe, from the declaration and prosecution of such a war, and from the support of slavery by a nation professing what we profess; a nation boasting of liberty; who have drawn the sword and bathed it in blood in defence of the principle, that all men have an inalienable right to liberty; that they are born free and equal. Such a nation proclaiming such a principle, and fighting in the defence of it, standing with its proud foot on the neck of three millions of crushed and prostrate slaves! O horrible! This is less evil to the world than emancipation, or even than the dismemberment of our hypocritical union! "O shame, where is thy blush!" The prosecution of a war, unjustly engaged in, a less evil than repentance and restitution? It is impossible. Honesty is always and necessarily the best policy. Nations are bound by the same law as individuals. If they have done wrong, it is always duty, and honourable for them to repent, confess, and make restitution. To adopt the maxim, "Our country right or wrong," and to sympathize with the government, in the prosecution of a war unrighteously waged, must involve the guilt of murder. To adopt the maxim, "Our union even with perpetual slavery," is an abomination so execrable, as not to be named by a just mind without indignation.

(4.) The same principles apply to governmental sabbath desecration. The sabbath is plainly a divine institution, founded in the necessities of human beings. The letter of the law of the sabbath forbids all labour of every kind, and under all circumstances on that day. But, as has been said in a former lecture, the spirit of the law of the sabbath, being identical with the law of benevolence, sometimes requires the violation of the letter of the law. Both governments and individuals may, and it is their duty, to do on the sabbath whatever is plainly required by the great law of benevolence. But nothing more, absolutely. No human legislature can nullify the moral law. No human legislation can make it right or lawful to violate any command of God. All human enactments requiring or sanctioning the violation of any command of God, are not only null and void, but they are a blasphemous usurpation and invasion of the prerogative of God.

(5.) The same principles apply to slavery. No human constitution or enactment can, by any possibility be law, that recognizes the right of one human being to enslave another, in a sense that implies selfishness on the part of the slaveholder. Selfishness is wrong *per se*. It is, therefore, always and unalterably wrong. No enactment, human or divine, can legalize selfishness and make it right, under any conceivable circumstances. Slavery or any other evil, to be crime, must imply selfishness. It must imply a violation of the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If it implies a breach of this, it is wrong invariably and necessarily, and no legislation, or any thing else, can make it right. God cannot authorize it. The Bible cannot sanction it, and if both God and the Bible were to sanction it, it could not be lawful. God's arbitrary will is not law. The moral law, as we have seen, is as independent of his will, as his own necessary existence is. He cannot alter or repeal it. He could not sanctify selfishness and make it right. Nor can any book be received as of divine authority that sanctions selfishness. God and the Bible quoted to sustain and sanctify slaveholding in a sense implying selfishness! 'Tis blasphemous! That slaveholding, as it exists in this country, implies selfishness at least, in almost all instances, is too plain to need proof. The sinfulness of slaveholding and war, in almost all cases, and in every case where the terms slaveholding and war are used in their popular signification, will appear irresistibly, if we consider that sin is selfishness, and that all selfishness is necessarily sinful. Deprive a human being of liberty who has been guilty of no crime! Rob him of himself--his body--his soul--his time, and his earnings, to promote the interest of his master, and attempt to justify this on the principles of moral law! It is the greatest absurdity, and the most revolting wickedness.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXVIII.

MORAL DEPRAVITY.

In discussing the subject of human depravity, I shall,--

I. DEFINE THE TERM DEPRAVITY.

II. POINT OUT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MORAL DEPRAVITY.

III. SHOW OF WHAT PHYSICAL DEPRAVITY CAN BE PREDICATED.

IV. OF WHAT MORAL DEPRAVITY CAN BE PREDICATED.

V. THAT MANKIND ARE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MORALLY DEPRAVED.

VI. THAT SUBSEQUENT TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF MORAL AGENCY, AND PREVIOUS TO REGENERATION, THE MORAL DEPRAVITY OF MANKIND IS UNIVERSAL.

VII. THAT DURING THE ABOVE PERIOD THE MORAL DEPRAVITY OF MANKIND IS TOTAL.

VIII. THE PROPER METHOD OF ACCOUNTING FOR THE UNIVERSAL TOTAL MORAL DEPRAVITY OF THE UNREGENERATE MORAL AGENTS OF OUR RACE.

I. *Definition of the term depravity.*

The word is derived from the Latin *de* and *pravus*. *Pravus* means "crooked." *De* is intensive. *Depravo*, literally and primarily, means "very crooked," not in the sense of original or constitutional crookedness, but in the sense of having become crooked. The term does not imply original mal-conformation, but lapsed, fallen, departed from right or straight. It always implies deterioration, or fall from a former state of moral or physical perfection.

Depravity always implies a departure from a state of original integrity, or from conformity to the laws of the being who is the subject of depravity. Thus we should not consider that being depraved, who remained in a state of conformity to the original laws of his being, physical and moral. But we justly call a being depraved, who has departed from conformity to those laws, whether those laws be physical or moral.

II. *Point out the distinction between physical and moral depravity.*

Physical depravity, as the word denotes, is the depravity of constitution, or substance, as distinguished from depravity of free moral action. It may be predicated of body or of mind. Physical depravity, when predicated of the body, is commonly and rightly termed disease. It consists in a physical departure from the laws of health; a lapsed, or fallen state, in which healthy organic action is not sustained.

When physical depravity is predicated of mind, it is intended that the powers of the mind, either in substance, or in consequence of their connexion with, and dependence upon, the body, are in a diseased, lapsed, fallen, degenerate state, so that the healthy action of those powers is not sustained.

Physical depravity, being depravity of substance as opposed to depravity of the actions of free-will, can have no moral character. It may, as we shall see, be caused by moral depravity; and a moral agent may be blameworthy for having rendered himself physically depraved, either in body or mind. But physical depravity, whether of body or of mind, can have no moral character in itself, for the plain reason that it is involuntary, and in its nature is disease, and not sin. Let this be remembered.

Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character.

III. *Of what physical depravity can be predicated.*

1. It can be predicated of any organized substance. That is, every organized substance is liable to become depraved. Depravity is a possible state of every organized body or substance in existence.

2. Physical depravity may be predicated of mind, as has already been said, especially in its connexion with an organized body. As mind, in connexion with body, manifests itself through it, acts by means of it, and is dependent upon it, it is plain that if the body become diseased, or physically depraved, the mind cannot but be affected by this state of the body, through and by means of which it acts. The normal manifestations of mind cannot, in such case, be reasonably expected. Physical depravity may be predicated of all the involuntary states of the intellect, and of the sensibility. That is, the actings and states of the intellect may become disordered, depraved, deranged, or fallen from the state of integrity and healthiness. This every one knows, as it is matter of daily experience and observation. Whether this in all cases is, and must be, caused by the state of the bodily organization, that is, whether it is always and necessarily to be ascribed to the depraved state of the brain and nervous system, it is impossible for us to know. It may, for aught we know, in some instances at least, be a depravity or derangement of the substance of the mind itself.

The sensibility, or feeling department of the mind, may be sadly and physically depraved. This is a matter of common experience. The appetites and passions, the desires and cravings, the antipathies and repellencies of the feelings fall into great disorder and anarchy. Numerous artificial appetites are generated, and the whole sensibility becomes a wilderness, a chaos of conflicting and clamorous desires, emotions and passions. That this state of the sensibility is often, and perhaps in some measure, always owing to the state of the nervous system with which it is connected, through and by which it manifests itself, there can be but little room to doubt. But whether this is always and necessarily so, no one can tell. We know that the sensibility manifests great physical depravity. Whether this depravity belong exclusively to the body, or to the mind, or to both in conjunction, I will not venture to affirm. In the present state of our knowledge, or of my knowledge, I dare not hazard an affirmation upon the subject. The human body is certainly in a state of physical depravity. The human mind also certainly manifests physical depravity. But observe, physical depravity has in no case any moral character, because it is involuntary.

IV. *Of what moral depravity can be predicated.*

1. Not of substance; for over involuntary substance the moral law does not directly legislate.

2. Moral depravity cannot be predicated of any involuntary acts or states of mind. These surely cannot be violations of moral law apart from the ultimate intention; for moral law legislates directly only over free, intelligence choices.

3. Moral depravity cannot be predicated of any unintelligent act of will, that is, of acts of will that are put forth in a state of idiocy, of intellectual derangement, or of sleep. Moral depravity implies moral obligation; moral obligation implies moral agency; and moral agency implies intelligence, or knowledge of moral relations. Moral agency implies moral law, or the developement of the idea of duty, and knowledge of what duty is.

4. Moral depravity can only be predicated of violations of moral law, and of the free volitions by which those violations are perpetrated. Moral law, as we have seen, requires love, and only love, to God and man, or to God and the universe. This love, as we have seen, is good-will, choice, the choice of an end, the choice of the highest well-being of God, and the universe of sentient existences.

Moral depravity is sin. Sin is violation of moral law. We have seen that sin must consist in choice, in the choice of self indulgence or self-gratification as an end.

5. Moral depravity cannot consist in any attribute of nature or constitution, nor in any lapsed and fallen state of nature; for this is physical and not moral depravity.

6. It cannot consist in anything that is an original and essential part of mind, or of body: nor in any involuntary action or state of either mind or body.

7. It cannot consist in anything back of choice, and that sustains to choice the relation of a cause. Whatever is back of choice, is without the pale of legislation. The law of God, as has been said, requires good-willing only, and sure it is, that nothing but acts of will can constitute a violation of moral law. Outward actions, and involuntary thoughts and feelings, may be said in a certain sense to possess moral character, because they are produced by the will. But, strictly speaking, moral character belongs only to choice, or intention.

It was shown in a former lecture, that sin does not, and cannot consist in malevolence, properly speaking, or in the choice of sin or misery as an end, or for its own sake. It was also shown, that all sin consists, and must consist in selfishness, or in the choice of self-gratification as a final end. Moral depravity then, strictly speaking, can only be predicated of selfish ultimate intention.

Moral depravity, as I use the term, does not consist in, nor imply a sinful nature, in the sense that the substance of the human soul is sinful in itself. It is not a constitutional sinfulness. It is not an involuntary sinfulness. Moral depravity, as I use the term, consists in selfishness; in a state of voluntary committal of the will to self-gratification. It is a spirit of self-seeking, a voluntary and entire consecration to the gratification of self. It is selfish ultimate intention: it is the choice of a wrong end of life; it is moral depravity, because it is a violation of moral law. It is a refusal to consecrate the whole being to the highest well-being of God and of the universe, and obedience to the moral law, and consecrating it to the gratification of self. Moral depravity sustains to the outward life, the relation of a cause. This selfish intention, or the will in this committed state, of course, makes efforts to secure its end, and these efforts make up the outward life of the selfish man. Moral depravity is sinfulness, not of nature but of voluntary state. It is a sinfully committed state of the will to self-indulgence. It is not a sinful nature but a sinful heart. It is a sinful ultimate aim, or intention. The Greek term *amartia*, rendered *sin* in our English Bible, signifies to miss the mark, to aim at the wrong end. Sin is a wrong aim, or intention. It is aiming at, or intending self-gratification as the ultimate and supreme end of life, instead of aiming, as the moral law requires, at the highest good of universal being, as the end of life.

V. *Mankind are both physically and morally depraved.*

1. There is, in all probability, no perfect health of body among all ranks and classes of human beings that inhabit this world. The physical organization of the whole race has become impaired, and beyond all doubt has been becoming more and more so since intemperance of any kind was first introduced into our world. This is illustrated and confirmed by the comparative shortness of human life. This is a physiological fact.

2. As the human mind in this state of existence is dependent upon the body for all its manifestations, and as the human body is universally in a state of greater or less physical depravity or disease, it follows that the manifestations of mind thus dependent on a physically depraved organization, will be physically depraved manifestations. Especially is this true of the human sensibility. The appetites, passions, and propensities are in a state of most unhealthy developement. This is too evident, and too much a matter of universal notoriety, to need proof or illustration. Every person of reflection has observed, that the human mind is greatly out of balance, in consequence of the monstrous developement of the sensibility. The appetites, passions, and propensities have been indulged, and the intelligence and conscience stultified by selfishness. Selfishness, be it remembered, consists in a disposition or choice to gratify the propensities, desires, and feelings. This, of course, and of necessity, produces just the unhealthy and monstrous developements which we daily see: sometimes one ruling passion or appetite lording it, not only over the intelligence and over the will, but over all the other appetites and passions, crushing and sacrificing then all upon the altar of its own gratification. See that bloated wretch, the inebriate! His appetite for strong drink has played the despot. His whole mind and body, reputation, family, friends, health, time, eternity, all, all are laid by him upon its filthy altar. There is the debauchee, and the glutton, and the gambler, and the miser, and a host of others, each in his turn giving striking and melancholy proof of the monstrous developement and physical depravity of the human sensibility.

3. That men are morally depraved is one of the most notorious facts of human experience, observation and history. Indeed, I am not aware that it has ever been doubted, when moral depravity has been understood to consist in selfishness.

The moral depravity of the human race is everywhere assumed and declared in the Bible, and so universal and notorious is the fact of human selfishness, that should any man practically call it in question--should he, in his business transactions, and in his intercourse with men, assume the contrary, he would justly subject himself to the charge of insanity. There is not a fact in the world more notorious and undeniable than this. Human moral depravity is as palpably evident as human existence. It is a fact everywhere assumed in all governments, in all the arrangements of society, and has impressed its image, and written its name, upon every thing human.

VI. *Subsequent to the commencement of moral agency, and previous to regeneration, the moral depravity of mankind is universal.*

By this it is not intended to deny that, in some instances, the Spirit of God may, from the first moment of moral agency, have so enlightened the mind as to have secured conformity to moral law, as the first moral act. This may or may not be true. It is not my present purpose to affirm or to deny this, as a possibility, or as a fact.

But by this is intended, that every moral agent of our race is, from the dawn of moral agency to the moment of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, morally depraved, unless we except those possible cases just alluded to. The Bible exhibits proof of it.

1. In those passages that represent all the unregenerate as possessing one common wicked heart or character. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."-- Gen 6:5. "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."-- Ecc 9:3. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?"-- Jer 17:9. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."-- Rom 8:7.

2. In those passages that declare the universal necessity of regeneration. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."-- Joh 3:3.

3. Passages that expressly assert the universal moral depravity of all unregenerate moral agents of our race. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."-- Rom 3:9-20.

4. Universal history proves it. What is this world's history but the shameless chronicle of human wickedness?

5. Universal observation attests it. Whoever saw one unregenerate human being that was not selfish, that did not obey his feelings rather than the law of his intelligence, that was not under some form, or in some way, living to please self? Such an unregenerate human being I may safely affirm was never seen since the fall of Adam.

6. I may also appeal to the universal consciousness of the unregenerate. They know themselves to be selfish, to be aiming to please themselves, and they cannot honestly deny it.

VII. *The moral depravity of the unregenerate moral agents of our race, is total.*

By this is intended, that the moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man. It is not intended, that they may not perform many outward actions, and have many inward feelings, that are such as the regenerate perform and experience: and such too as are accounted virtue by those who place virtue in the outward action. But it is intended, that virtue does not consist either in involuntary feelings or in outward actions, and that it consists alone in entire consecration of heart and life to God and the good of being, and that no unregenerate sinner previous to regeneration, is or can be for one moment in this state.

When virtue is clearly seen to consist in the heart's entire consecration to God and the good of being, it must be seen, that the unregenerate are not for one moment in this state. It is amazing, that some philosophers and theologians have admitted and maintained, that the unregenerate do sometimes do that which is truly virtuous. But in these admissions they necessarily assume a false philosophy, and overlook that in which all virtue does and must consist, namely, supreme ultimate intention. They speak of virtuous actions and of virtuous feelings, as if virtue consisted in them, and not in the intention.

Henry P. Tappan, for example, for the most part an able, truthful, and beautiful writer, assumes, or rather affirms, that volitions may be put forth inconsistent with, and contrary to the present choice of an end, and that consequently, unregenerate sinners, whom he admits to be in the exercise of a selfish choice of an end, may and do sometimes put forth right volitions, and perform right actions, that is, right in the sense of virtuous actions. But let us examine this subject. We have seen that all choice and all volition must respect either an end or means, that is that everything willed or chosen, is willed or chosen for some reason. To deny this, is the same as to deny that anything is willed or chosen, because the ultimate reason for a choice and the thing chosen are identical. Therefore, it is plain, as was shown in a former lecture, that the will cannot embrace at the same time, two opposite ends; and that while but one end is chosen, the will cannot put forth volitions to secure some other end, which end is not yet chosen. It other words, it certainly is absurd to say, that the will, while maintaining the choice of one end, can use means for the accomplishment of another and opposite end.

Again: the choice of an end, or of means, when more than one end or means is known to the mind, implies preference. The choice of one end or means, implies the rejection of its opposite. If one of two opposing ends be chosen, the other is and must be rejected. Therefore the choice of the two ends can never co-exist. And, as was shown in a former lecture--

1. The mind cannot will at all without an end. As all choice and volition must respect ends, or means, and as means cannot be willed without the previous choice of an end, it follows that the choice of an end is necessarily the first choice.

2. When an end is chosen, that choice confines all volition to securing its accomplishment, and for the time being, and until another end is chosen, and this one relinquished, it is impossible for the will to put forth any volition inconsistent with the present choice. It therefore follows, that while sinners are selfish, or unregenerate, it is impossible for them to put forth a holy volition.

They are under the necessity of first changing their hearts, or their choice of an end, before they can put forth any volitions to secure any other than a selfish end. And this is plainly the everywhere assumed philosophy of the Bible. That uniformly represents the unregenerate as totally depraved, and calls upon them to repent, to make to themselves a new heart, and never admits directly, or by way of implication, that they can do anything good or acceptable to God, while in the exercise of a wicked or selfish heart.

When examining the attributes of selfishness, it was shown that total depravity was one of its essential attributes; or rather, that it was the moral attribute in these senses, to wit:--

(1.) That selfishness did not, could not, co-exist with virtue or benevolence.

(2.) That selfishness could admit of no volitions or actions inconsistent with it, while it continued.

(3.) That selfishness was not only wholly inconsistent with any degree of love to God, but was enmity against God, the very opposite of his will, and constituted deep and entire opposition of will to God.

(4.) That selfishness was mortal enmity against God, as manifested in the murder of Christ.

(5.) That selfishness was supreme opposition to God.

(6.) That every selfish being is, and must be at every moment, just as wicked and blameworthy, as with his light he could be; that he at every moment violated all his moral obligations, and rejected and turned from all the light he had; and that whatever course of outward life any sinner pursues, it is all directed exclusively by selfishness; and whether he goes into the pulpit to preach the gospel, or becomes a pirate upon the high seas, he is actuated, in either case, solely by a regard to self-interest; and that, let him do one or the other, it is for the same reason, to wit, to please himself: so that it matters not, so far as his guilt is concerned, which he does. One course may, or may not, result in more or less evil than the other. But, as was then shown, the tendency of one course or the other, is not the criterion by which his guilt is to be measured, but his apprehension of the value of the interests rejected for the sake of securing his own gratification.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XXXIX.

MORAL DEPRAVITY.

VIII. *Let us consider the proper method of accounting for the universal and total moral depravity of the unregenerate moral agents of our race.*

In the discussion of this subject, I will--

1. Endeavour to show how it is not to be accounted for.

2. How it is to be accounted for.

1. How the moral depravity of mankind is not to be accounted for.

In examining this part of the subject, it is necessary to have distinctly in view, that which constitutes moral depravity. All the error that has existed upon this subject, has been founded in false assumptions in regard to the nature or essence of moral depravity. It has been almost universally true, that no distinction has been made between moral and physical depravity; and consequently, physical depravity has been confounded with and treated of, as moral depravity. This of course has led to vast confusion and nonsense upon this subject. Let the following facts, which have been shown in former lectures, be distinctly borne in mind.

That moral depravity consists in selfishness, or in the choice of self-interest, self-gratification, or self-indulgence, as an end.

Consequently it cannot consist,

(1.) *In a sinful constitution*, or in a constitutional appetency or craving for sin. This has been shown in a former lecture, on what is not implied in disobedience to the moral law.

(2.) Moral depravity is sin itself, and not the cause of sin. It is not something prior to sin, that sustains to it the relation of a cause, but it is the essence and the whole of sin.

(3.) It cannot be an attribute of human nature, considered simply as such, for this would be physical, and not moral depravity.

(4.) Moral depravity is not then to be accounted for by ascribing it to a nature or constitution sinful in itself. To talk of a sinful nature, or sinful constitution, in the sense of physical sinfulness, is to ascribe sinfulness to the Creator, who is the author of nature. It is to overlook the essential nature of sin, and to make sin a physical virus, instead of a voluntary and responsible choice. Both sound philosophy and the Bible, make sin to consist in obeying the flesh, or in the spirit of self-pleasing, or self-indulgence, or, which is the same thing, in selfishness--in a carnal mind, or in minding the flesh. But writers on moral depravity have assumed, that moral depravity was distinct from, and the cause of sin, that is, of actual transgression. They call it original sin, indwelling sin, a sinful nature, an appetite for sin, an attribute of human nature, and the like. We shall presently see what has led to this view of the subject.

I will, in the next place, notice a modern, and perhaps the most popular view of this subject, which has been taken by any late writer, who has fallen into the error of confounding physical and moral depravity. I refer to the prize essay of Dr. Woods, of Andover, Mass. He defines moral depravity to be the same as "sinfulness." He also, in one part of his essay, holds and maintains, that it is always and necessarily, voluntary. Still, his great effort is to prove that sinfulness or moral depravity, is an attribute of human nature. It is no part of my design to expose the inconsistency of holding moral depravity to be a voluntary state of mind, and yet a natural attribute, but only to examine the philosophy, the logic, and theology of his main argument. The following quotation will show the sense in which he holds moral depravity to belong to the nature of man. At page 54 he says:--

"The word depravity, relating as it here does to man's moral character, means the same as sinfulness, being the opposite of moral purity, or holiness. In this use of the word there is a general agreement. But what is the meaning of native, or natural? Among the variety of meanings specified by Johnson, Webster, and others, I refer to the following, as relating particularly to the subject before us.

"*Native*. Produced by nature. Natural, or such as is according to nature; belonging by birth; original. Natural has substantially the same meaning: 'produced by nature; not acquired.'--So Crabbe. 'Of a person we say, his worth is native, to designate it as some valuable property born with him, not foreign to him, or ingrafted upon him; but we say of his disposition, that it is natural, as opposed to that which is acquired by habit.' And Johnson defines nature to be 'the native state or properties of any thing, by which it is discriminated from others.' He quotes the definition of Boyle; 'Nature sometimes means what belongs to a living creature at its nativity, or accrues to it by its birth, as when we say a man is noble by nature, or a child is naturally froward.' 'This,' he says, 'may be expressed by saying, the man was born so.'

"After these brief definitions, which come to nearly the same thing, I proceed to inquire, what are the marks or evidences which show anything in man to be natural, or native; and how far these marks are found in relation to depravity."

Again, page 66, he says:--

"The evil, then, cannot be supposed to originate in any unfavourable external circumstances, such as corrupting examples, or insinuating and strong temptations; for if we suppose these entirely removed, all human beings would still be sinners. With such a moral nature as they now have, they would not wait for strong temptations to sin. Nay, they would be sinners in opposition to the strongest motives to the contrary. Indeed, we know that human beings will turn those very motives which most powerfully urge to holiness, into occasions of sin. Now, does not the confidence and certainty with which we foretell the commission of sin, and of sin unmixed with moral purity, presuppose a full conviction in us, and a conviction resting upon what we regard as satisfactory evidence, that sin, in all its visible actings, arises from that which is within the mind itself, and which belongs to our very nature as moral beings? Have we not as much evidence that this is the case with moral evil, as with any of our natural affections or bodily appetites?"

This quotation, together with the whole argument, shows that he considers moral depravity to be an attribute of human nature, in the same sense that the appetites and passions are.

Before I proceed directly to the examination of his argument, that sinfulness, or moral depravity, is an "attribute of human nature," I would premise, that an argument, or fact, that may equally well consist with either of two opposing theories, can prove neither. The author in question presents the following facts and considerations in support of his great position, that moral depravity, or sinfulness, is an attribute of human nature; and three presidents of colleges endorse the soundness and conclusiveness of the argument. He proves his position--

(i.) From the "universality of moral depravity." To this I answer, that this argument proves nothing to the purpose, unless it be true, and assumed as a major premise, that whatever is universal among mankind, must be a natural attribute of man as such; that whatever is common to all men, must be an attribute of human nature. But this assumption is a begging of the question. Sin may be the result of temptation; temptation may be universal, and of such a nature as uniformly, not necessarily, to result in sin, unless a contrary result be secured by a Divine moral suasion. This I shall endeavour to show is the fact. This argument assumes, that there is but one method of accounting for the universality of human sinfulness. But this is the question in debate, and is not to be thus assumed as true.

Again: Selfishness is common to all unregenerate men. Is selfishness a natural attribute? We have seen, in a former lecture, that it consists in choice. Can choice be an attribute of human nature?

Again: This argument is just as consistent with the opposite theory, to wit, that moral depravity is selfishness. The universality of selfishness is just what might be expected, if selfishness consists in the committal of the will to the gratification of self. This will be a thing of course, unless the Holy Spirit interpose, greatly to enlighten the intellect, and break up the force of habit, and change the attitude of the will, already, at the first dawn of reason, committed to the impulses of the sensibility. If moral depravity is to be accounted for, as I shall hereafter more fully show, by ascribing it to the influence of temptation, or to a physically depraved constitution, surrounded by the circumstances in which mankind first form their moral character, or put forth their first moral choices, universality might of course be expected to be one of its characteristics. This argument, then, agreeing equally will with either theory, proves neither.

(2.) His second argument is, that "Moral depravity developes itself in early life." Answer--

(i.) This is just what might be expected upon the opposite theory. If moral depravity consist in the choice of self-gratification, it would of course appear in early life. So this argument agrees quite as well with the opposing theory, and therefore proves nothing. But--

(ii.) This argument is good for nothing, unless the following be assumed as a major premise, and unless the fact assumed be indeed a truth, namely, "Whatever is developed in early life, must be an attribute of human nature." But this again is assuming the truth of the point in debate. This argument is based upon the assumption that a course of action common to all men, and commencing at the earliest moment of their moral agency, can be accounted for only by ascribing it to an attribute of nature, having the same moral character as that which belongs to the actions themselves. But this is not true. There may be more than one way of accounting for the universal sinfulness of human actions from the dawn of moral agency. It may be ascribed to the universality and peculiar nature of temptation, as has been said.

(3.) His third argument is, that "Moral depravity is not owing to any change that occurs subsequent to birth." Answer:--

No, the circumstances of temptation are sufficient to account for it without supposing the nature to be changed. This argument proves nothing, unless it be true, that the peculiar circumstances of temptation under which moral agents act, from the dawn of moral agency, cannot sufficiently account for their conduct, without supposing a change of nature subsequent to birth. "What then, does this arguing prove?"

Again, this argument is just as consistent with the opposing theory, and therefore proves neither.

(4.) His fourth argument is, "That moral depravity acts freely and spontaneously." Answer. The moral agent acts freely, and acts selfishly, that is wickedly. This argument assumes, that if a moral agent acts freely and wickedly, moral depravity, or sin, must be an attribute of his nature. Or more fairly, if mankind universally, in the exercise of their liberty, act sinfully, sinfulness must be an attribute of human nature. But what is sin? Why sin is a voluntary transgression of law, Dr. Woods being judge. Can a voluntary transgression of law be denominated an attribute of human nature?

But again, this argument alleges nothing but what is equally consistent with the opposite theory. If moral depravity consist in the choice of self-gratification as an end, it would of course freely and spontaneously manifest itself. This argument then, is good for nothing.

(5.) His fifth argument is, "That moral depravity is hard to overcome, and therefore it must be an attribute of human nature." Answer--

(i.) If it were an attribute of human nature, it could not be overcome at all, without a change of the human constitution.

(ii.) It is hard to overcome, just as selfishness naturally would be, in beings of a physically depraved constitution, and in the presence of so many temptations to self-indulgence.

(iii.) If it were an attribute of human nature, it could not be overcome without a change of personal identity. But the fact that it can be overcome without destroying the consciousness of personal identity, proves that it is not an attribute of human nature.

(6.) His sixth argument is, that "We can predict with certainty, that in due time it will act itself out." Answer: Just as might be expected. If moral depravity consists in selfishness, we can predict with certainty, that the spirit of self-pleasing will, in due time, and at all times, act itself out. We can also predict, without the gift of prophecy, that with a constitution physically depraved, and surrounded with objects to awaken appetite, and with all the circumstances in which human beings first form their moral character, they will seek universally to gratify themselves, unless prevented by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit. This argument is just as consistent with the opposite theory, and therefore proves neither.

It is unnecessary to occupy any more time with the treatise of Dr. Woods. I will now quote the standards of the Presbyterian church, which will put you in possession of their views upon this subject. At pp. 30, 31, of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, we have the following: "By this sin, they (Adam and Eve) fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

Again, pp. 152-154, Shorter Catechism. "Question 22. Did all mankind fall in that first transgression? Ans. The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.

"Question 23. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? Ans. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

"Question 24. What is sin? Ans. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.

"Question 25. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? Ans. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

"Question 26. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity? Ans. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way, are conceived and born in sin."

These extracts show, that the framers and defenders of this confession of faith, account for the moral depravity of mankind by making it to consist in a sinful nature, inherited by natural generation from Adam. They regard the constitution inherited from Adam, as in itself sinful, and the cause of all actual transgression. They make no distinction between physical and moral depravity. They also distinguish between original and actual sin. Original sin is the selfishness of the constitution, in which Adam's posterity have no other hand than to inherit it by natural generation, or by birth. This original sin, or sinful nature, renders mankind utterly disabled from all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all that is evil. This is their account of moral depravity. This, it will be seen, is substantially the ground of Dr. Woods.

It has been common with those who confound physical with moral depravity, and who maintain that human nature is itself sinful, to quote certain passages of Scripture to sustain their position. An examination of these proof texts, must, in the next place, occupy our attention. But before I enter upon this examination, I must first call your attention to certain well settled rules of biblical interpretation.

(1.) Different passages must be so interpreted, if they can be, as not to contradict each other.

(2.) Language is to be interpreted according to the subject matter of discourse.

(3.) Respect is always to be had, to the general scope and design of the speaker or writer.

(4.) Texts that are consistent with either theory, prove neither.

(5.) Language is to be so interpreted, if it can be, as not to conflict with sound philosophy, matters of fact, the nature of things, or immutable justice.

Let us now, remembering and applying these plain rules of sound interpretation, proceed to the examination of those passages that are supposed to establish the theory of depravity I am examining.

Gen 5:3.--"Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness and after his own image, and called his name Seth." It is not very easy to see, why this text should be pressed into the service of those who hold that human nature is in itself sinful. Why should it be assumed that the likeness and image here spoken of was a moral likeness or image? But, unless this be assumed, the text has nothing to do with the subject.

Again: it is generally admitted, that in all probability Adam was a regenerate man at the time and before the birth of Seth. Is it intended that Adam begat a saint or a sinner? If, as is supposed, Adam was a saint of God, if this text is anything to the purpose, it affirms that Adam begat a saint. But this is the opposite of that in proof of which the text is quoted.

Another text is, Job 14:4.--"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." This text is quoted in support of the position of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, that children inherit from their parents, by natural generation, a sinful nature. Upon this text, I remark,--

(i.) That all that can be made of it, even if we read it without regard to the translation or the context, is, that a physically depraved parent will produce a physically depraved offspring.

(ii.) That this is its real meaning, is quite evident, when we look into the context. Job is treating of the frail and dying state of man, and manifestly has in the text and context his eye wholly on the physical state, and not on the moral character of man. What he intends is; who can bring other than a frail, dying offspring from a frail, dying parent? Not one. This is substantially the view that Professor Stuart takes of this text. The utmost that can be read of it is, that as he belonged to a race of sinners, nothing else could be expected than that he should be a sinner, without meaning to affirm anything in regard to the *quo modo* of this result.

Again: Job 15:14.--"What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous."

(1.) These are the words of Eliphaz, and it is improper to quote them as inspired truth. That Eliphaz uttered this sentiment, let what will be the meaning, there is no reason to doubt; and there is just as little reason to receive his doctrines as inspired truth. For God himself testifies that Job's friends did not hold the truth. But,

(2.) Suppose we receive the text as true, what is its import? Why, it simply asserts, or rather implies, the unrighteousness or sinfulness of the whole human race. It expresses the universality of human depravity, in the very common way of including all that are born of woman. This certainly says nothing, and implies nothing, respecting a sinful constitution. It is just as plain, and just as warrantable, to understand this passage as implying that mankind have become so physically depraved, that this fact, together with the circumstances under which they come into being, and begin their moral career, will certainly, (not necessarily,) result in moral depravity. I might use just such language as that found in this text, and, naturally enough, express by it my own views of moral depravity; to wit, that it results from a physically depraved constitution, and the circumstances of temptation under which children come into this world, and begin and prosecute their moral career; certainly this is the most that can be made of this text.

Again, Psa 51:5.--"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Upon this I remark,--

(1.) It would seem, if this text is to be understood literally, that the Psalmist intended to affirm the sinful state of his mother, at the time of his conception, and during gestation. But,--

(2.) I made a remark that is applicable to all the texts and arguments that are adduced in support of the theory in question; namely, that to take this view of the subject, and to interpret these passages as teaching the constitutional sinfulness of man, is to contradict God's own definition of sin, and the only definition that human reason or common sense can receive, to wit, that "sin is a transgression of the law." This is, no doubt, the only correct definition of sin. But we have seen that the law does not legislate over substance, requiring men to have a certain nature, but over voluntary action only. If the Psalmist really intended to affirm, that the substance of his body was sinful from its conception, then he not only arrays himself against God's own definition of sin, but he also affirms sheer nonsense. The substance of an unborn child sinful! It is impossible! But what did the Psalmist mean? I answer: This verse is found in David's penitential psalm. He was deeply convinced of sin, and was, as he had good reason to be, much excited, and expressed himself, as we all do in similar circumstances, in strong language. His eye, as was natural and is common in such cases, had been directed back along the pathway of life up to the days of his earliest recollection. He remembered sins among the earliest acts of his recollected life. He broke out in the language of this text to express, not the anti-scriptural and nonsensical dogma of a sinful constitution, but to affirm in his strong, poetic language, that he had always been a sinner from the commencement of his moral existence, or from the earliest moment of his capability of being a sinner. This is the strong language of poetry. To press this and similar texts further than this, is to violate two sound rules of biblical interpretation, to wit:--

(1.) That language is to be interpreted according to the subject matter of discourse. And,--

(2.) That one passage is to be so interpreted as not to contradict another. But to make this text state that sin belongs, or may belong, to the substance of an unborn infant, is to make it flatly contradict another passage that defines sin to be a "transgression of the law of God."

Some suppose that, in the passage in question, the Psalmist referred to, and meant to acknowledge and assert, his low and despicable origin, and to say, I was always a sinner, and my mother that conceived me was a sinner, and I am but the degenerate plant of a strange vine, without intending to affirm anything in respect to the absolute sinfulness of his nature.

Again, Psa 58:3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

Upon this text I remark,--

That it has been quoted at one time to establish the doctrine of a sinful nature, and at another to prove that infants commit actual sin from the very day and hour of their birth. But certainly no such use can be legitimately made of this text. It does not affirm anything of a sinful nature, but this has been inferred from what it does affirm, that the wicked are estranged from their birth. But does this mean, that they are really and literally estranged from the day and hour of their birth, and that they really "go astray the very day they are born, speaking lies?" This every one knows to be contrary to fact. The text cannot then be pressed to the letter. What then does it mean? It must mean, like the text last examined, that the wicked are estranged and go astray from the commencement of their moral agency. If it means more than this, it would contradict other plain passages of scripture. It affirms, in strong, graphic, and poetic language, the fact, that the first moral conduct and character of children is sinful. This is all that in truth it can assert, and it doubtless dates the beginning of their moral depravity at a very early period, and expresses it in very strong language, as if it were literally from the hour of birth. But when it adds, that they go astray speaking lies, we know that this is not, and cannot be, literally taken, for, as every one knows, children do not speak at all from their birth. Should we understand the Psalmist as affirming, that children go astray as soon as they go at all, and speak lies as soon as they speak at all, this would not prove that their nature was in itself sinful, but might well consist with the theory that their physical depravity, together with their circumstances of temptation, led them into selfishness, from the very first moment of their moral existence.

Again, Joh 3:6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Upon this I remark--

(1.) That it may, if literally taken, mean nothing more that this, that the body which is born of flesh is flesh, and that that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; that is, that this birth of which he was speaking was of the soul, and not of the body. But--

(2.) It may be understood to mean, that that which results from the influence of the flesh is flesh, in the sense of sin; for this is a common sense of the term flesh in the New Testament, and that which results from the Spirit, is spirit or spiritual, in the sense of holy. This I understand to be the true sense. The text when thus understood, does not at all support the dogma of a sinful nature or constitution, but only this, that the flesh tends to sin, that the appetites and passions are temptations to sin, so that when the will obeys them it sins. Whatever is born of the propensities, in the sense that the will yields to their control, is sinful. And, on the other hand, whatever is born of the Spirit, that is, whatever results from the agency of the Holy Spirit, in the sense that the will yields to Him, is holy.

Again, Eph 2:3. "By nature the children of wrath, even as others." Upon this text I remark--

(1.) That it cannot, consistently with natural justice, be understood to mean, that we are exposed to the wrath of God on account of our nature. It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma, that a holy God is angry with any creature for possessing a nature with which he was sent into being without his knowledge or consent. The Bible represents God as angry with men for their wicked deeds, and not for their nature.

(2.) It is common and proper to speak of the first state in which men universally are, as a natural state. Thus we speak of sinners before regeneration, as in a state of nature, as opposed to a changed state, regenerate state, and a state of grace. By this we do not necessarily mean, that they have a nature sinful in itself, but merely that before regeneration they are universally and morally depraved, that this is their natural, as opposed to their regenerate state. Total moral depravity is the state that follows, and results from their first birth, and is in this sense natural, and in this sense alone, can it truly be said, that they are "by nature children of wrath." Against the use that is made of this text, and all this class of texts, may be arrayed the whole scope of scripture, that represents man as to blame, and to be judged and punished only for his deeds. The subject matter of discourse in these texts is such as to demand that we should understand them as not implying, or asserting, that sin is an essential part of our nature.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XL.

MORAL DEPRAVITY.

FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENTS ADDUCED IN SUPPORT OF THE POSITION, THAT HUMAN NATURE IS IN ITSELF SINFUL.

The defenders of the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, or moral depravity, urge as an additional argument:--

That sin is a universal effect of human nature, and therefore human nature must be itself sinful. Answer,--

This is a *non sequitur*. Sin may be, and must be, an abuse of free agency; and this may be accounted for, as we shall see, by ascribing it to the universality of temptation, and does not at all imply a sinful constitution. But if sin necessarily implies a sinful nature, how did Adam and Eve sin? Had they a sinful nature to account for, and to cause their first sin? How did angels sin? Had they also a sinful nature? Either sin does not imply a sinful nature, or a nature in itself sinful, or Adam and angels must have had sinful natures before their fall.

Again: suppose we regard sin as an event or effect. An effect only implies an adequate cause. Free, responsible will is an adequate cause in the presence of temptation, without the supposition of a sinful constitution, as has been demonstrated in the case of Adam and of angels. When we have found an adequate cause, it is unphilosophical to look for and assign another.

Again: it is said that no motive to sin could be a motive or a temptation, if there were not a sinful taste, relish, or appetite, inherent in the constitution, to which the temptation or motive is addressed. For example, the presence of food, it is said, would be no temptation to eat, were there not a constitutional appetency terminating on food. So the presence of any object could be no inducement to sin, were there not a constitutional appetency or craving for sin. So that, in fact, sin in action were impossible, unless there were sin in the nature. To this I reply,--

Suppose this objection be applied to the sin of Adam and of angels. Can we not account for Eve's eating the forbidden fruit without supposing that she had a craving for sin? The Bible informs us that her craving was for the fruit, for knowledge, and not for sin. The words are,--"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Here is nothing of a craving for sin. Eating this fruit was indeed sinful; but the sin consisted in consenting to gratify, in a prohibited manner, the appetites, not for sin, but for food and knowledge. But the advocates of this theory say, that there must be an adaptedness in the constitution, a something within answering to the outward motive or temptation, otherwise sin were impossible. This is true. But the question is, What is that something within, which responds to the outward motive? Is it a craving for sin? We have just seen what it was in the case of Adam and Eve. It was simply the correlation that existed between the fruit and their constitution, its presence exciting the desires for food and knowledge. This led to prohibited indulgence. But all men sin in precisely the same way. They consent to gratify, not a craving for sin, but a craving for other things, and the consent to make self-gratification an end, is the whole of sin.

This argument assumes as true, what on a former occasion we have seen to be false, namely, that sinners love sin for its own sake. If it could be true, total depravity would of necessity secure perfect blessedness. It would be the very state which the mind supremely loves for its own sake. The sinner could then say, not merely in the language of poetry, but in sober prose and fact, "Evil, be thou my good."

The theologians whose views we are canvassing, maintain that the appetites, passions, desires, and propensities, which are constitutional and entirely involuntary, are in themselves sinful. To this I reply, that Adam and Eve possessed them before they fell. Christ possessed them, or he was not a man, nor, in any proper sense, a human being. No, these appetites, passions, and propensities, are not sinful, though they are the occasions of sin. They are a temptation to the will to seek their unlawful indulgence. When these lusts or appetites are spoken of as the "passions of sin," or as "sinful lusts or passions," it is not because they are sinful in themselves, but because they are the occasions of sin. It has been asked, Why are not the appetites and propensities to be regarded as sinful, since they are the prevalent temptations to sin? I reply,--

(1.) They are involuntary, and moral character can no more be predicated of them, on account of their being temptations, than it could of the fruit that was a temptation to Eve. They have no design to tempt. They are constitutional, unintelligent, involuntary; and it is impossible that moral character should be predicable of them. A moral agent is responsible for his emotions, desires, &c., so far as they are under the direct or indirect control of his will, and no further. He is always responsible for the manner in which he gratifies them. If he indulges them in accordance with the law of God, he does right. If he makes their gratification his end, he sins.

(2.) Again: the death and suffering of infants previous to actual transgression, is adduced as an argument to prove that infants have a sinful nature. To this I reply,--

(i.) That this argument must assume, that there must be sin wherever there is suffering and death. But this assumption proves too much, as it would prove that mere animals have a sinful nature, or have committed actual sin. An argument that proves too much proves nothing.

(ii.) Physical sufferings prove only physical, and not moral, depravity. Previous to moral agency, infants are no more subjects of moral government than brutes are; therefore, their sufferings and death are to be accounted for as are those of brutes, namely, by ascribing them to physical interference with the laws of life and health.

Another argument for a sinful constitution is, that unless infants have a sinful nature, they do not need sanctification to fit them for heaven. Answer:--

(1.) This argument assumes, that, if they are not sinful, they must be holy; whereas they are neither sinful nor holy, until they are moral agents, and render themselves so by obedience or disobedience to the moral law. If they are to go to heaven, they must be made holy or must be sanctified.

(2.) This objection assumes, that previous sinfulness is a condition of the necessity of being holy. This is contrary to fact. Were Adam and angels first sinful before they were sanctified? But it is assumed that unless moral agents are at first sinners, they do not need the Holy Spirit to induce them to be holy. That is, unless their nature is sinful, they would become holy without the Holy Spirit. But where do we ascertain this? Suppose that they have no moral character, and that their nature is neither holy nor sinful. Will they become holy without being enlightened by the Holy Spirit? Who will assert that they will?

(3.) That infants have a sinful nature has been inferred from the institution of circumcision so early as the eighth day after birth. Circumcision, it is truly urged, was designed to teach the necessity of regeneration, and by way of implication, the doctrine of moral depravity. It is claimed, that its being enjoined as obligatory upon the eighth day after birth, was requiring it at the earliest period at which it could be safely performed. From this it is inferred, that infants are to be regarded as morally depraved from their birth.

In answer to this I would say, that infant circumcision was doubtless designed to teach the necessity of their being saved by the Holy Spirit from the dominion of the flesh; that the influence of the flesh must be restrained; and the flesh circumcised, or the soul would be lost. This truth needed to be impressed on the parents from the birth of their children. This very significant, and bloody, and painful rite, was well calculated to impress this truth upon parents, and to lead them from their birth to watch over the developement and indulgence of their propensities, and to pray for their sanctification. Requiring it at so early a day was no doubt designed to indicate, that they are from the first under the dominion of their flesh, without however affording any inference in favour of the idea, that their flesh was in itself sinful, or that the action of their will at that early age was sinful. If reason was not developed, the subjection of the will to appetite could not be sinful. But whether this subjection of the will to the gratification of the appetite was sinful or not, the child must be delivered from it, or it could never be fitted for heaven, any more than a mere brute can be fitted for heaven. The fact, that circumcision was required on the eighth day, and not before, seems to indicate, not that they are sinners absolutely from birth, but that they very early become so, even from the commencement of moral agency.

Again: the rite must be performed at some time. Unless a particular day were appointed, it would be very apt to be deferred, and finally not performed at all. It is probable, that God commanded that it should be done at the earliest period at which it could be safely done, not only for the reasons already assigned, but to prevent its being neglected too long, and perhaps altogether: and perhaps, also, because it would be less painful and dangerous at that early age, when the infant slept most of the time. The longer it was neglected the greater would be the temptation to neglect it altogether. So painful a rite needed to be enjoined by positive statute, at some particular time; and it was desirable on all accounts that it should be done as early as it safely could be. This argument, then, for native constitutional moral depravity amounts really to nothing.

Again: it is urged, that unless infants have a sinful nature, should they die in infancy, they could not be saved by the grace of Christ.

To this I answer, that, in this case they would not, and could not, as a matter of course, be sent to the place of punishment for sinners; because that were to confound the innocent with the guilty, a thing morally impossible with God.

But what grace could there be in saving them from a sinful constitution, that is not exercised in saving them from circumstances that would certainly result in their becoming sinners, if not snatched from them? In neither case do they need pardon for sin. Grace is unearned favour--a gratuity. If the child has a sinful nature, it is his misfortune, and not his crime. To save him from this nature is to save him from those circumstances that will certainly result in actual transgression, unless he is rescued by death and by the Holy Spirit. So if his nature is not sinful, yet it is certain that his nature and circumstances are such, that he will surely sin unless rescued by death or by the Holy Spirit, before he is capable of sinning. It certainly must be an infinite favour to be rescued from such circumstances, and especially to have eternal life conferred as a mere gratuity. This surely is grace. And as infants belong to a race of sinners who are all, as it were, turned over into the hands of Christ, they doubtless will ascribe their salvation to the infinite grace of Christ.

Again: is it not grace that saves us from sinning? What then is it but grace that saves infants from sinning, by snatching them away from circumstances of temptation? In what way does grace save adults from sinning, but by keeping them from temptation, or by giving them grace to overcome it? And is there no grace in rescuing infants from circumstances that are certain, if they are left in them, to lead them into sin?

All that can be justly said in either case is, that if infants are saved at all, which I suppose they are, they are rescued by the benevolence of God from circumstances that would result in certain and eternal death, and are by grace made heirs of eternal life. But after all, it is useless to speculate about the character and destiny of those who are confessedly not moral agents. The benevolence of God will take care of them. It is nonsensical to insist upon their moral depravity before they are moral agents, and it is frivolous to assert, that they must be morally depraved, as a condition of their being saved by grace.

We deny that the human constitution is morally depraved,--

(1.) Because there is no proof of it.

(2.) Because it is impossible that sin should be a quality of the substance of soul or body. It is, and must be, a quality of choice or intention, and not of substance.

(3.) To make sin an attribute or quality of substance is contrary to God's definition of sin. "Sin," says the apostle, "is *anomia*," a "transgression of, or a want of conformity to, the moral law." That is, it consists in a refusal to love God and our neighbour, or, which is the same thing, in loving ourselves supremely.

(4.) To represent the constitution as sinful, is to represent God, who is the author of the constitution, as the author of sin. To say that God is not the direct former of the constitution, but that sin is conveyed by natural generation from Adam, who made himself sinful, is only to remove the objection one step farther back, but not to obviate it; for God established the physical laws that of necessity bring about this result.

(5.) But how came Adam by a sinful nature? Did his first sin change his nature? or did God change it as a penalty for sin? What ground is there for the assertion that Adam's nature became in itself sinful by the fall? This is a groundless, not to say ridiculous, assumption, and an absurdity. Sin an attribute of nature! A sinful substance! Sin a substance! Is it a solid, a fluid, a material, or a spiritual substance?

I have received from a brother the following note on this subject:--

"The orthodox creeds are in some cases careful to say that original sin consists in the substance of neither soul nor body. Thus Bretschneider, who is reckoned among the rationalists in Germany, says: 'The symbolical books very rightly maintained that original sin is not in any sense the substance of man, his body or soul, as Flacius taught,--but that it has been infused into human nature by Satan, and mixed with it, as poison and wine are mixed.'

"They rather expressly guard against the idea that they mean by the phrase 'man's nature,' his substance, but somewhat which is fixed in the substance. They explain original sin, therefore, not as an essential attribute of man, that is, a necessary and essential part of his being, but as an accident, that is, somewhat which does not subsist in itself, but as something accidental, which has come into human nature. He quotes the Formula Concordantiæ as saying: 'Nature does not denote the substance itself of man, but something which inheres fixed in the nature or substance.' Accident is defined, 'what does not subsist by itself, but is in some substance and can be distinguished from it.'"

Here, it seems, is sin by itself, and yet not a substance or subsistence--not a part or attribute of soul or body. What can it be? Does it consist in wrong action? No, not in action, but is an accident which inheres fixed in the nature of substance. But what can it be? Not substance, nor yet action. But if it be anything, it must be either substance or action. If it be a state of substance, what is this but substance in a particular state? What a wonder it must be! Who ever saw it? But it is invisible, for it is something neither matter nor spirit--a virus, a poison mixed with, yet distinct from, the constitution. Do these writers think by this subtlety and refinement to relieve their doctrine of constitutional moral depravity of its intrinsic absurdity? If so, they are greatly mistaken; for really they only render it more absurd and ridiculous.

(6.) I object to the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, that it makes all sin, original and actual, a mere calamity, and not a crime. For those who hold that sin is an essential and inseparable part of our nature, to call it a crime, is to talk nonsense. What! a sinful nature the crime of him upon whom it is entailed, without his knowledge or consent? If the nature is sinful, in such a sense that action must necessarily be sinful, which is the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, then sin in action must be a calamity, and can be no crime. It is the necessary effect of a sinful nature. This cannot be a crime, since the will has nothing to do with it.

(7.) This doctrine represents sin as a disease, and obedience to law impossible, until the nature is changed by a sovereign and physical agency of the Holy Spirit, in which the subject is passive.

(8.) Of course it must render repentance, either with or without the grace of God, impossible, unless grace sets aside our reason. If repentance implies self-condemnation, we can never repent in the exercise of our reason. Constituted as we are, it is impossible that we should condemn ourselves for a sinful nature, or for actions that are unavoidable. The doctrine of original sin, or of a sinful constitution, and of necessary sinful actions, represents the whole moral government of God, the plan of salvation by Christ, and indeed every doctrine of the gospel, as a mere farce. Upon this supposition the law is tyranny, and the gospel an insult to the unfortunate.

(9.) This doctrine represents sin as being of two kinds: original or constitutional, and actual--sin of substance, and sin of action; whereas neither the Bible, nor common sense acknowledges more than one kind of sin, and that consists in disobedience to the law.

(10.) This doctrine represents a sinful nature as the physical cause of actual sin.

(11.) It acknowledges a kind of sin of which no notice will be taken at the judgment. The Bible everywhere represents the deeds done in the body, and not the constitution itself, as the only things to be brought into judgment.

(12.) It necessarily begets in sinners a self-justifying and God-condemning spirit. Man must cease to be a reasonable being, and give himself up to the most ridiculous imaginations, before he can blame himself for Adam's sin, as some have professed to do, or before he can blame himself for possessing a sinful nature, or for sins that unavoidably resulted from a sinful nature.

(13.) This doctrine necessarily leads its advocates rather to pity and excuse sinners, than unqualifiedly to blame them.

(14.) It is difficult, and, indeed, impossible for those who really believe this doctrine, to urge immediate repentance and submission on the sinner, feeling that he is infinitely to blame unless he instantly comply. It is a contradiction to affirm, that a man can heartily believe in the doctrine in question, and yet truly and heartily blame sinners for not doing what is naturally impossible to them. The secret conviction must be in the mind of such an one, that the sinner is not really to blame for being a sinner. For in fact, if this doctrine is true, he is not to blame for being a sinner, any more than he is to blame for being a human being. This the advocate of this doctrine must know. It is vain for him to set up the pretence that he truly blames sinners for their nature, or for their conduct that was unavoidable. He can no more do it, than he can honestly deny the necessary affirmations of his own reason. Therefore the advocates of this theory must merely hold it as a theory, without believing it, or otherwise they must in their secret conviction excuse the sinner.

(15.) This doctrine naturally and necessarily leads its advocates, secretly at least, to ascribe the atonement of Christ rather to justice than to grace--to regard it rather as an expedient to relieve the unfortunate, than to render the forgiveness of the inexcusable sinner, possible. The advocates of the theory cannot but regard the case of the sinner as rather a hard one, and God as under an obligation to provide a way for him to escape a sinful nature, entailed upon him in spite of himself, and from actual transgressions which result from his nature by a law of necessity. If all this is true, the sinner's case is infinitely hard, and God would appear the most unreasonable and cruel of beings, if he did not provide for their escape. These convictions will, and must, lodge in the mind of him who really believes the dogma of a sinful nature. This, in substance, is sometimes affirmed by the defenders of the doctrine of original sin.

(16.) The fact that Christ died in the stead and behalf of sinners, proves that God regarded them not as unfortunate, but as criminal and altogether without excuse. Surely Christ need not have died to atone for the misfortunes of men. His death was to atone for their guilt, and not for their misfortunes. But if they are without excuse for sin, they must be without a sinful nature that renders sin unavoidable. If men are without excuse for sin, as the whole law and gospel assume and teach, it cannot possibly be that their nature is sinful, for a sinful nature would be the best of all excuses for sin.

(17.) This doctrine is a stumbling-block both to the church and the world, infinitely dishonourable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect, and should be banished from every pulpit, and from every formula of doctrine, and from the world. It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself. This view of moral depravity that I am opposing, has long been the stronghold of universalism. From it, the universalists inveighed with resistless force against the idea that sinners would be sent to an eternal hell. Assuming the long-defended doctrine of original or constitutional sinfulness, they proceed to show, that it would be infinitely unreasonable and unjust in God to send them to hell. What! create them with a sinful nature, from which proceed, by a law of necessity, actual transgressions, and then send them to an eternal hell for having this nature, and for transgressions that are unavoidable? Impossible! they say; and the human intellect responds, Amen.

(18.) From the dogma of a sinful nature or constitution also, has naturally and irresistibly flowed the doctrine of inability to repent, and the necessity of a physical regeneration. These too have been a sad stumbling-block to universalists, as every one knows who is at all acquainted with the history of universalism. They infer the salvation of all men, from the fact of God's benevolence and physical omnipotence! God is almighty, and he is love. Men are constitutionally depraved, and are unable to repent. God will not, cannot send them to hell. They do not deserve it. Sin is a calamity, and God can save them, and he ought to do so. This is the substance of their argument. And assuming the truth of their premises, there is no evading their conclusion. But the whole argument is built on "such stuff as dreams are made of." Strike out the erroneous dogma of a sinful nature, and the whole edifice of universalism comes to the ground in a moment.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLI.

MORAL DEPRAVITY.

We come now to consider--

2. THE PROPER METHOD OF ACCOUNTING FOR MORAL DEPRAVITY.

The term "moral" is from the Latin *mos*, manners. The term "depravity," as has been shown, is from *de* and *pravus*, crooked. The terms united, signify crooked manners, or bad morals. The word *amartia*, rendered sin, as has been said, signifies to miss the mark, to aim at the wrong end, a deviation from the divine law. In this discussion I must,

(1.) Remind you of some positions that have been settled respecting moral depravity.

(2.) Consult the oracles of God respecting the nature of moral depravity, or sin.

(3.) Consult the oracles of God in respect to the proper method of accounting for the existence of sin.

(4.) Show the manner in which it is to be accounted for as an ultimate fact.

(1.) *Some positions that have been settled.*

(i.) It has been shown that moral depravity resolves itself into selfishness.

(ii.) That selfishness consists in the supreme choice of self-indulgence.

(iii.) That self-indulgence consists in the committal of the will to the gratification of the sensibility, as opposed to obeying the law of the reason, and of God.

(iv.) That sin, or moral depravity, is a unit, and always consists in this committed state of the will to self-gratification, irrespective of the particular form or means of self-gratification.

(v.) It has also been shown, that moral depravity does not consist in a sinful nature.

(vi.) And, also that actual transgression cannot justly be ascribed to a sinful constitution.

(vii.) We have also seen that all sin is actual, and that no other than actual transgression can justly be called sin.

(2.) *We are to consult the oracles of God respecting the nature of moral depravity, or sin.*

Reference has often been made to the teachings of inspiration upon this subject. But it is important to review our ground in this place, that we may ascertain what are the teachings, and what are the assumptions, of the bible in regard to the nature of sin. Does it assume that as a truth, which natural theology teaches upon the subject? What is taught in the bible, either expressly, or by way of inference and implication, upon this subject?

(i.) The Bible gives a formal definition of sin. 1Jo 3:4, "Sin is a transgression of the law;" and 1Jo 5:17, "All unrighteousness is sin." As was remarked on a former occasion, this definition is not only an accurate one, but it is the only one that can possibly be true.

(ii.) The Bible everywhere makes the law the only standard of right and wrong, and obedience to it to be the whole of virtue, and disobedience to it the whole of sin. This truth lies everywhere upon the face of the Bible. It is taught, assumed, implied, or expressed, on every page of the Bible.

(iii.) It holds men responsible for their voluntary actions alone, or more strictly for their choices alone, and expressly affirms, that "if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." That is, willing as God directs is accepted as obedience, whether we are able to execute our choices or not.

(iv.) The Bible always represents sin as something done or committed, or wilfully omitted, and never as a part or attribute of soul or body. We have seen, that the texts that have been relied on, as teaching the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, when rightly understood, mean no such thing.

(v.) The Bible assures us, that all sin shall pass in review at the solemn judgment, and always represents all sin then to be recognized, as consisting in "the deeds done in the body." Texts that support these assertions are too numerous to need to be quoted, as every reader of the Bible knows.

(3.) *We are to consult the Bible in respect to the proper method of accounting for moral depravity.*

(i.) We have more than once seen that the Bible has given us the history of the introduction of sin into our world; and that from the narrative, it is plain, that the first sin consisted in selfishness, or in consenting to indulge the excited constitutional propensities in a prohibited manner. In other words, it consisted in yielding the will to the impulses of the sensibility, instead of abiding by the law of God, as revealed in the intelligence. Thus the Bible ascribes the first sin of our race to the influence of temptation.

(ii.) The Bible once, and only once, incidentally intimates that Adam's first sin has in some way been the occasion, not the necessary physical cause, of all the sins of men. Rom 5:12-19.

(iii.) It neither says nor intimates anything in relation to the manner in which Adam's sin has occasioned this result. It only incidentally recognizes the fact, and then leaves it, just as if the *quo modo* was too obvious to need explanation.

(iv.) In other parts of the Bible we are informed how we are to account for the existence of sin among men. For example, Jam 1:15, "When lust ('desire', *epithumia*) has conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Here sin is represented, not as the desire itself, but as consisting in the consent of the will to gratify the desire.

James says again, that a man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, (*epithumia* "desires") and enticed. That is, his lusts, or the impulses of his sensibility, are his tempters. When he or his will is overcome of these, he sins.

(v.) Paul and other inspired writers represent sin as consisting in a carnal or fleshly mind, in the mind of the flesh, or in minding the flesh. It is plain that by the term flesh they mean what we understand by the sensibility, as distinguished from intellect, and that they represent sin as consisting in obeying, minding the impulses of the sensibility. They represent the world, and the flesh, and Satan, as the three great sources of temptation. It is plain that the world and Satan tempt by appeals to the flesh, or to the sensibility. Hence, the apostles have much to say of the necessity of the destruction of the flesh, of the members, of putting off the old man with his deeds, &c. Now, it is worthy of remark, that all this painstaking, on the part of inspiration, to intimate the source from whence our sin proceeds, and to apprise us of the proper method of accounting for it, and also of avoiding it, has probably been the occasion of leading certain philosophers and theologians who have not carefully examined the whole subject, to take a view of it which is directly opposed to the truth intended by the inspired writers. Because so much is said of the influence of the flesh over the mind, they have inferred that the nature and physical constitution of man is itself sinful. But the representations of Scripture are, that the body is the occasion of sin. The law in his members, that warred against the law of his mind, of which Paul speaks, is manifestly the impulse of the sensibility opposed to the law of the reason. This law, that is, the impulse of his sensibility, brings him into captivity, that is, influences his will, in spite of all his convictions to the contrary.

In short, the Bible rightly interpreted, everywhere assumes and implies, that sin consists in selfishness. It is remarkable, if the Bible be read with an eye to its teachings and assumptions on this point, to what an extent this truth will appear.

(4.) How moral depravity is to be accounted for.

(i.) It consists, remember, in the committal of the will to the gratification or indulgence of self--in the will's following, or submitting itself to be governed by, the impulses and desires of the sensibility, instead of submitting itself to the law of God revealed in the reason.

(ii.) This definition of the thing shows how it is to be accounted for, namely; the sensibility acts as a powerful impulse to the will, from the moment of birth, and secures the consent and activity of the will to procure its gratification, before the reason is at all developed. The will is thus committed to the gratification of feeling and appetite, when first the idea of moral obligation is developed. This committed state of the will is not moral depravity, and has no moral character, until the idea of moral obligation is developed. The moment this idea is developed, this committal of the will to self-indulgence must be abandoned, or it becomes selfishness, or moral depravity. But, as the will is already in a state of committal, and has to some extent already formed the habit of seeking to gratify feeling, and as the idea of moral obligation is at first but feebly developed, unless the Holy Spirit interferes to shed light on the soul, the will, as might be expected, retains its hold on self-gratification. Here alone moral character commences, and must commence. No one can conceive of its commencing earlier. Let it be remembered, that selfishness consists in the supreme and ultimate choice, or in the preference of self-gratification as an end, or for its own sake, over all other interests. Now, as the choice of an end implies and includes the choice of the means, selfishness, of course, causes all that outward life and activity that makes up the entire history of sinners.

This selfish choice is the wicked heart--the propensity to sin--that causes what is generally termed actual transgression. This sinful choice is properly enough called indwelling sin. It is the latent, standing, controlling preference of the mind, and the cause of all the outward and active life. It is not the choice of sin itself, distinctly conceived of, or chosen as sin, but the choice of self-gratification, which choice is sin.

Again: It should be remembered, that the physical depravity of our race has much to do with our moral depravity. A diseased physical system renders the appetites, passions, tempers, and propensities more clamorous and despotic in their demands, and of course constantly urging to selfishness, confirms and strengthens it. It should be distinctly remembered that physical depravity has no moral character in itself. But yet it is a source of fierce temptation to selfishness. The human sensibility is, manifestly, deeply physically depraved; and as sin, or moral depravity, consists in committing the will to the gratification of the sensibility, its physical depravity will mightily strengthen moral depravity. Moral depravity is then universally owing to temptation. That is, the soul is tempted to self-indulgence, and yields to the temptation, and this yielding, and not the temptation, is sin or moral depravity. This is manifestly the way in which Adam and Eve became morally depraved. They were tempted, even by undepraved appetite, to prohibited indulgence, and were overcome. The sin did not lie in the constitutional desire of food, or of knowledge, or in the excited state of these appetites or desires, but in the consent of the will to prohibited indulgence.

Just in the same way all sinners become such, that is, they become morally depraved, by yielding to temptation to self-gratification under some form. Indeed, it is impossible that they should become morally depraved in any other way. To deny this were to overlook the very nature of moral depravity. It is remarkable, that President Edwards, after writing five hundred pages, in which he confounds physical and moral depravity; in answer to an objection of Dr. Taylor of England, that his view made God the author of the constitution, the author also of sin, turns immediately round, and without seeming aware of his own inconsistency, ascribes all sin to temptation, and makes it consist altogether in obeying the propensities, just as I have done. His words are--

"One argument against a supposed native, sinful depravity, which Dr. Taylor greatly insists upon, is, 'that this does, in effect, charge Him who is the author of our nature, who formed us in the womb, with being the author of a sinful corruption of nature; and that it is highly injurious to the God of our nature, whose hands have formed and fashioned us, to believe our nature to be originally corrupted, and that in the worst sense of corruption.'

"With respect to this, I would observe, in the first place, that this writer, in handling this grand objection, supposes something to belong to the doctrine objected against, as maintained by the divines whom he is opposing, which does not belong to it, nor follow from it. As particularly, he supposes the doctrine of original sin to imply, that nature must be corrupted by some positive influence; 'something, by some means or other, infused into human nature; some quality or other, not from the choice of our minds, but like a taint, tincture, or infection, altering the natural constitution, faculties, and dispositions of our souls! That sin and evil dispositions are implanted in the *fetus* in the womb.' Whereas truly our doctrine neither implies nor infers any such thing. In order to account for a sinful corruption of nature, yea, a total native depravity of the heart of man, there is not the least need of supposing any evil quality infused, implanted, or wrought into the nature of man, by any positive cause or influence whatsoever, either from God, or the creature; or of supposing that man is conceived and born with a fountain of evil in his heart, such as is anything properly positive. I think a little attention to the nature of things will be sufficient to satisfy any impartial, considerate inquirer, that the absence of positive good principles, and so the withholding of a special divine influence to impart and maintain those good principles--leaving the common natural principles of self-love, natural appetite, &c, to themselves, without the government of superior divine principles, will certainly be followed with the corruption, yea, the total corruption of the heart, without occasion for any positive influences at all. And that it was thus in fact, that corruption of nature came on Adam immediately on his fall, and comes on all his posterity as sinning in him, and falling with him.

"The case with man was plainly this: When God made man at first he implanted in him two kinds of principles. There was an inferior kind which may be natural, being the principles of mere human nature; such as self-love, with those natural appetites and passions which belong to the nature of man, in which his love to his own liberty, honour, and pleasure, were exercised. These, when alone, and left to themselves, are what the scriptures sometimes call flesh. Besides these, there were superior principles, that were spiritual, holy, and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love; wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness; which are called in scripture the divine nature. These principles may, in some sense, be called supernatural, being (however concreated or connate, yet) such as are above those principles that are essentially implied in, or necessarily resulting from, and inseparably connected with, mere human nature: and being such as immediately depend on man's union and communion with God, or divine communications and influences of God's Spirit, which though withdrawn, and man's nature forsaken of these principles, human nature would be human nature still; man's nature, as such, being entire without these divine principles, which the scripture sometimes calls spirit, in contradistinction to flesh. These superior principles were given to possess the throne, and maintain absolute dominion in the heart; the other to be wholly subordinate and subservient. And while things continued thus, all was in excellent order, peace, and beautiful harmony, and in a proper and perfect state. These divine principles thus reigning, were the dignity, life, happiness, and glory of man's nature. When man sinned and broke God's covenant, and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart; for, indeed, God then left him, that communion with God on which these principles depended, entirely ceased; the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forsook the house, because it would have been utterly improper in itself, and inconsistent with the constitution God had established, that he should still maintain communion with man, and continue, by his friendly, gracious, vital influences, to dwell with him and in him, after he was become a rebel, and had incurred God's wrath and curse. Therefore, immediately the superior divine principles wholly ceased; so light ceases in a room when the candle is withdrawn; and thus man was left in a state of darkness, woeful corruption, and ruin; nothing but flesh without spirit. The inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite, which were given only to serve, being alone, and left to themselves, of course became reigning principles; having no superior principles to regulate or control them, they became the absolute masters of the heart. The immediate consequence of which was a fatal catastrophe, a turning of all things upside down, and the succession of a state of the most odious and dreadful confusion. Man immediately set up himself, and the objects of his private affections and appetites, as supreme, and so they took the place of God. These inferior principles were like fire in a house; which we say is a good servant, but a bad master; very useful while kept in this place, but if left to take possession of the whole house, soon brings all to destruction. Man's love to his own honour, separate interests, and private pleasure, which before was wholly subordinate unto love to God, and regard to his authority and glory, now disposes and impels him to pursue those objects, without regard to God's honour or law; because there is no true regard to these divine things left in him. In consequence of which, he seeks those objects as much when against God's honour and law, as when agreeable to them. God still continuing strictly to require supreme regard to himself, and forbidding all undue gratification of these inferior passions; but only in perfect subordination to the ends, and agreeable to the rules and limits which his holiness, honour, and law prescribe; hence, immediately arises enmity in the heart, now wholly under the power of self-love; and nothing but war ensures, in a course against God. As when a subject has once renounced his lawful sovereign, and set up a pretender in his stead, a state of enmity and war against his rightful king necessarily ensues. It were easy to show, how every lust, and depraved disposition of man's heart, would naturally arise from this privative original, if here were room for it. Thus it is easy to give an account, how total corruption of heart should follow on man's eating the forbidden fruit, though that was but one act of sin, without God putting any evil into his heart, or implanting any bad principle, or infusing any corrupt taint, and so becoming the author of depravity. Only God's withdrawing, as it was highly proper and necessary that he should, from rebel man, and his natural principles being left to themselves, is sufficient to account for his becoming entirely corrupt, and bent on sinning against God.

"And as Adam's nature became corrupt, without God's implanting or infusing of any evil thing into it; so does the nature of his posterity. God dealing with Adam as the head of his posterity, as has been shown, and treating them as one, he deals with his posterity as having all sinned in him. And therefore, as God withdrew spiritual communion, and his vital, gracious influence from all the members, as they come into existence; whereby they come into the world mere flesh, and entirely under the government of natural and inferior principles; and so become wholly corrupt, as Adam did."--*Edwards' Works*, pp. 532-538.

To sum up the truth upon this subject in few words, I would say--

1. Moral depravity in our first parents was induced by temptation addressed to the unperverted susceptibilities of their nature. When these susceptibilities became strongly excited, they overcame the will; that is, the human pair were over-persuaded, and fell under the temptation. This has been repeatedly said, but needs repetition in a summing up.

2. All moral depravity commences in substantially the same way. Proof:--

(1.) The impulses of the sensibility are developed, and gradually commencing from the birth, and depending on physical developement and birth.

(2.) The first acts of will are in obedience to these.

(3.) Self-gratification is the rule of action previous to the developement of reason.

(4.) No resistance is offered to the will's indulgence of appetite, until a habit of self-indulgence is formed.

(5.) When reason affirms moral obligation, it finds the will in a state of habitual and constant committal to the impulses of the sensibility.

(6.) The demands of the sensibility have become more and more despotic every hour of indulgence.

(7.) In this state of things, unless the Holy Spirit interpose, the idea of moral obligation will be but dimly developed.

(8.) The will of course rejects the bidding of reason, and cleaves to self-indulgence.

(9.) This is the settling of a fundamental question. It is deciding in favour of appetite, against the claims of conscience and of God.

(10.) Light once rejected, can be afterwards more easily resisted, until it is nearly excluded altogether.

(11.) Selfishness confirms, and strengthens, and perpetuates itself by a natural process. It grows with the sinner's growth, and strengthens with his strength; and will do so for ever, unless overcome by the Holy Spirit through the truth.

REMARKS.

1. Adam, being the natural head of the race, would naturally, by the wisest constitution of things, greatly affect for good or evil his whole posterity.

2. His sin in many ways exposed his posterity to aggravated temptation. Not only the physical constitution of all men, but all the influences under which they first form their moral character, are widely different from what they would have been, if sin had never been introduced.

3. When selfishness is understood to be the whole of moral depravity, its *quo modo*, or in what way it comes to exist, is manifest. Clear conceptions of the thing will instantly reveal the occasion and manner.

4. The only difficulty in accounting for it, has been the false assumption, that there must be, and is, something lying back of the free actions of the will, which sustains to those actions the relation of a cause, that is itself sinful.

5. If holy Adam, and holy angels, could fall under temptations addressed to their undepraved sensibility, how absurd it is to conclude, that sin in those who are born with a physically depraved constitution, cannot be accounted for, without ascribing it to original sin, or to a nature that is in itself sinful.

6. Without divine illumination, the moral character will of course be formed under the influence of the flesh. That is, the lower propensities will of course influence the will, unless the reason be developed by the Holy Spirit, as was said by President Edwards, in the extract just quoted.

7. The dogma of constitutional moral depravity, is a part and parcel of the doctrine of a necessitated will. It is a branch of a grossly false and heathenish philosophy. How infinitely absurd, dangerous, and unjust, then, to embody it in a standard of Christian doctrine, to give it the place of an indispensable article of faith, and denounce all who will not swallow its absurdities, as heretics. O, shame!

8. We are unable to say precisely at what age infants become moral agents, and of course how early they become sinners. Doubtless there is much difference among children in this respect. Reason is developed in one earlier than in another, according to the constitution and circumstances.

A thorough consideration of the subject, will doubtless lead to the conviction, that children become moral agents much earlier than is generally supposed. The conditions of moral agency are, as has been repeatedly said in former lectures, the possession of the powers of moral agency, together with the developement of the ideas of the good or valuable, of moral obligation or oughtness--of right and wrong--of praise and blameworthiness. I have endeavoured to show, in former lectures, that mental satisfaction, blessedness or happiness, is the ultimate good. Satisfaction arising from the gratification of the appetites, is one of the earliest experiences of human beings. This no doubt suggest or developes, at a very early period, the idea of the good or the valuable. The idea is doubtless developed, long before the word that expresses it is understood. The child knows that happiness is good, and seeks it in the form of self-gratification, long before the terms that designate this state of mind are at all understood. It knows that its own enjoyment is worth seeking, and doubtless very early has the idea, that the enjoyment of others is worth seeking, and affirms to itself, not in words, but in idea, that it ought to please its parents and those around it. It knows, in fact, though language is as yet unknown, that it loves to be gratified, and to be happy, that it loves and seeks enjoyment for itself, and doubtless has the idea that it ought not to displease and distress those around it, but that it ought to endeavour to please and gratify them. This is probably among the first ideas, if not the very first idea, of the pure reason that is developed, that is, the idea of the good, the valuable, the desirable; and the next must be that of oughtness, or of moral obligation, or of right and wrong, &c. I say again, these ideas are, and must be developed, before the signs or words that express them are at all understood, and the words would never be understood except the idea were first developed. We always find, at the earliest period at which children can understand words, that they have the idea of obligation, of right and wrong. As soon as these words are understood by them, they recognize them as expressing ideas already in their own minds, and which ideas they have had further back than they can remember. Some, and indeed most persons, seem to have the idea, that children affirm themselves to be under moral obligation, before they have the idea of the good; that they affirm their obligation to obey their parents before they know, or have the idea of the good or of the valuable. But this is, and must be a mistake. They may and do affirm obligation to obey their parents, before they can express in language, and before they would understand, a statement of the grounds of their obligation. The idea, however, they have, and must have, or they could not affirm obligation. It is agreed, and cannot be denied, that moral obligation respects acts of will, and not strictly outward action. It is agreed, and cannot be denied, that obligation respects intelligent actions of will. It is also agreed, and cannot be denied, that all intelligent acts of will, and such as those to which moral obligation belongs, must respect ends or means. If, therefore, one has any true idea of moral obligation, it must respect acts of will or intentions. It must respect the choice of an end, or of means. If it respect the choice of a means, the idea of the end must exist. It cannot justly affirm obligation of anything but choice or intention, for, as a matter of fact, obligation belongs to nothing else. The fact is, the child knows that it ought to please its parent, and seek to make its parent happy. This it knows, that it ought to intend, long before it knows what the word intention means. Upon this assumption it bases all its affirmations in respect to its obligation to obey its parents and others that are around it. It regards its own satisfaction or enjoyment as a good, and seeks it, before it knows what the words mean that express this state of mind. It also knows, that the enjoyment of others is a good, and affirms not in word, but in idea, that it ought to seek the enjoyment of all. This idea is the basis upon which all affirmations of obligation rest, and if it be truly an idea of real obligation, it is impossible that the idea of the good, or of the value of enjoyment, should not be its base. To assert the contrary, is to overlook the admitted fact, that moral obligation must respect choice, and the choice of an end; that it must respect intention. It is absurd to suppose, that a being can truly affirm moral obligation, in respect to outward action before he has the idea of the obligation to will, or intend, an end. The idea of an end may not be developed in words, that is, the word expressive of the idea may not be understood, but the idea must be in the mind, in a state of developement, or there can be no affirmation of obligation. The fact is, there is a logical connection between the idea of the good, and the idea of moral obligation, of right and wrong, of praise and blameworthiness. These latter ideas cannot exist without the first, and the existence of that necessitates the developement of these. These are first truths of reason. In other words, these ideas are universally and necessarily developed in the minds of moral agents, and indeed their developement is the condition of moral agency. Most of the first truths are developed in idea, long before the language in which they are expressed is or can be understood. Thus the ideas of space, of time, of causality, of liberty of will, or ability, of the good, of oughtness, or obligation of right and wrong, of praise or blameworthiness, and many others, are developed before the meaning of these words is at all understood. Human beings come gradually to understand the words or signs that represent their ideas, and afterwards, so often express their ideas in words, that they finally get the impression that they received the idea from the word, whereas, in every instance, in respect to the first truths of reason, they had the idea long before they understood, or perhaps ever heard, the word that represents it, and was coined to express it.

9. Those persons who maintain the sinfulness of the constitutional appetites, must of course deny, that men can ever be entirely sanctified in this life, and must maintain, as they do, that death must complete the work of sanctification.

10. False notions of moral depravity lie at the foundation of all the objections I have seen to the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life.

11. A diseased nervous system is a fierce temptation. Some forms of disease expose the soul to much trial. Dyspeptic and nervous persons need superabounding grace.

12. Why sin is so natural to mankind. Not because their nature is itself sinful, but because the appetites and passions tend so strongly to self-indulgence. These are temptations to sin, but sin itself consists not in these appetites and propensities, but in the voluntary committal of the will to their indulgence. This committal of the will is selfishness, and when the will is once given up to sin, it is very natural to sin. The will once committed to self-indulgence as its end, selfish actions are in a sense spontaneous.

13. The doctrine of original sin, as held by its advocates, must essentially modify the whole system of practical theology. This will be seen as we proceed in our investigations.

14. The constitution of a moral being as a whole, when all the powers are developed, does not tend to sin, but strongly in an opposite direction; as is manifest from the fact that when reason is thoroughly developed by the Holy Spirit, it is more than a match for the sensibility, and turns the heart to God.

15. The difficulty is, that the sensibility gets the start of reason, and engages the attention in devising means of self-gratification, and thus retards, and in a great measure prevents, the developement of the ideas of the reason which were designed to control the will.

16. It is this morbid developement that the Holy Spirit is given to rectify, by so forcing truth upon the attention, as to secure the developement of the reason. By doing this, he brings the will under the influence of truth. Our senses reveal to us the objects correlated to our animal nature and propensities. The Holy Spirit reveals God and the spiritual world, and all that class of objects that are correlated to our higher nature, so as to give reason the control of the will. This is regeneration and sanctification, as we shall see in its proper place.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLII.

REGENERATION.

In the examination of this subject I will--

I. POINT OUT THE COMMON DISTINCTION BETWEEN REGENERATION AND CONVERSION.

II. STATE THE ASSIGNED REASONS FOR THIS DISTINCTION.

III. STATE OBJECTIONS TO THIS DISTINCTION.

IV. SHOW WHAT REGENERATION IS NOT.

V. WHAT IT IS.

VI. ITS UNIVERSAL NECESSITY.

VII. AGENCIES EMPLOYED IN IT.

VIII. INSTRUMENTALITIES EMPLOYED IN IT.

IX. THAT IN REGENERATION THE SUBJECT IS BOTH ACTIVE AND PASSIVE.

X. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REGENERATION.

XI. PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES OF REGENERATION.

XII. EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

I. *I am to point out the common distinction between regeneration and conversion.*

1. Regeneration is the term used by some theologians to express the divine agency in changing the heart.

2. With them regeneration does not include and imply the activity of the subject, but rather excludes it. These theologians, as will be seen in its place, hold that a change of heart is first effected by the Holy Spirit while the subject is passive, which change lays a foundation for the exercise, by the subject, of repentance, faith, and love.

3. The term conversion with them expresses the activity and turning of the subject, after regeneration is effected by the Holy Spirit. Conversion with them does not include or imply the agency of the Holy Spirit, but expresses only the activity of the subject. With them the Holy Spirit first regenerates or changes the heart, after which the sinner turns or converts himself. So that God and the subject work each in turn. God first changes the heart, and as a consequence, the subject afterwards converts himself or turns to God. Thus the subject is passive in regeneration, but active in conversion.

When we come to the examination of the philosophical theories of regeneration, we shall see that the views of these theologians respecting regeneration result naturally and necessarily from their holding the dogma of constitutional moral depravity, which we have recently examined. Until their views on that subject are corrected, no change can be expected in their views of this subject. I said in a concluding remark, when upon the subject of moral depravity, that erroneous views upon that subject must necessarily materially affect and modify one's views upon most of the questions in practical theology. Let us bear this remark in mind as we proceed, not only in the discussions immediately before us, but also in all our future investigations, that we may duly appreciate the importance of clear and correct views on the subject of practical theology.

II. *I am to state the assigned reasons for this distinction.*

1. The original term plainly expresses and implies other than the agency of the subject.

2. We need and must adopt a term that will express the Divine agency.

3. Regeneration is expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

4. Conversion, as it implies and expresses the activity and turning of the subject, does not include and imply any Divine agency, and therefore does not imply or express what is intended by regeneration.

5. As two agencies are actually employed in the regeneration and conversion of a sinner, it is necessary to adopt terms that will clearly teach this fact, and clearly distinguish between the agency of God and of the creature.

6. The terms regeneration and conversion aptly express this distinction, and therefore should be theologically employed.

III. *I am to state the objections to this distinction.*

1. The original term *gennao*, with its derivatives, may be rendered, (1.) To beget. (2.) To bear or bring forth. (3.) To be begotten. (4.) To be born, or brought forth.

2. Regeneration is in the Bible the same as the new birth.

3. To be born again is the same thing in the Bible use of the term, as to have a new heart, to be a new creature, to pass from death unto life. In other words, to be born again is to have a new moral character, to become holy. To regenerate is to make holy. To be born of God, no doubt, expresses and includes the Divine agency, but it also includes and expresses that which the Divine agency is employed in effecting, namely, making the sinner holy. Certainly, a sinner is not regenerated whose moral character is unchanged. If he were, how could it be truly said, that whosoever is born of God overcometh the world, doth not commit sin, cannot sin, &c.? If regeneration does not imply and include a change of moral character in the subject, how can regeneration be made the condition of salvation? The fact is, the term regeneration, or the being born of God, is designed to express primarily and principally the thing done, that is, the making of a sinner holy, and expresses also the fact, that God's agency induces the change. Throw out the idea of what is done, that is, the change of moral character in the subject, and he would not be born again, he would not be regenerated, and it could not be truly said, in such a case, that God had regenerated him.

It has been objected, that the term really means and expresses only the Divine agency; and only by way of implication, embraces the idea of a change of moral character and of course of activity in the subject. To this I reply--

(1.) That if it really expresses only the Divine agency, it leaves out of view the thing effected by Divine agency.

(2.) That it really and fully expresses not only the Divine agency, but also that which this agency accomplishes.

(3.) The thing which the agency of God brings about, is a new or spiritual birth, a resurrection from spiritual death, the inducing of a new and holy life. The thing done is the prominent idea expressed or intended by the term.

(4.) The thing done implies the turning or activity of the subject. It is nonsense to affirm that his moral character is changed without any activity or agency of his own. Passive holiness is impossible. Holiness is obedience to the law of God, the law of love, and of course consists in the activity of the creature.

(5.) We have said that regeneration is synonymous in the Bible with a new heart. But sinners are required to make to themselves a new heart, which they could not do, if they were not active in this change. If the work is a work of God, in such a sense, that He must first regenerate the heart or soul before the agency of the sinner begins, it were absurd and unjust to require him to make to himself a new heart, until he is first regenerated.

Regeneration is ascribed to man in the gospel, which it could not be, if the term were designed to express only the agency of the Holy Spirit. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."-- 1Co 4:15.

(6.) Conversion is spoken of in the Bible as the work of another than the subject of it, and cannot therefore have been designed to express only the activity of the subject of it. (1.) It is ascribed to the word of God.--"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."-- Psa 19:7. (2.) To man. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."-- Jam 5:19-20.

(7.) Both conversion and regeneration are sometimes in the Bible ascribed to God, sometimes to man, and sometimes to the subject; which shows clearly that the distinction under examination is arbitrary and theological, rather than biblical.

(8.) The fact is, that both terms imply the simultaneous exercise of both human and Divine agency. The fact that a new heart is the thing done, demonstrates the activity of the subject; and the word regeneration, or the expression "born of the Holy Spirit," asserts the Divine agency. The same is true of conversion, or the turning the sinner to God. God is said to turn him, and he is said to turn himself. God draws him, and he follows. In both alike God and man are both active, and their activity is simultaneous. God works or draws, and the sinner yields or turns, or which is the same thing, changes his heart, or, in other words, is born again. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins. God calls on him, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph 5:14. God calls; the sinner hears and answers, Here am I. God says, Arise from the dead. The sinner puts forth his activity, and God draws him into life; or rather, God draws, and the sinner comes forth to life.

(9.) The distinction set up is not only not recognized in the Bible, but is plainly of most injurious tendency, for two reasons:--

(i.) It assumes and inculcates a false philosophy of depravity and regeneration.

(ii.) It leads the sinner to wait to be regenerated, before he repents or turns to God. It is of most fatal tendency to represent the sinner as under a necessity of waiting to be passively regenerated, before he gives himself to God.

As the distinction is not only arbitrary, but anti-scriptural and injurious, and inasmuch as it is founded in, and is designed to teach, a philosophy false and pernicious on the subject of depravity and regeneration, I shall drop and discard the distinction; and in our investigations henceforth, let it be understood, that I use regeneration and conversion as synonymous terms.

IV. *I am to show what regeneration is not.*

It is not a change in the substance of soul or body. If it were, sinners could not be required to effect it. Such a change would not constitute a change of moral character. No such change is needed, as the sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use these powers and attributes as he ought. The words conversion and regeneration do not imply any change of substance, but only a change of moral state or of moral character. The terms are not used to express a physical, but a moral change. Regeneration does not express or imply the creation of any new faculties or attributes of nature, nor any change whatever in the constitution of body or mind. I shall remark further upon this point when we come to the examination of the philosophical theories of regeneration before alluded to.

V. *What regeneration is.*

It has been said that regeneration and a change of heart are identical. It is important to inquire into the scriptural use of the term heart. The term, like most others, is used in the Bible in various senses. The heart is often spoken of in the Bible, not only as possessing moral character, but as being the source of moral action, or as the fountain from which good and evil actions flow, and of course as constituting the fountain of holiness or of sin, or, in other words still, as comprehending, strictly speaking, the whole of moral character. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."-- Mat 15:18-19. "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."-- Mat 12:34-35. When the heart is thus represented as possessing moral character, and as the fountain of good and evil, it cannot mean,--

1. The bodily organ that propels the blood.

2. It cannot mean the substance of the soul or mind itself: substance cannot in itself possess moral character.

3. It is not any faculty or natural attribute.

4. It cannot consist in any constitutional taste, relish, or appetite, for these cannot in themselves have moral character.

5. It is not the sensibility or feeling faculty of the mind: for we have seen, that moral character cannot be predicated of it. It is true, and let it be understood, that the term heart is used in the Bible in these senses, but not when the heart is spoken of as the fountain of moral action. When the heart is represented as possessing moral character, the word cannot be meant to designate any involuntary state of mind. For neither the substance of soul or body, nor any involuntary state of mind can, by any possibility, possess moral character in itself. The very idea of moral character implies, and suggests the idea of, a free action or intention. To deny this, were to deny a first truth.

6. This term heart, when applied to mind, is figurative, and means something in the mind that has some point of resemblance to the bodily organ of that name, and a consideration of the function of the bodily organ will suggest the true idea of the heart of the mind. The heart of the body propels the vital current, and sustains organic life. It is the fountain from which the vital fluid flows, from which either life or death may flow, according to the state of the blood. The mind as well as the body has a heart which, as we have seen, is represented as a fountain, or as an efficient propelling influence, out of which flows good or evil, according as the heart is good or evil. This heart is represented, not only as the source or fountain of good and evil, but as being either good or evil in itself, as constituting the character of man, and not merely as being capable of moral character.

It is also represented as something over which we have control, for which we are responsible, and which, in case it is wicked, we are bound to change on pain of death. Again: the heart, in the sense in which we are considering it, is that, the radical change of which constitutes a radical change of moral character. This is plain from Matthew xii. 34, 35, and xv. 18, 19, already considered.

7. Our own consciousness, then, must inform us that the heart of the mind that possesses these characteristics, can be nothing else than the supreme ultimate intention of the soul. Regeneration is represented in the Bible as constituting a radical change of character, as the resurrection from a death in sin, as the beginning of a new and spiritual life, as constituting a new creature, as a new creation, not a physical, but a moral or spiritual creation, as conversion, or turning to God, as giving God the heart, as loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Now we have seen abundantly, that moral character belongs to, or is an attribute of, the ultimate choice or intention of the soul.

Regeneration then is a radical change of the ultimate intention, and, of course, of the end or object of life. We have seen, that the choice of an end is efficient in producing executive volitions, or the use of means to obtain its end. A selfish ultimate choice is, therefore, a wicked heart, out of which flows every evil; and a benevolent ultimate choice is a good heart, out of which flows every good and commendable deed.

Regeneration, to have the characteristics ascribed to it in the Bible, must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference; a change from selfishness to benevolence; from choosing self-gratification as the supreme and ultimate end of life to the supreme and ultimate choice of the highest well-being of God and of the universe; from a state of entire consecration to self-interest, self-indulgence, self-gratification for its own sake or as an end, and as the supreme end of life, to a state of entire consecration to God, and to the interests of his kingdom as the supreme and ultimate end of life.

VI. *The universal necessity of regeneration.*

1. The necessity of regeneration as a condition of salvation must be co-extensive with moral depravity. This has been shown to be universal among the unregenerate moral agents of our race. It surely is impossible, that a world or a universe of unholy or selfish beings should be happy. It is impossible that heaven should be made up of selfish beings. It is intuitively certain, that without benevolence or holiness no moral being can be ultimately happy. Without regeneration, a selfish soul can by no possibility be fitted either for the employments, or for the enjoyments, of heaven.

2. The scriptures expressly teach the universal necessity of regeneration. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."-- Joh 3:3. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."-- Gal 6:15.

VII. *Agencies employed in regeneration.*

1. The scriptures often ascribe regeneration to the Spirit of God. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."-- Joh 3:5-6. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."-- Joh 1:13.

2. We have seen that the subject is active in regeneration, that regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love or benevolence; or, in other words, in turning from the supreme choice of self-gratification, to the supreme love of God and the equal love of his neighbour. Of course the subject of regeneration must be an agent in the work.

3. There are generally other agents, one or more human beings concerned in persuading the sinner to turn. The Bible recognizes both the subject and the preacher as agents in the work. Thus Paul says: "I have begotten you through the gospel." Here the same word is used which is used in another case, where regeneration is ascribed to God.

Again: an apostle says, "Ye have purified your souls by obeying the truth." Here the work is ascribed to the subject. There are then always two, and generally more than two agents employed in effecting the work. Several theologians have held that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. In proof of this they cite those passages that ascribe it to God. But I might just as lawfully insist that it is the work of man alone, and quote those passages that ascribe it to man, to substantiate my position. Or I might assert that it is alone the work of the subject, and in proof of this position quote those passages that ascribe it to the subject. Or again, I might assert that it is effected by the truth alone, and quote such passages as the following to substantiate my position: "Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."-- Jam 1:18. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."-- 1Pe 1:23. The fact is, when Dr. Woods and others insist that regeneration is the work, or a work of God, they tell the truth, but not the whole truth. For it is also the work of man and of the subject. Their course is precisely like that of the Unitarian, who when he would prove that Christ is not God, merely proves that he was a man. Now we admit that he was a man, but we hold that he is more, that he is also God. Just so we hold that God is active in promoting regeneration, and we hold also that the subject always and necessarily is active in the work, and that generally some other human agency is employed in the work, in presenting and urging the claims of God.

It has been common to regard the third person as a mere instrument in the work. But the fact is, he is a willing, designing, responsible agent, as really so as God or the subject is.

If it be inquired how the Bible can consistently ascribe regeneration at one time to God, at another to the subject, at another to the truth, at another to a third person; the answer is to be sought in the nature of the work. The work accomplished is a change of choice, in respect to an end or the end of life. The sinner whose choice is changed, must of course act. The end to be chosen must be clearly and forcibly presented: this is the work of the third person, and of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the soul. The truth is employed, or it is truth which must necessarily be employed, as an instrument to induce a change of choice. See this illustrated in Sermons on Important Subjects, Sermon I. on Regeneration.

VIII. *Instrumentalities employed in the work.*

1. Truth. This must, from the nature of regeneration, be employed in effecting it, for regeneration is nothing else than the will being duly influenced by truth.

2. There may be, and often are, many providences concerned in enlightening the mind, and in inducing regeneration. These are instrumentalities. They are means or instruments of presenting the truth. Mercies, judgments, men, measures, and in short all those things that conduce to enlightening the mind, are instrumentalities employed in effecting it.

Those who hold to physical or constitutional moral depravity must hold, of course, to constitutional regeneration; and, of course, consistency compels them to maintain that there is but one agent employed in regeneration, and that is the Holy Spirit, and that no instrument whatever is employed, because the work is, according to them, an act of creative power; that the very nature is changed, and of course no instrument can be employed, any more than in the creation of the world. These theologians have affirmed, over and over again, that regeneration is a miracle; that there is no tendency whatever in the gospel, however presented, and whether presented by God or man, to regenerate the heart. Dr. Griffin, in his Park Street Lectures, maintains that the gospel, in its natural and necessary tendency, creates and perpetuates only opposition to, and hatred of God, until the heart is changed by the Holy Spirit. He understands the carnal mind to be not a voluntary state, not a minding of the flesh, but the very nature and constitution of the mind; and that enmity against God is a part, attribute, or appetite of the nature itself. Consequently, he must deny the adaptability of the gospel to regenerate the soul. It has been proclaimed by this class of theologians, times without number, that there is no philosophical connexion between the preaching of the gospel and the regeneration of sinners, no adaptedness in the gospel to produce that result; but, on the contrary, that it is adapted to produce an opposite result. The favourite illustrations of their views have been Ezekiel's prophesying over the dry bones, and Christ's restoring sight to the blind man by putting clay on his eyes. Ezekiel's prophesying over the dry bones had no tendency to quicken them, they say. And the clay used by the Saviour was calculated rather to destroy than to restore sight. This shows how easy it is for men to adopt a pernicious and absurd philosophy, and then find, or think they find, it supported by the Bible. What must be the effect of inculcating the dogma, that the gospel has nothing to do with regenerating the sinner? Instead of telling him that regeneration is nothing else than his embracing the gospel, to tell him that he must wait, and first have his constitution recreated before he can possibly do anything but oppose God? This is to tell him the greatest and most abominable and ruinous of falsehoods. It is to mock his intelligence. What! call on him, on pain of eternal death, to believe; to embrace the gospel; to love God with all his heart, and at the same time represent him as entirely helpless, and constitutionally the enemy of God and of the gospel, and as being under the necessity of waiting for God to regenerate his nature, before it is possible for him to do otherwise than to hate God with all his heart?

IX. *In regeneration the subject is both passive and active.*

1. That he is active is plain from what has been said, and from the very nature of the change.

2. That he is, at the same time, passive, is plain from the fact that he acts only when and as he is acted upon. That is, he is passive in the perception of the truth presented by the Holy Spirit. I know that this perception is no part of regeneration. But it is simultaneous with regeneration. It induces regeneration. It is the condition and the occasion of regeneration. Therefore the subject of regeneration must be a passive recipient or percipient of the truth presented by the Holy Spirit, at the moment, and during the act of regeneration. The Spirit acts upon him through or by the truth: thus far he is passive. He closes with the truth: thus far he is active. What a mistake those theologians have fallen into who represent the subject as altogether passive in regeneration! This rids the sinner at once of the conviction of any duty or responsibility about it. It is wonderful that such an absurdity should have been so long maintained in the church. But while it is maintained, it is no wonder that sinners are not converted to God. While the sinner believes this, it is impossible, if he has it in mind, that he should be regenerated. He stands and waits for God to do what God requires him to do, and which no one can do for him. Neither God, nor any other being, can regenerate him, if he will not turn. If he will not change his choice, it is impossible that it should be changed. Sinners who have been taught thus, and have believed what they have been taught, would never have been regenerated had not the Holy Spirit drawn off their attention from this error, and ere they were aware, induced them to close in with the offer of life.

X. *What is implied in regeneration.*

1. The nature of the change shows that it must be instantaneous. It is a change of choice, or of intention. This must be instantaneous. The preparatory work of conviction and enlightening the mind may have been gradual and progressive. But when regeneration occurs, it must be instantaneous.

2. It implies an entire present change of moral character, that is, a change from entire sinfulness to entire holiness. We have seen that it consists in a change from selfishness to benevolence. We have also seen that selfishness and benevolence cannot co-exist in the same mind; that selfishness is a state of supreme and entire consecration to self; that benevolence is a state of entire and supreme consecration to God and the good of the universe. Regeneration, then, surely implies an entire change of moral character.

Again: the Bible represents regeneration as a dying to sin and becoming alive to God. Death in sin is total depravity. This is generally admitted. Death to sin and becoming alive to God, must imply entire present holiness.

3. The scriptures represent regeneration as the condition of salvation in such a sense, that if the subject should die immediately after regeneration, and without any further change, he would go immediately to heaven.

Again: the scripture requires only perseverance in the first love, as the condition of salvation, in case the regenerate soul should live long in the world subsequently to regeneration.

4. When the scriptures require us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, this does not imply that there is yet sin remaining in the regenerate heart which we are required to put away only by degrees. But the spirit of the requirement must be, that we should acquire as much knowledge as we can of our moral relations, and continue to conform to all truth as fast as we know it. This, and nothing else, is implied in abiding in our first love, or abiding in Christ, living and walking in the Spirit, &c.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLIII.

REGENERATION.

XI. PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES OF REGENERATION.

Different classes of theologians have held very different theories in regard to the philosophy of regeneration, in accordance with their views of moral depravity, of intellectual philosophy, moral government, and of the freedom of the human will. In discussing this subject I will--

1. *State the different theories of regeneration that have been held by different classes of theologians, as I understand them; and--*

2. *Examine them in their order.*

1. The principal theories that have been advocated, so far as my knowledge extends, are the following:--

(1.) The taste scheme. (2.) The divine efficiency scheme. (3.) The susceptibility scheme. (4.) The divine moral suasion scheme.

2. *I will examine them in their order.*

1. The taste scheme.

(i.) This theory is based upon the view of mental philosophy which regards the mental heart as identical with the sensibility. Moral depravity, according to this school, consists in a constitutional relish, taste, or craving for sin. They hold the doctrine of original sin--of a sinful nature or constitution, as was shown in my lectures on moral depravity. The heart of the mind, in the estimation of this school, is not identical with choice or intention. They hold that it does not consist in any voluntary state of mind, but that it lies back of, and controls voluntary action, or the actions of the will. The wicked heart, according to them, consists in an appetency or constitutional taste for sin, and with them, the appetites, passions, and propensities of human nature in its fallen state, are in themselves sinful. They often illustrate their ideas of the sinful taste, craving, or appetite for sin, by reference to the craving of carnivorous animals for flesh. Of course,--

(ii.) A change of heart, in the view of this philosophy, must consist in a change of constitution. It must be a physical change, and wrought by a physical, as distinguished from a moral agency. It is a change wrought by the direct and physical power of the Holy Spirit in the constitution of the soul, changing its susceptibilities, implanting or creating a new taste, relish, appetite, craving for, or love of, holiness. It is, as they express it, the implantation of a new principle of holiness. It is described as a creation of a new taste or principle, as an infusion of a holy principle, &c. This scheme, of course, holds and teaches that, in regeneration, the subject is entirely passive. With this school, regeneration is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit, the subject having no agency in it. It is an operation performed upon him, may be, while he is asleep, or in a fit of derangement, while he is entirely passive, or perhaps when at the moment he is engaged in flagrant rebellion against God. The agency by which this work is wrought, according to them, is sovereign, irresistible, and creative. They hold that there are of course no means of regeneration, as it is a direct act of creation. They hold the distinction already referred to and examined, between regeneration and conversion; that when the Holy Spirit has performed the sovereign operation, and implanted the new principle, then the subject is active in conversion, or in turning to God.

They hold that the soul, in its very nature, is enmity against God; that therefore the gospel has no tendency to regenerate or convert the soul to God; but, on the contrary, that previous to regeneration by the sovereign and physical agency of the Holy Spirit, every exhibition of God made in the gospel, tends only to inflame and provoke this constitutional enmity.

They hold, that when the sinful taste, relish, or craving for sin is weakened, for they deny that it is ever wholly destroyed in this life, or while the soul continues connected with the body, and a holy taste, relish, or craving is implanted or infused by the Holy Spirit into the constitution of the soul, then, and not till then, the gospel has a tendency to turn or convert the sinner from the error of his ways.

As I have said, their philosophy of moral depravity is the basis of their philosophy of regeneration. It assumes the dogma of original sin, as taught in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and attempts to harmonize the philosophy of regeneration with that philosophy of sin, or moral depravity.

Upon this scheme or theory of regeneration, I remark,--

(i.) That it has been sufficiently refuted in the lectures on moral depravity. If, as was then shown, moral depravity is altogether voluntary, and consists in selfishness, or in a voluntary state of mind, this philosophy of regeneration is of course without foundation.

(ii.) It was shown in the lectures on moral depravity, that sin is not chosen for its own sake,--that there is no constitutional relish, taste, or craving for sin,--that in sinful choice, sin is not the end or object chosen, but that self-gratification is chosen, and that this choice is sinful. If this is so, then the whole philosophy of the taste scheme turns out to be utterly baseless.

(iii.) The taste, relish, or craving, of which this philosophy speaks, is not a taste, relish, or craving for sin, but for certain things and objects, the enjoyment of which is, to a certain extent, and upon certain conditions, lawful. But when the will prefers the gratification of taste or appetite to higher interests, this choice or act of will is sin. The sin never lies in the appetite, but in the will's consent to unlawful indulgence.

(iv.) This philosophy confounds appetite or temptation to unlawful indulgence, with sin. Nay, it represents sin as consisting mostly, if not altogether, in that which is only temptation.

(v.) It is, as we have seen, inconsistent with the Bible definition both of sin and of regeneration.

(vi.) It is also inconsistent with the justice of the command, so solemnly given to sinners, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?"

(vii.) It also contradicts the Bible representation, that men regenerate each other. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."-- 1Co 4:15.

(viii.) It throws the blame of unregeneracy upon God. If the sinner is passive, and has no agency in it; if it consists in what this philosophy teaches, and is accomplished in the manner which this theory represents, it is self-evident that God alone is responsible for the fact, that any sinner is unregenerate.

(ix.) It represents regeneration as a miracle. This is affirmed.

(x.) It renders holiness after regeneration physically necessary, just as sin was before, and perseverance also as physically necessary, and falling from grace as a natural impossibility. In this case holy exercises and living are only the gratification of a constitutional appetite, implanted in regeneration.

(xi.) It renders perseverance in holiness no virtue, as it is only self-gratification, or the gratification of appetite.

(xii.) It is the assumption of a philosophy at war with the Bible.

(xiii.) Upon this theory regeneration would destroy personal identity.

Let us consider next,--

(2.) The divine efficiency scheme or theory.

This scheme is based upon, or rather is only a carrying out of, an ancient heathen philosophy, bearing the same name. This ancient philosophy denies second causes, and teaches that what we call laws of nature are nothing else than the mode of divine operation. It denies that the universe would even exist for a moment, if the divine upholding were withdrawn. It maintains that the universe exists only by an act of present and perpetual creation. It denies that matter, or mind, has in itself any inherent properties that can originate laws or motions; that all action, whether of matter or mind, is the necessary result of direct divine irresistible efficiency or power; that this is not only true of the natural universe, but also of all the exercises and actions of moral agents in all worlds.

The abettors of the divine efficiency scheme of regeneration apply this philosophy especially to moral agents. They hold, that all the exercises and actions of moral agents in all worlds, and whether those exercises be holy or sinful, are produced by a divine efficiency, or by a direct act of Omnipotence; that holy and sinful acts are alike effects of an irresistible cause, and that this cause is the power and agency, or efficiency, of God.

This philosophy denies constitutional moral depravity, or original sin, and maintains that moral character belongs alone to the exercises or choices of the will; that regeneration does not consist in the creation of any new taste, relish, or craving, nor in the implantation or infusion of any new principles in the soul: but that it consists in a choice conformed to the law of God, or in a change from selfishness to disinterested benevolence; that this change is effected by a direct act of Divine power or efficiency, as irresistible as any creative act whatever. This philosophy teaches, that the moral character of every moral agent, whether holy or sinful, is formed by an agency as direct, as sovereign, and as irresistible, as that which first gave existence to the universe; that true submission to God implies the hearty consent of the will to have the character thus formed, and then to be treated accordingly, for the glory of God. The principal arguments by which this theory is supported, so far as I am acquainted with them, are as follow:--

(i.) The Bible, its advocates say, teaches it in those texts that teach the doctrine of a universal and particular providence, and that God is present in all events; such, for example, as the following:--"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."-- Pro 16:33. "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works in us."-- Isa 26:12. "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."-- Isa 45:7. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"-- Dan 4:35. "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people be not afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"-- Amo 3:6. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."-- Rom 11:36. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."-- Eph 1:11. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."-- Phi 2:13. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."-- Heb 13:20-21.

These may serve as a specimen of the proofs of this theory cited from holy scripture, and upon which great stress is laid by its defenders.

Concerning these I would remark:--

(*a*.) That they prove nothing to the point. The question in debate is not whether God is, or is not, in some sense, present in every event, or whether there be not some sense in which everything may be ascribed to the providence and agency of God, for this their opponents admit and maintain. But the true question at issue respects only the *quo modo* of the divine agency, of which these passages say nothing. It is neither affirmed nor implied in these passages, nor in any other, that God is the direct, efficient, irresistible agent in all those cases.

(*b*.) Other passages abundantly imply and affirm that he is not the direct, efficient, and irresistible agent in the production of moral evil. For example: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incence unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" Jer 7:10. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Jam 1:13-17. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Jam 3:14-17.

These passages plainly teach and imply that God's agency, to say the least, in the production of sin, is not direct, efficient, irresistible. Their scripture argument then proves nothing to the purpose of their philosophy.

(ii.) Another argument by which the divine efficiency scheme has been sustained is that divine foreknowledge implies it.

This is an assumption without the shadow of proof.

(iii.) Third argument: The divine purposes imply it.

This is also a sheer assumption.

(iv.) Fourth argument: Prophecy, or the foretelling of future events, implies it.

This again is assumption without proof. These arguments assume, that God could not know what future events would be, especially what the free actions of men would be, unless he produces and controls them by a direct and irresistible efficiency.

(v.) Fifth argument: The Bible ascribes both the holy and sinful actions of man to God, and in equally unqualified terms.

This settles nothing of the *quo modo*, or the sense in which it does so, in either case.

(vi.) It is admitted, say some, that holy actions are produced by a direct divine efficiency; and as the Bible ascribes the sinful actions of men to God in as unqualified terms as holy ones, we have no right to infer a difference in the *quo modo* of his doing it.

We are not only allowed, but are bound to infer that his agency is different in the one case, from what it is in the other. The Bible has, as we shall see, settled the philosophy, or the manner in which he produces holy exercises in moral agents. It also everywhere assumes or affirms, that he is concerned only providentially in the permission of sin; that sin is an abuse of his providence, and of the liberty of moral agents.

(vii.) It has been assumed, that it is naturally impossible for God to create a being that should have the power of originating his own actions.

This is surely an assumption, and of no weight whatever. It certainly is not an affirmation of reason; and I cannot see any ground for such an affirmation. Human consciousness is against it.

(viii.) It has been asserted, that if such a creature existed, he would be independent of God, in such a sense, that God could neither certainly control him, nor know what he would do.

This is a mere begging of the question. How can this be known? This argument assumes that even Omniscience cannot know how a free moral agent would act upon condition of his originating his own choices, intentions, and actions. But why this assumption?

To this theory I make the following objections:--

(i.) It is mere philosophy, and that falsely so called.

(ii.) It is supported, so far as I can see, only by the most unwarrantable assumptions.

(iii.) Its tendency condemns it.

(*a*.) It tends to produce and perpetuate a sense of divine injustice. To create a character by an agency as direct and irresistible as that of the creation of the world itself, and then treat moral beings according to that character so formed, is wholly inconsistent with all our ideas of justice.

(*b*.) It destroys a sense of accountability, or tends to destroy it.

(*c*.) It contradicts human consciousness. I know it is said, that consciousness only gives our mental actions and states, but not the cause of them. This I deny, and affirm that consciousness not only gives us our mental actions and states, but it also gives us the cause of them, especially it gives the fact, that we ourselves are the sovereign and efficient causes of the choices and actions of our will. In our passive states we can almost always recognize the cause of these phenomena. At least we can very often do so. I am as conscious of originating in a sovereign manner my choices, as I am of the choices themselves.

(*d*.) This theory virtually denies, or rather stultifies, the eternal distinction between liberty and necessity.

(*e*.) If this theory were true, with our present consciousness, we cannot believe it. We cannot but affirm to ourselves, that we are the efficient causes of our own choices and volitions.

(*f*.) The philosophy in question, really represents God as the only agent, in any proper sense of that term, in the universe. If God produces the exercises of moral beings in the manner represented by this philosophy, then they are in fact no more agents than the planets are agents. If their exercises are all directly produced by the power of God, it is ridiculous to call them agents.

(*g*.) If this theory be true, what we generally call moral beings and moral agents, are no more so than the winds and the waves, or any other substance or thing in the universe.

(*h.*) Again: if this theory be true, no being but God has, or can have, moral character. No other being is the author of his own actions. He is the subject, but not the author of his actions. He is the passive subject, but not the active efficient cause of his own exercises. To affirm moral character of such a passive subject is truly ridiculous.

(*i.*) This theory obliges its advocates, together with all other necessitarians, to give a false and nonsensical definition of free agency. Free agency, according to them, consists in doing as we will, while their theory denies the power to will, except as our willings are necessitated by God. But as we have seen in former lectures, this is no true account of freedom, or liberty. Liberty to execute my choices is no liberty at all. Choice is connected with its sequents by a law of necessity; and if an effect follow my volitions, that effect follows by necessity, and not freely. All freedom of will must, as was formerly shown, consist in the sovereign power to originate our own choices. If I am unable to will, I am unable to do any thing; and it is absurd and ridiculous to affirm, that a being is a moral or a free agent, who has not power to originate his own choices.

(*j.*) If this theory is true, God is more than the accomplice of the devil; for--

(I.) Satan cannot tempt us according to this theory, unless God by a direct divine efficiency, moves him and compels him to do so.

(II.) Then, we cannot possibly yield to his temptation, except as God compels us to yield, or creates the yielding within us. This is a blasphemous theory surely, that represents God as doing such things. That a philosophy like this could ever have been taught, will appear incredible to many. But such is the fact, and such the true statement of the views of this class of theologians, if I can understand them.

(*k.*) But this theory is inconsistent with the Bible, as we have seen.

(*l.*) It is also inconsistent with itself, for it both affirms and denies natural ability. Its advocates admit, that we cannot act except as we will, and affirm that we cannot will, except as our willings are created by a direct Divine efficiency. How absurd then is it to maintain, that we have natural ability to do anything. All that can truly be said of us, upon the principles of this theory, is that we have a susceptibility to be acted upon, and to be rendered the subjects of certain states, immediately and irresistibly created by the power of God. But it is absurd to call this a natural ability to do our duty.

(*m.*) If this theory is true, the whole moral government of God is no government at all, distinct from, and superior to, physical government. Then the gospel is an insult to men, in two respects, at least:--

(I.) Upon this theory men do not, cannot deserve punishment, nor require a Saviour from it.

(II.) If they do, the gospel is presented and urged upon their acceptance, when, in fact, they have no more power to accept it, than they have to create a world.

(*n.*) Again: this theory overlooks and virtually denies the fundamentally important distinction between moral and physical power, and moral and physical government. All power and all government, upon this theory, are physical.

(*o.*) Again: this theory renders repentance, remorse, and self-condemnation impossible, as a rational exercise.

(*p.*) This theory involves the delusion of all moral beings. God not only creates our volitions, but also creates the persuasion and affirmation that we are responsible for them. O, shame on such a theory as this!

(3.) *Let us proceed now to notice the susceptibility scheme*.

(i.) What this theory is.

This theory represents, that the Holy Spirit's influences are both physical and moral; that he, by a direct and physical influence, excites the susceptibilities of the soul and prepares them to be affected by the truth; that he, thereupon, exerts a moral or persuasive influence by presenting the truth, which moral influence induces regeneration.

(ii.) Wherein this and the Divine moral suasion theory agree.

(*a.*) In rejecting the taste and Divine efficiency schemes.

(*b.*) In rejecting the dogma of constitutional moral depravity.

(*c.*) In rejecting the dogma of physical regeneration; for be it remembered, that this theory teaches that the physical influence exerted in exciting the susceptibilities is no part of regeneration.

(*d.*) They agree in maintaining the natural ability or liberty of all moral agents.

(*e.*) That the constitutional appetites and passions have no moral character in themselves.

(*f.*) That when strongly excited they are the occasions of sin.

(*g.*) That sin and moral depravity are identical, and that they consist in a violation of the moral law.

(*h.*) That the moral heart is the ruling preference or ultimate intention of the mind.

(*i.*) That the carnal mind, or heart, is selfishness.

(*j.*) That the new or regenerate heart is benevolence.

(*k.*) That regeneration consists in a change from selfishness to benevolence, or from the supreme love of self, to the supreme love of God, and the equal love of our neighbour.

(*l.*) That this change is effected through the truth presented by the Holy Spirit, or by a Divine moral persuasion.

(iii.) Wherein they differ.

This philosophy maintains the necessity and the fact of a physical influence superadded to the moral or persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit, as a *sine quà non* of regeneration. The Divine moral suasion theory regards regeneration as being induced alone by a moral influence. This theory also admits and maintains, that regeneration is effected solely by a moral influence, but also that a work preparatory to the efficiency of the moral influence, and indispensable to its efficiency, in producing regeneration, is performed by a direct and physical agency of the Holy Spirit upon the constitutional susceptibilities of the soul, to quicken and wake it up, and predispose it to be deeply and duly affected by the truth. The arguments by which that part of this theory which relates to a physical influence of the Holy Spirit is supported, are, so far as I am acquainted with them, as follows:--

(*a.*) It is maintained by the defenders of this scheme, that the representations of the Bible upon the subject of the Holy Spirit's agency in regeneration, are such as to forbid the supposition, that his influence is altogether moral or persuasive, and such as plainly to indicate that he also exerts a physical agency, in preparing the mind to be duly effected by the truth. In reply to this argument, I observe,--

(i.) That I fear greatly to disparage the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of man's redemption from sin, and would, by no means, resist or deny, or so much as call in question, anything that is plainly taught or implied in the Bible upon this subject.

(ii.) I admit and maintain that regeneration is always induced and effected by the personal agency of the Holy Spirit. The question now before us relates wholly to the mode, and not at all to the fact, of the divine agency in regeneration. Let this be distinctly understood, for it has been common for theologians of the old school, as soon as the dogma of a physical regeneration, and of a physical influence in regeneration, has been called in question, to cry out and insist that this is Pelagianism, and that it is a denial of divine influence altogether, and that it is teaching a self-regeneration, independent of any divine influence. I have been ashamed of such representations as these on the part of Christian divines, and have been distressed by their want of candour. It should, however, be distinctly stated that, so far as I know, the defenders of the theory now under consideration have never manifested this want of candour towards those who have called in question that part of their theory that relates to a physical influence.

(III.) Since the advocates of this theory admit that the Bible teaches that regeneration is induced by a divine moral suasion, the point of debate is simply, whether the Bible teaches that there is also a physical influence exerted by the Holy Spirit, in exciting the constitutional susceptibilities. We will now attend to their proof texts. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."-- Luk 24:45. It is affirmed, that this text seems to teach or imply a physical influence in opening their understandings. But what do we mean by such language as this in common life? Language is to be understood according to the subject-matter of discourse. Here the subject of discourse is the understanding. But what can be intended by opening it? Can this be a physical prying, pulling, or forcing open any department of the constitution? Such language in common life would be understood only to mean, that such instruction was imparted as to secure a right understanding of the Scriptures. Every one knows this, and why should we suppose and assume that anything more is intended here? The context plainly indicates that this was the thing, and the only thing, done in this case. "Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.--And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."-- Luk 24:25-27, Luk 24:46. From these verses it appears that he expounded the Scriptures to them, when in the light of what had passed, and in the light of that measure of divine illumination which was then imparted to them, they understood the things which he explained to them. It does not seem to me, that this passage warrants the inference that there was a physical influence exerted. It certainly affirms no such thing. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."-- Act 16:14. Here is an expression similar to that just examined. Here it is said, "that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended," &c.; that is, the Lord inclined her to attend. But how? Why, say the advocates of this scheme, by a physical influence. But how does this appear? What is her heart that it should be pulled, or forced open? and what can be intended by the assertion, "that the Lord opened her heart?" All that can be meant is, that the Lord secured her attention, or disposed her to attend, and so enlightened her when she did attend, that she believed. Surely here is no assertion of a physical influence, nor, so far as I can see, any just ground for the inference, that such an influence was exerted. A moral influence can sufficiently explain all the phenomena; and any text that can equally well consist with either of two opposing theories, can prove neither.

Again: there are many passages that represent God as opening the spiritual eyes, and passages in which petitions are offered to God to do this. It is by this theory assumed that such passages strongly imply a physical influence. But this assumption appears to me unwarrantable. We are in the habit of using just such language, and speak of opening each other's eyes, when no such thing is intended or implied, as a physical influence, and when nothing more than a moral or persuasive influence is so much as thought of. Why then resort to such an assumption here? Does the nature of the case demand it? This I know is contended for by those who maintain a constitutional moral depravity. But this dogma has been shown to be false, and it is admitted to be so by those who maintain the theory now under consideration. Admitting, then, that the constitution is not morally depraved, should it be inferred that any constitutional change, or physical influence is needed to produce regeneration? I can see no sufficient reason for believing, or affirming, that a physical influence is either demanded or exerted. This much I freely admit, that we cannot affirm the impossibility of such an influence, nor the impossibility of the necessity of such an influence. The only question with me is, does the Bible plainly teach or imply such an influence? Hitherto I have been unable to see that it does. The passages already quoted are of a piece with all that are relied upon in support of this theory, and as the same answer is a sufficient reply to them all, I will not spend time in citing and remarking upon them.

(*b.*) Again: A physical influence has been inferred from the fact, that sinners are represented as dead in trespasses and sins, as asleep, &c. &c. But all such representations are only declaratory of a moral state, a state of voluntary alienation from God. If the death is moral, and the sleep moral, why suppose that a physical influence is needed to correct a moral evil? Cannot truth, when urged and pressed by the Holy Spirit, effect the requisite change?

(*c.*) But a physical influence is also inferred from the fact, that truth makes so different an impression at one time from what it does at another. Answer: this can well enough be accounted for by the fact, that sometimes the Holy Spirit so presents the truth, that the mind apprehends it and feels its power, whereas at another time he does not.

(*d.*) But it is said, that there sometimes appears to have been a preparatory work performed by a physical influence pre-disposing the mind to attend to, and be affected by, the truth. Answer: there often is no doubt a preparatory work pre-disposing the mind to attend to, and be affected by, truth. But why assume that this is a physical influence? Providential occurrences may have had much to do with it. The Holy Spirit may have been directing the thoughts and communicating instructions in various ways, and preparing the mind to attend and obey. Who then is warranted in the affirmation that this preparatory influence is physical? I admit that it may be, but I cannot see either that it must be, or that there is any good ground for the assumption that it is.

(4.) *The last theory to be examined is that of a Divine moral suasion*.

This theory teaches--

(i.) That regeneration consists in a change in the ultimate intention or preference of the mind, or in a change from selfishness to disinterested benevolence; and--

(ii.) That this change is induced and effected by a divine moral influence; that is, that the Holy Spirit effects it with, through, or by the truth. The advocates of this theory assign the following as the principal reasons in support of it.

(*a.*) The Bible expressly affirms it. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."-- Joh 3:5-6. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."-- 1Pe 1:23. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."-- Jam 1:18. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."-- 1Co 4:15.

(*b.*) Men are represented as being sanctified by and through the truth. "Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth."-- Joh 17:17. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."-- Joh 15:3.

(*c.*) The nature of regeneration decides the philosophy of it so far as this, that it must be effected by truth, addressed to the heart through the intelligence.

(*d.*) Unless it is so effected, it has no moral character.

(*e.*) The regenerate are conscious of having been influenced by the truth in turning to God.

(*f.*) They are conscious of no other influence than light poured upon the intelligence, or truth presented to the mind.

(*g.*) When God affirms that he regenerates the soul with or by the truth, we have no right to infer that he does it in some other way. This he does affirm; therefore the Bible has settled the philosophy of regeneration. That he exerts any other than a moral influence, or the influence of Divine teaching and illumination, is sheer assumption.

To this theory the following objections have been made.

(i.) To represent sinners as regenerated by the influence of truth, although presented and urged by the Holy Spirit, is virtually to deny total depravity. To this it is answered--

(*a.*) It does indeed deny constitutional moral depravity, and therefore constitutional or physical regeneration.

(*b.*) Adam and the sinning angels were changed or regenerated from perfect holiness to perfect sinfulness, by motives presented to them, at least Adam was. Now, if they could be regenerated from entire holiness to entire sinfulness by a moral influence, or by means of a lie, is it impossible that God should convert sinners by means of truth? Has God so much less moral power than Satan has?

(*c.*) To this it may be replied, that it is much easier to convert or regenerate men from holiness to sin, than from sin to holiness.

(I.) This, I answer, seems to reflect upon the wisdom and goodness of God, in forming the human constitution.

(II.) Should the fact be granted, still it may truly be urged, that the motives to holiness are infinitely greater than those to sin, so that the Holy Spirit has altogether the advantage in this respect.

(ii.) If sinners are regenerated by the light of the truth, they may be regenerated in hell, as they will there know the truth.

(*a.*) The Bible, I answer, represents the wicked in hell, as being in darkness, and not in the light of the truth.

(*b.*) The truth will not be presented and urged home there by the persuasive Spirit of God.

(*c.*) The gospel motives will be wanting there. The offer of pardon and acceptance, which is indispensable to induce repentance and obedience, will not be made there. Therefore sinners will not be converted in hell.

REMARKS.

1. This scheme honours the Holy Spirit without disparaging the truth of God.

2. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit through the truth illustrates the wisdom of God. There is a deep and divine philosophy in regeneration.

3. This theory is of great practical importance. For if sinners are to be regenerated by the influence of truth, argument, and persuasion, then ministers can see what they have to do, and how it is that they are to be "workers together with God."

4. So also sinners may see, that they are not to wait for a physical regeneration or influence, but must submit to, and embrace, the truth, if they ever expect to be saved.

5. If this scheme is true, we can see, that when truth is made clear to the mind and is resisted, the Holy Spirit is resisted, for this is his work, to make the mind clearly to apprehend the truth.

6. If this theory is true, sinners are most likely to be regenerated while sitting under the sound of the gospel, while listening to the clear exhibition of truth.

7. Ministers should lay themselves out, and press every consideration upon the attention of sinners, just as heartily and as freely, as if they expected to convert them themselves. They should aim at, and expect the regeneration of sinners, upon the spot, and before they leave the house of God.

8. Sinners must not wait for and expect physical omnipotence to regenerate them.

9. The physical omnipotence of God affords no presumption that all men will be converted; for regeneration is not effected by physical power.

10. To neglect and resist the truth is fatal to salvation.

11. Sinners are not regenerated, because they neglect and resist the truth.

12. God cannot do the sinner's duty, and regenerate him without the right exercise of the sinner's own agency.

13. This view of regeneration shows that the sinner's dependence upon the Holy Spirit arises entirely out of his own voluntary stubbornness, and that his guilt is all the greater, by how much the more perfect this kind of dependence is.

14. This view of regeneration shows the adaptedness of the law and Gospel of God to regenerate, sanctify, and save the souls of men.

15. It also demonstrates the wisdom of appointing such means and instrumentalities to accomplish their salvation.

16. Physical regeneration, under every modification of it, is a stumbling-block.

17. Original or constitutional sinfulness, physical regeneration, and all their kindred and resulting dogmas, are alike subversive of the gospel, and repulsive to human intelligence; and should be laid aside as relics of a most unreasonable and confused philosophy.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLIV.

REGENERATION.

XII. EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

In the discussion of this subject I will--

1. MAKE SEVERAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

2. SHOW WHEREIN THE EXPERIENCE AND OUTWARD LIFE OF SAINTS AND SINNERS MAY AGREE.

3. WHEREIN THEY MUST DIFFER.

1. *Introductory remarks.*

(1.) In ascertaining what are, and what are not, evidences of regeneration, we must constantly keep in mind what is not, and what is regeneration; what is not, and what is implied in it.

(2.) We must constantly recognize the fact, that saints and sinners have precisely similar constitutions and constitutional susceptibilities, and therefore that many things are common to both.

(3.) What is common to both cannot, of course, be an evidence of regeneration.

(4.) That no state of the sensibility has any moral character in itself. That regeneration does not consist in, or imply, any physical change whatever, either of the intellect, sensibility, or the faculty of will.

(5.) That the sensibility of the sinner is susceptible of every kind and degree of feeling that is possible to saints.

(6.) The same is true of the consciences of both saints and sinners, and of the intelligence generally.

(7.) That moral character belongs to the ultimate intention.

(8.) That regeneration consists in a change of the ultimate intention.

(9.) That the moral character is as the ultimate intention is.

(10.) The inquiry is, What are evidences of a change in the ultimate intention? What is evidence that benevolence is the ruling choice, preference, intention of the soul?

This, it would seem, must be a plain question, and must admit of a very easy and satisfactory answer.

It is a plain question, and demands, and may have, a plain answer. But so much error prevails as to the nature of regeneration, and, consequently, as to what are evidences of regeneration, that we need patience, discrimination, and perseverance, and withal candour to get at the truth upon this subject.

2. *Wherein the experience and outward life of saints and sinners may agree.*

It is plain that they may be alike; in whatever does not consist in, or necessarily proceed from, the attitude of their will, that is, in whatever is constitutional or involuntary. For example--

(1). They may both desire their own happiness. This desire is constitutional, and, of course, common to both saints and sinners.

(2.) They may both desire the happiness of others. This also is constitutional, and of course common to both saints and sinners. There is no moral character in these desires, any more than there is in the desire for food and drink. That men have a natural desire for the happiness of others, is evident from the fact that they manifest pleasure when others are happy, unless they have some selfish reason for envy, or unless the happiness of others is in some way inconsistent with their own. They also manifest uneasiness and pain when they see others in misery, unless they have some selfish reason for desiring their misery.

(3.) Saints and sinners may alike dread their own misery, and the misery of others. This is strictly constitutional and has therefore no moral character. I have known that very wicked men, and men who had been infidels, when they were convinced of the truths of Christianity, manifested great concern about their families and about their neighbours; and, in one instance, I heard of an aged man of this description who, when convinced of the truth, went and warned his neighbours to flee from the wrath to come, avowing at the same time his conviction, that there was no mercy for him, though he felt deeply concerned for others. Such like cases have repeatedly been witnessed. The case of the rich man in hell seems to have been one of this description, or to have illustrated the same truth. Although he knew his own case to be hopeless, yet he desired that Lazarus should be sent to warn his five brethren, lest they also should come to that place of torment. In this case, and in the case of the aged man just named, it appears that they not only desired that others should avoid misery, but they actually tried to prevent it, and used the means that were in their reach to save them. Now it is plain that this desire took control of their will, and, of course, the state of the will was selfish. It sought to gratify desire. It was the pain and dread of seeing their misery, and of having them miserable, that led them to use means to prevent it. This was not benevolence, but selfishness. It no doubt increases the misery of sinners in hell to have their number multiplied, that is, they being moral agents, cannot but be unutterably pained to behold the wretchedness around them. This may, and doubtless will, make up a great part of the misery of devils and of wicked men, the beholding to all eternity the misery which they have occasioned. They will not only be filled with remorse, but undoubtedly their souls will be unutterably agonized with the misery they will behold around them.

Let it be understood, then, that as both saints and sinners constitutionally desire, not only their own happiness, but also the happiness of others, they may alike rejoice in the happiness and safety of others, and in converts to Christianity, and may alike grieve at the danger and misery of those who are unconverted. I well recollect, when far from home, and while an impenitent sinner, I received a letter from my youngest brother, informing me that he was converted to God. He, if he was converted, was, as I supposed, the first and only member of the family who then had a hope of salvation. I was at the time, and both before and after, one of the most careless sinners, and yet on receiving this intelligence, I actually wept for joy and gratitude, that one of so prayerless a family was likely to be saved.

Indeed, I have repeatedly known sinners to manifest much interest in the conversion of their friends, and express gratitude for their conversion, although they had no religion themselves. These desires have no moral character in themselves. In as far as they control the will, the will yielding to impulse instead of the law of the intelligence, this, is selfishness.

(4.) Saints and sinners may agree in desiring their own sanctification and the sanctification of others. Both may desire their own sanctification as the condition of their salvation. They may also desire the sanctification of others, as the condition of their salvation.

(5.) Saints and sinners may both desire to be useful, as a condition of their own salvation.

(6.) They may also desire that others should be useful, as a condition of their salvation.

(7.) They may both desire to glorify God, as a means or condition of their own salvation.

(8.) They may also desire to have others glorify God, as a means of their salvation. These desires are natural and constitutional, when the salvation either of ourselves or others is felt to be important, and when these things are seen to be conditions of salvation.

(9.) They may both desire, and strongly desire, a revival of religion and the prosperity of Zion, as a means of promoting their own salvation, or the salvation of their friends. Sinners have often been known to desire revivals of religion.

(10.) They may agree in desiring the triumph of truth and righteousness, and the suppression of vice and error, for the sake of the bearings of these things on self and friends. These desires are constitutional and natural to both, under certain circumstances. When they do not influence the will, they have in themselves no moral character; but when they influence the will, their selfishness takes on a religious type. It then manifests zeal in promoting religion. But if desire, and not the intelligence, controls the will, it is selfishness notwithstanding.

(11.) Moral agents constitutionally approve of what is right, and disapprove of what is wrong. Of course, both saints and sinners may both approve of and delight in goodness. I can recollect weeping at an instance of what, at the time, I supposed to be goodness, while, at the same time, I was not religious myself. I have no doubt that wicked men, not only often are conscious of strongly approving the goodness of God, but that they also often take delight in contemplating it. This is constitutional, both as it respects the intellectual approbation, and also as it respects the feeling of delight. It is a great mistake to suppose that sinners are never conscious of feelings of complacency and delight in the goodness of God. The Bible represents sinners as taking delight in drawing near to him. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."-- Isa 58:2. "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."-- Eze 33:32. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."-- Rom 7:22.

(12.) Saints and sinners may alike not only intellectually approve, but have feelings of deep complacency in the characters of good men, sometimes good men of their own time and of their acquaintance, but more frequently good men either of a former age, or, if of their own age, of a distant country. The reason is this: good men of their own day and neighbourhood are very apt to render them uneasy in their sins; to annoy them by their faithful reproofs and rebukes. This offends them, and overcomes their natural respect for goodness. But who has not observed the fact that good and bad men unite in praising, admiring, and loving,--so far as feeling is concerned--good men of by-gone days, or good men at a distance, whose life and rebukes have annoyed the wicked in their own neighbourhood? The fact is, that moral agents, from the laws of their being, necessarily approve of goodness wherever they witness it. And when not annoyed by it, when left to contemplate it in the abstract, or at a distance, they cannot but feel a complacency in it. Multitudes of sinners are conscious of this, and suppose that this is a virtuous feeling. It is of no use to deny, that they sometimes have feelings of love and gratitude to God, and of respect for, and complacency in, good men. They often have these feelings, and to represent them as always having feelings of hatred and of opposition to God and to good men, is sure either to offend them, or to lead them to deny the truths of religion, if they are told that the Bible teaches this. Or, again, it may lead them to think themselves Christians, because they are conscious of such feelings as they are taught to believe are peculiar to Christians. Or again, they may think that, although they are not Christians, yet they are far from being totally depraved, inasmuch as they have so many good desires and feelings. It should never be forgotten, that saints and sinners may agree in their opinions and intellectual views and judgments. Many professors of religion, it is to be feared, have supposed religion to consist in desires and feelings, and have entirely mistaken their own character. Indeed, nothing is more common than to hear religion spoken of as consisting altogether in mere feelings, desires, and emotions. Professors relate their feelings, and suppose themselves to be giving an account of their religion. It is infinitely important, that both professors of religion and non-professors, should understand more than most of them do of their mental constitution, and of the true nature of religion. Multitudes of professors of religion have, it is to be feared, a hope founded altogether upon desires and feelings that are purely constitutional, and therefore common to both saints and sinners.

(13.) Saints and sinners agree in this, that they both disapprove of, and are often disgusted with, and deeply abhor, sin. They cannot but disapprove of sin. Necessity is laid upon every moral agent, whatever his character may be, by the law of his being, to condemn and disapprove of sin. And often the sensibility of sinners, as well as of saints, is filled with deep disgust and loathing in view of sin. I know that representations the direct opposite of these are often made. Sinners are represented as universally having complacency in sin, as having a constitutional craving for sin, as they have for food and drink. But such representations are false and most injurious. They contradict the sinner's consciousness, and lead him either to deny his total depravity, or to deny the Bible, or to think himself regenerate. As was shown when upon the subject of moral depravity, sinners do not love sin for its own sake; but they crave other things, and this leads to prohibited indulgence, which indulgence is sin. But it is not the sinfulness of the indulgence that was desired. That might have produced disgust and loathing in the sensibility, if it had been considered even at the moment of indulgence. For example: suppose a licentious man, a drunkard, a gambler, or any other wicked man, engaged in his favourite indulgence, and suppose that the sinfulness of this indulgence should be strongly set before his mind by the Holy Spirit. He might be deeply ashamed and disgusted with himself, and so much so as to feel a great contempt for himself, and feel almost ready, were it possible, to spit in his own face. And yet, unless this feeling becomes more powerful than the desire and feeling which the will is seeking to indulge, the indulgence will be persevered in, notwithstanding this disgust. If the feeling of disgust should for the time overmatch the opposing desire, the indulgence will be, for the time being, abandoned for the sake of gratifying or appeasing the feeling of disgust. But this is not virtue. It is only a change in the form of selfishness. Feeling still governs, and not the law of the intelligence. The indulgence is only abandoned for the time being, to gratify a stronger impulse of the sensibility. The will, will of course return to the indulgence again, when the feelings of fear, disgust, or loathing subside. This, no doubt, accounts for the multitudes of spurious conversions sometimes witnessed. Sinners are convicted, fears awakened, and disgust and loathing excited. These feelings for the time become stronger than their desire for their former indulgences, and consequently they abandon them for a time, in obedience, not to the law of God or of their intelligence, but in obedience to their fear, disgust, and shame. But when conviction subsides, and the consequent feelings are no more, these spurious converts "return like a dog to his vomit, and like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." It should be distinctly understood, that all these feelings of which I have spoken, and indeed any class or degree of mere feelings, may exist in the sensibility; and further, that these or any other feelings may, in their turns, control the will; and produce of course a corresponding outward life, and yet the heart be and remain all the while in a selfish state, or in a state of total depravity. Indeed, it is perfectly common to see the impenitent sinner manifest much disgust and opposition to sin in himself and in others, yet this is not principle in him; it is only the effect of present feeling. The next day, or perhaps hour, he will repeat his sin, or do that which, when beheld in others, enkindled his indignation.

(14.) Both saints and sinners approve of, and often delight in, justice. It is common to see in courts of justice, and on various other occasions, impenitent sinners manifest great complacency in the administration of justice, and the greatest indignation at, and abhorrence of, injustice. So strong is this feeling sometimes that it cannot be restrained, but will burst forth like a smothered volcano, and carry desolation before it. It is this natural love of justice, and abhorrence of injustice, common alike to saints and sinners, to which popular tumults and bloodshed are often to be ascribed. This is not virtue, but selfishness. It is the will giving itself up to the gratification of a constitutional impulse. But such feelings and such conduct are often supposed to be virtuous. It should always be borne in mind that the love of justice, and the sense of delight in it, and the feeling of opposition to injustice, is not only not peculiar to good men, but that such feelings are no evidence whatever of a regenerate heart. Thousands of instances might be adduced as proofs and illustrations of this position. But such manifestations are too common to need to be cited to remind any one of their existence.

(15.) The same remarks may be made in regard to truth. Both saints and sinners have a constitutional respect for, approbation of, and delight in truth. Whoever knew a sinner to approve of the character of a liar? What sinner will not resent it, to be accused or even suspected of lying? All men spontaneously manifest their respect for, complacency in, and approbation of truth. This is constitutional; so that even the greatest liars do not, and cannot, love lying for its own sake. They lie to gratify, not a love for falsehood on its own account, but to obtain some object which they desire more strongly than they hate falsehood. Sinners, in spite of themselves, venerate, respect, and fear a man of truth. They just as necessarily despise a liar. If they are liars, they despise themselves for it, just as drunkards and debauchees despise themselves for indulging their filthy lusts, and yet continue in them.

(16.) Both saints and sinners not only approve of, and delight in good men, when, as I have said, wicked men are not annoyed by them, but they agree in reprobating, disapproving, and abhorring wicked men and devils. Who ever heard of any other sentiment and feeling being expressed either by good or bad men, than of abhorrence and indignation toward the devil? Nobody ever approved or can approve, of his character; sinners can no more approve of it than holy angels can. If he could approve of and delight in his own character, hell would cease to be hell, and evil would become his good. But no moral agent can, by any possibility, know wickedness and approve it. No man, saint or sinner, can entertain any other sentiments and feelings toward the devil, or wicked men, but those of disapprobation, distrust, disrespect, and often of loathing and abhorrence. The intellectual sentiment will be uniform. Disapprobation, distrust, condemnation, will always necessarily possess the minds of all who know wicked men and devils. And often, as occasions arise, wherein their characters are clearly revealed, and under circumstances favourable to such a result, the deepest feelings of disgust, of loathing, of indignation, and abhorrence of their wickedness, will manifest themselves alike among saints and sinners.

(17.) Saints and sinners may be equally honourable and fair in business transactions, so far as the outward act is concerned. They have different reasons for their conduct, but outwardly it may be the same. This leads to the remark--

(18.) That selfishness in the sinner, and benevolence in the saint, may, and often do, produce, in many respects, the same results or manifestations. For example: benevolence in the saint, and selfishness in the sinner, may beget the same class of desires, to wit, as we have seen, desire for their own sanctification, and for that of others, to be useful, and to have others so; desires for the conversion of sinners; and many such like desires.

(19.) This leads to the remark, that, when the desires of an impenitent person for these objects become strong enough to influence the will, he may take the same outward course, substantially, that the saint takes, in obedience to his intelligence. That is, the sinner is constrained by his feelings to do what the saint does from principle, or from obedience to the law of his intelligence. In this, however, although the outward manifestations be the same for the time being, yet the sinner is entirely selfish, and the saint benevolent. The saint is controlled by principle, and the sinner by impulse. In this case, time is needed to distinguish between them. The sinner not having the root of the matter in him, will return to his former course of life, in proportion as his convictions of the truth and importance of religion subside, and his former feelings return; while the saint will evince his heavenly birth, by manifesting his sympathy with God, and the strength of principle that has taken possession of his heart. That is, he will manifest that his intelligence, and not his feelings, controls his will.

(20.) Saints and sinners may both love and hate the same things, but for different and opposite reasons. For example: they may both love the Bible; the saint benevolently, and the sinner selfishly; that is, the saint loves the Bible for benevolent, and the sinner for selfish, reasons. They may love Christians for opposite reasons; the saint for their likeness to Christ, the sinner because he considers them the favourites of Heaven, as his particular friends, or because he, in some way, hopes to be benefited by them, or from a mere constitutional complacency in goodness. Now observe; the Christian may have the same constitutional feelings as the sinner; and besides these, he may have reasons for his love and conduct peculiar to the saint. The saint and sinner may, for different and opposite reasons, be interested in, and deeply affected with, the character of God, with the truth, the sanctuary, and in all the duties of religion, and all the means of grace. They may alike, but for different reasons, hate infidelity, error, sin, sinners, selfishness. A selfish sinner may deeply abhor selfishness in others, and even in himself, and still persevere in it.

(21.) Again: selfishness in the sinner, and benevolence in the saint, may lead them to form similar resolutions and purposes; for example--to serve God; to avoid all sin; to do all duty; to do right; to be useful; to persevere in well-doing; to live for eternity; to set a good example; to pay the strictest regard to the sabbath and to all the institutions of religion; to do all that in them lies to support religious institutions.

(22.) Saints and sinners may agree in their views of doctrines and of measures, may be equally zealous in the cause of God and religion; may be equally well-informed; may experience delight in prayer, and in religious meetings, and in religious exercises generally.

(23.) Both may be greatly changed in feeling and in life.

(24.) They may both give all their goods to feed the poor, or to support the gospel, and send it to the heathen.

(25.) They may both go as missionaries to the heathen, but for entirely different reasons.

(26.) They may have equal convictions of sin, and their sensibilities may be similarly affected by these convictions.

(27.) They may both have great sorrow for sin, and great loathing of self on account of it.

(28.) They may both have feelings of gratitude to God.

(29.) They may both appear to manifest all the graces of true saints.

(30.) They may both be very confident of their good estate.

(31.) They may both have new hopes and new fears, new joys and new sorrows, new friends and new enemies, new habits of life.

(32.) They may both be comforted by the promises, and awed by the threatenings.

(33.) They may both appear to have answers to prayer.

(34.) They may both appear and really suppose themselves to renounce the world. They may really both renounce this world, the saint for the glory of God, the sinner that he may win heaven.

(35.) They may both practise many forms of self-denial. The Christian really denies himself, and the sinner may appear to do so, by denying certain forms of self-seeking, for the securing of a selfish interest in another direction.

(36.) They may both have the faith of miracles: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."-- 1Co 13:2.

(37.) They may both suffer martyrdom for entirely opposite reasons. "And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."-- 1Co 13:3.

(38.) They may be confident of their good estate, and may both die in triumph, and carry their hope to the bar of God. "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."-- Luk 13:26-27.

REMARKS.

1. For want of these and such like discriminations, many have stumbled. Hypocrites have held on to a false hope, and lived upon mere constitutional desires and spasmodic turns of giving up the will, during seasons of special excitement, to the control of these desires and feelings. These spasms they call their waking up. But no sooner does their excitement subside, than selfishness again assumes its wonted forms. It is truly wonderful and appalling to see to what an extent this is true. Because, in seasons of special excitement they feel deeply, and are conscious of feeling, as they say, and acting, and of being entirely sincere in following their impulses, they have the fullest confidence in their good estate. They say they cannot doubt their conversion. They felt so and so, and gave themselves up to their feelings, and gave much time and money to promote the cause of Christ. Now this is a deep delusion, and one of the most common in Christendom, or at least one of the most common that is to be found among what are called revival Christians. This class of deluded souls do not see that they are, in such cases, governed by their feelings, and that if their feelings were changed, their conduct would be so, of course; that as soon as the excitement subsides, they will go back to their former ways, as a thing of course. When the state of feeling that now controls them has given place to their former feelings, they will of course appear as they used to do. This is, in few words, the history of thousands of professors of religion.

2. This has greatly stumbled the openly impenitent. Not knowing how to account for what they often witness of this kind among professors of religion, they are led to doubt whether there is any such thing as true religion.

Again: many sinners have been deceived just in the way I have pointed out, and have afterwards discovered that they had been deluded, but could not understand how. They have come to the conclusion that everybody is deluded, and that all professors are as much deceived as they are. This leads them to reject and despise all religion.

3. A want of discrimination between what is constitutional and what belongs to a regenerate state of mind, has stumbled many. Impenitent sinners, finding themselves to have what they call certain good desires and feelings, have either come to the conclusion that they were born again, or that the unregenerate have at least a spark of holiness in them, that only needs to be cherished and cultivated, to fit them for heaven.

4. Some exercises of impenitent sinners, and of which they are conscious, have been denied for fear of denying total depravity. They have been represented as necessarily hating God and all good men; and this hatred has been represented as a feeling of malice and enmity towards God. Many impenitent sinners are conscious of having no such feelings; but, on the contrary, they are conscious of having at times feelings of respect, veneration, awe, gratitude, and affection towards God and good men. They are also conscious, that they are often influenced by these feelings; that, in obedience to them, they sometimes pray and sing praises to God; that they sometimes manifest a deep veneration and respect for good men, and show them favour, and do many things for them which they would not do, did they not feel so deep a respect, veneration, and affection for them. Of these, and many like things, many impenitent sinners are often conscious. They are also often conscious of feeling no opposition to revivals, but, on the contrary, that they rejoice in them, and feel desirous that they should prosper, and hope that they shall be themselves converted. They are conscious of feeling deep veneration and respect, and even affection for those ministers who are the agents, in the hand of God, of carrying them forward. To this class of sinners, it is a snare and a stumbling-block to tell them, and insist, that they only hate God, and Christians, and ministers, and revivals; and to represent their moral depravity to be such, that they crave sin as they crave food, and that they necessarily have none but feelings of mortal enmity against God. None of these things are true, and this class of sinners know that they are not true. Such representations either drive them into infidelity on the one hand, or to think themselves Christians on the other. But those theologians who hold the views of constitutional depravity of which we have spoken, cannot consistently with their theory, admit to these sinners the real truth, and then show them conclusively that in all their feelings which they call good, and in all their yielding to be influenced by them, there is no virtue; that their desires and feelings have in themselves no moral character, and that when they yield the will to their control, it is only selfishness.

The thing needed is a philosophy and a theology that will admit and explain all the phenomena of experience, and not deny human consciousness. A theology that denies human consciousness is only a curse and a stumbling-block. But such is the doctrine of universal constitutional moral depravity.

It is frequently true, that the feelings of sinners become exceedingly rebellious and exasperated, even to the most intense opposition of feeling toward God, and Christ, and ministers, and revivals, and toward every thing of good report. If this class of sinners are converted, they are very apt to suppose, and to represent all sinners as having just such feelings as they had. But this is a mistake, for many sinners never had those feelings. Nevertheless, they are no less selfish and guilty than the class who have the rebellious and blasphemous feelings which I have mentioned. This is what they need to know. They need to understand definitely what sin is, and what it is not; that sin is selfishness; that selfishness is the yielding of the will to the control of feeling, and that it matters not at all what the particular class of feelings is, if feelings control the will, and not intelligence. Admit their good feelings, as they call them, and take pains to show them, that these feelings are merely constitutional, and have in themselves no moral character. If they plead, as they often will, that they not only feel but that they act out their feelings, and give themselves up to be controlled by them, then show them that this is only selfishness, changing its form, and the will consenting for the time to seek the gratification of this class of feelings, because they are for the time being the most importunate and influential with the will; that as soon as another class of feelings come into play, they will go over to their indulgence, and leave God and religion uncared for.

The ideas of depravity and of regeneration, to which I have often alluded, are fraught with great mischief in another respect. Great numbers, it is to be feared, both of private professors of religion and of ministers, have mistaken the class of feelings of which I have spoken, as common among certain impenitent sinners, for religion. They have heard the usual representations of the natural depravity of sinners, and also have heard certain desires and feelings represented as religion. They are conscious of these desires and feelings, and also, sometimes, when they are very strong, of being influenced in their conduct by them. They assume, therefore, that they are regenerate, and elected, and heirs of salvation. They are conscious that they often have feelings of great attachment to the world, and various classes of feeling very inconsistent with their religious feelings, as they call them; and that when these feelings are in exercise, they also yield to them, and give themselves up to their control. But this they are taught to think is common to all Christians; that all Christians have much indwelling sin, are much of their time entirely out of the way, and never altogether right, even for a moment, that they never feel so much as they are capable of feeling, and often feel the opposite of what they ought to feel. These views lull them asleep. The philosophy and theology that misrepresent moral depravity and regeneration thus, must, if consistent, also misrepresent true religion; and oh! the many thousands that have mistaken the mere constitutional desires and feelings, and the selfish yielding of the will to their control, for true religion, and have gone to the bar of God with a lie in their right hand.

It is a mournful, and even a heart-rending fact, that very much that passes current for Christian experience is not, and cannot be, an experience peculiar at all to Christians. It is common to both saints and sinners. It is merely the natural and necessary result of the human constitution, under certain circumstances. Let no man deceive himself by thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think.

5. Another great evil has arisen out of the false views I have been exposing, namely:--

Many true Christians have been much stumbled and kept in bondage, and their comfort and their usefulness much abridged, by finding themselves, from time to time, very languid and unfeeling. Supposing religion to consist in feeling, if at any time the sensibility becomes exhausted, and their feelings subside, they are immediately thrown into unbelief and bondage. Satan reproaches them for their want of feeling, and they have nothing to say, only to admit the truth of his accusations. Having a false philosophy of religion, they judge of the state of their hearts by the state of their feelings. They confound their hearts with their feelings, and are in almost constant perplexity to keep their hearts right, by which they mean their feelings, in a state of great excitement.

Again: they are not only sometimes languid, and have no pious feelings and desires, but at others they are conscious of classes of emotions which they call sin. These they resist, but still blame themselves for having them in their hearts, as they say. Thus they are brought into bondage again, although they are certain that these feelings are hated, and not at all indulged, by them.

Oh, how much all classes of persons need to have clearly defined ideas of what really constitutes sin and holiness. A false philosophy of the mind, especially of the will, and of moral depravity, has covered the world with gross darkness on the subject of sin and holiness, of regeneration, and of the evidences of regeneration, until the true saints, on the one hand, are kept in a continual bondage to their false notions; and on the other, the church swarms with unconverted professors, and is cursed with many self-deceived ministers.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLV.

REGENERATION.

III. WHEREIN SAINTS AND SINNERS, OR DECEIVED PROFESSORS, MUST DIFFER.

In discussing this branch of the subject, I will--

1. Make several prefatory remarks.

2. Point out the prominent characteristics of both.

1. *Prefatory remarks*.

(1.) The Bible represents all mankind as forming two, and but two, great classes, saints and sinners. All regenerate souls, whatever be their attainments, are included in the first class. All unregenerate persons, whatever be their profession, possessions, gifts, or station, are included in the second.

(2.) The Bible represents the difference between these two classes as radical, fundamental, and complete. The Bible does not recognize the impenitent as having any goodness in them, but uniformly as being dead in trespasses and in sins. It represents the saints as being dead to sin, and alive to God, as sanctified persons, and often speaks in such strong language as almost to compel us to understand it as denying that the saints sin at all; or to conclude, that sinning at all, proves that one is not a saint. It does take the unqualified ground, that no one is a saint who lives or indulges in any sin.

(3.) The Bible represents the difference between saints and sinners as very manifest and as appearing abundantly in their lives. It requires us to judge all men by their fruits. It gives us both the fruits of a regenerate, and of an unregenerate state, and is exceedingly specific and plain upon the subject.

(4.) In treating this question, I shall endeavour to bear in mind, that I am inquiring after the evidences of regeneration, and that I am to speak, not of high and rare attainments in piety, but of its beginnings, and of things that must exist and appear, where there is even the commencement of true holiness.

2. *I will point out the prominent characteristics of both saints and sinners*.

(1.) Let it be distinctly remembered, that all unregenerate persons, without exception, have one heart, that is, they are selfish. This is their whole character. They are universally and only devoted to self-interest, or self-gratification. Their unregenerate heart consists in this selfish disposition, or in this selfish choice. This choice is the foundation of, and the reason for, all their activity. One and the same ultimate reason actuates them in all they do, and in all they omit, and that reason is either presently or remotely, directly or indirectly, to gratify themselves.

The regenerate heart is disinterested benevolence. In other words, it is love to God and our neighbour. All regenerate hearts are precisely similar. All true saints, whenever they have truly the heart of the saints of God, are actuated by one and the same motive. They have only one ultimate reason for all they do, and suffer, or omit. They have one ultimate intention, one end. They live for one and the same object, and that is the same end for which God lives.

Now the thing after which we are inquiring is, what must be the necessary developements and manifestations of these opposite states of mind. These opposite states are supreme and opposite and ultimate choices; and those opposite choices are ultimate. In whatever the saint and the sinner respectively engage, they have directly opposite ends in view. They are states of supreme devotion to ultimate and opposite ends. In whatever they do, the saint, if he acts as a saint, and the sinner, if he acts as a sinner, have directly opposite ends in view. They do, or omit what they do, for entirely different and opposite ultimate reasons. Although, as we have seen, in many things their opposite ends may lead them to attempt to secure them by similar means, and may, therefore, often lead to the same outward life, in many respects, yet it is always true, that even when they act outwardly alike, they have inwardly entirely different ultimate reasons for their conduct. As it often happens, that the saint in pursuing the highest good of being in general as an end, finds it necessary to do many things which the sinner may do to secure his selfish end; and as it often happens, that the sinner, in his endeavours to compass his selfish end, finds it necessary to use the same outward means that the saint does in his efforts to secure his end, it requires not unfrequently a good degree of candour and of discrimination to distinguish between them. And, as saints and sinners possess the same, or similar, constitutions and constitutional propensities, their desires and feelings are often so much alike, as to embarrass the superficial inquirer after their true spiritual state. As has been said, the sinner often, in seasons of strong religious excitement, not only has desires and feelings resulting from the laws of his constitution, similar to those that are experienced by the saints, but he also, for the time being, gives up his will to follow these impulses. In this case it requires the nicest discrimination to distinguish between the saint and the sinner; for at such times they not only feel alike, but they also act alike. The difficulty, in such cases, is to distinguish between the action of a will that obeys the intelligence and one that obeys a class of feelings that are so nearly in harmony with the dictates of the intelligence. To distinguish, in such cases, between that which proceeds from feeling, and that which proceeds from the intelligence, requires no slight degree of attention and discrimination. One needs to be a close observer, and no tyro in mental philosophy, to make just discriminations in cases of this kind.

Let it be understood, that the fundamental difference between saints and sinners does not consist in the fact, that one has a sinful nature, and the other has not, for neither of them has a sinful nature.

(2.) Nor does it consist in the fact, that the saint has had a physical regeneration, and therefore possesses some element of constitution which the sinner has not.

(3.) Nor does it consist in this, that saints are aiming or intending to do right, while sinners are aiming and intending to do wrong.

The saint loves God and his neighbour; that is, chooses or intends their highest good, for its own sake.	The sinner is selfish, and chooses his own gratification as an end.
This choice or intention is right, though right is not the ultimate thing intended. The good, i.e., the valuable to being, and not the right, is that upon which the intention terminates.	This choice or intention is wrong; but wrong is not the end chosen, or the thing upon which the intention terminates.

They are both choosing what they regard as valuable.

The saint chooses the good of being impartially; that is, he chooses the highest good of being in general for its own sake, and lays no greater stress upon his own, than is dictated by the law of his own intelligence. His duty is to will the greatest amount of good to being in general, and promote the greatest amount of good within his power. From the relation of things, every one's own highest well-being is committed to his particular keeping and promotion, in a higher sense than that of his neighbour is. Next to his own well-being, that of his own family and kindred is committed to his particular keeping and promotion, in a higher sense than that of his neighbour's family and kindred. Next the interest and well-being of his immediate neighbourhood and of those more immediately within the sphere of his influence, is committed to his keeping and promotion. Thus, while all interests are to be esteemed according to their intrinsic and relative value, the law of God requires, that we should lay ourselves out more particularly for the promotion of those interests that lie so much within our reach, that we can accomplish and secure a greater amount of good, by giving our principal attention and efforts to them, than could be secured by our practically treating the interests of every individual, of every family, and of every neighbourhood, as of equal value with our own. The practical judgment of all men always was, and necessarily must be, that the law of God demands, that every one should see to his own soul, and should provide for his own household, and that the highest good of the whole universe can best be promoted only by each individual, each family, each neighbourhood, and each nation, taking care to secure those interests more immediately committed to them, because more immediately within their reach. This is not selfishness, if the intention is to secure the highest good of being in general, and of these particular interests, as a part of the general good, and because it falls particularly to us to promote these particular interests, inasmuch as their promotion is particularly within our reach. The law of God, while it demands that I should will the highest good of being in general for its own sake, and esteem every interest known to me according to its intrinsic and relative value, demands also, that as a pastor of a church, I should give my time, and influence, and energies, more particularly to the promotion of the good of the people of my own charge. More good will, upon the whole, result to the world from pastors taking this course, than by their taking any other. The same is true of the family relation, and of all the relations of life. Our relations give us peculiar facilities for securing good, and impose on us peculiar responsibilities. Our relation to our own highest well-being imposes peculiar responsibilities on us, in regard to our own souls. So of our families, neighbourhoods, &c. It should be well considered then, that the precept, "Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself," does not require every one to pay just the attention to his neighbour's soul that he does to his own, nor the same attention to his neighbour's children and family that he does to his own. He is bound to esteem his neighbour's interest according to its relative value, and to pursue his own interest, and the interest of his family and neighbourhood, and nation, in a manner not inconsistent with the interests of others, but in a manner as highly conducive to the promotion of their interests, as in his judgment will, upon the whole, secure the greatest amount of good. If I have a life to live, and a certain amount of time, and talent, and money, and influence, to lay out for God and souls, I am bound to use all in that manner that, in my honest judgment, will upon the whole secure the greatest amount of good to being. I am not, certainly, to divide the pittance of my possessions among all men of present and coming generations. Nor am I to scatter my time and talent over the face of the whole globe. But, on the contrary, benevolence dictates, that I should lay out my time, and talents, and influence, and possessions, where and when, and in a way, in my honest estimation, calculated to secure to being the greatest amount of good.

I have said thus much, as might seem, by way of preparation; but, in fact, it is necessary for us to have these thoughts in mind, when we enter upon the discussion of the question before us; to wit: What are evidences of a truly benevolent state of mind? For example; suppose we should enter upon the inquiry in question, taking along with us the assumption, that true benevolence, that is, the disinterested love of God and our neighbour, implies that we should not only esteem, but also treat, all other interests of equal intrinsic value with our own, according to their intrinsic and relative value. I say, should we, in searching after evidence of disinterested benevolence, take along with us this false assumption, where should we find any evidence of benevolence on earth? No man does or can act upon such a principle. God has never acted upon it. Christ never acted upon it. Why did God select the particular nation of the Jews, and confine his revelations to them? Why did Christ preach the gospel to the Jews only, and say that he was not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Why has God always acted upon this principle of accomplishing the greatest practicable good under all the circumstances of the case? He esteems the good of all, and of each, of his creatures according to its intrinsic and relative value, but does good when and as he best can. If the greatest amount of ultimate good can be secured by choosing Abraham before all other men, and making him and his posterity the objects of peculiar effort and spiritual cultivation and the depositories of the holy oracles, which he intended should ultimately bless all nations, why then, he does it. He exercises his own discretion in his efforts to accomplish the greatest amount of good. Good is his end, and he does all the good he can. In securing this, he does many things that might appear partial to those who take but a limited view of things. Just so with all truly benevolent creatures. Good is their end. In promoting it, their intelligence and the law of God dictate, that they should bestow their particular efforts, attention, influence, and possessions upon those particular interests and persons that will, in their judgment, result in the highest good of being as a whole. The whole Bible everywhere assumes this as the correct rule of duty. Hence it recognizes all the relations of life, and the peculiar responsibilities and duties that grow out of them, and enjoins the observance of those duties. The relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, of ruler and subject, and indeed all the relations incident to our highest well-being in this life, are expressly recognized, and their corresponding obligations assumed by the inspired writers; which shows clearly, that they understood the law of supreme love to God and equal love to our neighbour, to imply an obligation to give particular attention to those interests which God had placed more particularly within the reach of our influence; always remembering that those interests are to be pursued impartially; that is, in consistency with the promotion of all other interests, by those to whom their promotion is particularly committed. For example: I am not to pursue my own good and that of my family, or my neighbourhood, or my nation, in a manner inconsistent with the interests of my neighbour, or his family, or neighbourhood, or nation. But I am to seek the promotion of all the interests particularly committed to me, in harmony with, and only as making a part of, the general interest of being.

Now let it be remembered, that the saint is benevolent, and all his life as a saint is only the developement of this one principle; or his outward and inward activity is only an effort to secure the end upon which benevolence fastens, to wit, the highest good of God and of being in general.

The sinner is selfish; all his activity is to be ascribed to an intention to secure his own gratification. Self-interest is his end. It is easy to see from what has been said, that, to an outward observer, a benevolent saint may, and often must, appear to be selfish, and the selfish sinner may and will appear to be disinterested. The saint pursues his own good and the happiness and well-being of his family, as a part of universal good, and does it disinterestedly. The sinner pursues his own gratification, and that of his family, not as parts of universal good, and disinterestedly, but as his own, and as the interest of those who are regarded as parts of himself, and whose interest he regards as identified with his own.

They are both busy in promoting the interests of self and family, and neighbourhood, &c. And the difference between them lies in their ultimate intentions, or the reasons for what they do.

There is, as I have intimated, special difficulty in ascertaining, for certainty, which is the saint and which the sinner, when the sinner's selfishness is directed to the securing of a heavenly and eternal interest, instead of a worldly and temporal one. He may, and often does, aim at securing a heavenly and an eternal interest, both for himself, and family, and friends. When he does this, his outward manifestations are so very like those of the true saint, as to render it difficult, if not impossible, for an observer for the time being to distinguish accurately between them.

I have compared the saint and the sinner, in my last lecture, for the purpose of showing in what respect they may be alike.

I will now, in a few particulars, proceed to contrast them, that it may appear in what they differ.

(1.) And fundamentally, they are radically opposite to each other in their ultimate choice or intention. They are supremely devoted to different and opposite ends. They live to promote those opposite ends.

(2.) The saint is governed by reason, the law of God, or the moral law; in other words still, the law of disinterested and universal benevolence is his law. This law is not only revealed and developed in his intelligence, but it is written in his heart. So that the law of his intellect is the law of his heart. He not only sees and acknowledges what he ought to do and be, but he is conscious to himself, and gives evidence to others, whether they receive it and are convinced by it or not, that his heart, his will, or intention, is conformed to his convictions of duty. He sees the path of duty and follows it. He knows what he ought to will, intend, and do, and does it. Of this he is conscious. And of this others may be satisfied, if they are observing, charitable, and candid.

(3.) The sinner is contrasted with this in the most important and fundamental respects. He is not governed by reason and principle, but by feeling, desire, and impulse. Sometimes his feelings coincide with the intelligence, and sometimes they do not. But when they do so coincide, the will does not pursue its course out of respect or in obedience to the law of the intelligence, but in obedience to the impulse of the sensibility, which, for the time being, impels in the same direction as the law of the reason. But for the most part the impulses of the sensibility incline him to worldly gratifications, and in an opposite direction to that which the intelligence points out. This leads him to a course of life that is too manifestly the opposite of reason, to leave any room for doubt, as to what his true character is.

But he also has the law revealed in his intelligence. His head is right, but his heart is wrong. He knows what he ought to do, and will, and be, but he is conscious that his heart does not obey his reason. He is conscious that the law is in his intelligence, but is not written in his heart. He knows that he is not in heart what he necessarily affirms that he ought to be. He knows that he is habitually selfish, and not disinterestedly benevolent. Sometimes, as has been said, during seasons of special religious excitement, when his sensibility and intelligence impel in the same direction, he thinks his heart and head agree; that he is what he knows he ought to be; that the law is written in his heart. But as soon as this excitement subsides, he sees, or may see, that it was not his intelligence but his sensibility that governed his will; that in the absence of religious excitement his intelligence has no control of his will; that he is governed by impulse and not by principle. This will also be manifest to others. If during religious excitement they have hoped too well of him, as soon as, and in proportion as, excitement ceases, they will clearly see, that it was the impulse of feeling, and not the law of the intelligence that governed him. They will soon clearly see, that he has not, and had not, the root of the matter in him; that his religion was founded in the effervescence of the ever-varying sensibility, and not in the stable demands of his reason and conscience. As excitement waxes and wanes, he will be ever fluctuating. Sometimes quite zealous, and active, and talkative, full of feeling, he will have the appearance of possessing most of the phases of Christian character in a state of freshness and beauty. And anon his religious excitement ceases. His tongue is silent on religious subjects. His zeal abates apace. His attendance at the prayer and conference meeting is interrupted, and finally ceases. A worldly excitement takes possession of his sensibility. His will is carried off course. Politics, business, amusement, no matter what, is for the time being his exciting topic; he is carried away with it, and remains in this state carried hither and thither by worldly engrossments, until another religious excitement renews and confirms his delusion and that of his friends, who look upon him as a real Christian, but prone to backsliding.

(4.) The true saint is distinguished by his firm adherence to all the principles and rules of the divine government. He is a reformer from principle, and needs not the gale of popular excitement, or of popular applause, to put and keep him in motion. His intellect and conscience have taken the control of his will, or the will has renounced the impulses of the sensibility as its law, and voluntarily committed itself to the demands of the reason. This fact must appear both on the field of his own consciousness, and also in most instances be very manifest to others. His zeal does not wax and wane with every breeze of excitement. He is not carried away by every change in the effervescing sensibility. The law of reason being written in his heart, he does not at one time appear reasonable, and to be influenced by conscience and a regard to the law of love, and at another to be infinitely unreasonable, and to have little or no regard to God or his laws. He fears and shuns popular excitements, as he does all other temptations. He loaths and resists them. The excitements of politics, and business, and amusements, are regarded by him with a jealous eye. He dreads their influence on his sensibility; and when he feels them, it causes a deep struggle and groaning of spirit, because the will, adhering to the law of conscience, stedfastly resists them. Such-like excitements, instead of being his element and the aliment of his life, are a grief and vexation to him. Instead of living, and moving, and having his being, as it were, in the midst of them, and by them, he is only annoyed by them. They are not the moving spring of his activity, but only embarrass his spiritual life. His spiritual life is founded in the law of the intelligence, and supported by the light of the Holy Spirit poured upon his intellect through the truth. He steadily resists the flood-tides of mere feeling on every subject, and abides by truth, and principle, and moral law, whatever may be the circumstances of worldly or religious excitement around him. Be it ever remembered, it is moral law, moral principle, the law of love, and not mere feeling, that governs him.

(5.) The sinner, or deceived professor, for they are one, is the very opposite of this. Excitement is his element and his life. He has truly no moral principle except in theory. He is never truly influenced by truth, law, reason, but always by excitement of some kind. His activity is based on this; hence he is not disturbed and embarrassed in his movements, by excitements of any kind, any longer than it takes to put down one form of excitement and take on another. If when he is much interested and excited and carried away, in one direction, a counter influence or excitement comes in his way, he is taken aback for the time being. He is disconcerted and embarrassed, perhaps displeased. But you will soon see him change his course, and follow the new excitement. Excitement is his life, and although, like a ship at sea, he is thrown into temporary confusion by a sudden change of the winds and waves, so, like her whose life and activity are the breezes and the gale, and the ocean wave, he readily accommodates his sails and his course to the ever-changing breeze and currents of excitement, in the midst of which he loves to live, and on the foaming surface of which he is borne along. If you wish to move him, you must strongly appeal to his feelings. Reason does not, cannot govern him. 'Tis not enough to say to him, Thus saith the Lord. He will admit the right, but surely will not do it. He will not go that way, unless you can first make his feelings move in that direction. He holds the truth only in theory and in unrighteousness. It is not the law of his live, his heart, his warmest affections and sympathies. Present considerations to his intelligence; unless they excite his sensibility, and arouse his hopes, or fears, or feelings in some direction, you might as well attempt to change the course of the winds by your words. His imagination must be aroused and set on fire. His sensibility must be reached, enkindled. The gales of excitement must be raised, and the mainspring of his action must be touched, and directed to impel his will, before you can quicken him into life. His feelings are his law.

(6.) The saint is justified, and he has the evidence of it in the peace of his own mind. He is conscious of obeying the law of reason and of love. Consequently he naturally has that kind and degree of peace that flows from the harmony of his will with the law of his intelligence. He sometimes has conflicts with the impulses of feeling and desire. But unless he is overcome, these conflicts, though they may cause him inwardly, and, perhaps, audibly to groan, do not interrupt his peace. There are still the elements of peace within him. His heart and conscience are at one, and while this is so he has thus far the evidence of justification in himself. That is, he knows that God cannot condemn his present state. Conscious as he is of conformity of heart to the moral law, he cannot but affirm to himself, that the lawgiver is pleased with his present attitude. But further, he has also within the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child of God, forgiven, accepted, adopted. He feels the filial spirit drawing his heart to exclaim, Father, Father. He is conscious that he pleases God, and has God's smile of approbation.

He is at peace with himself, because he affirms his heart to be in unison with the law of love. His conscience does not upbraid, but smile. The harmony of his own being is a witness to himself, that this is the state in which he was made to exist. He is at peace with God, because he and God are pursuing precisely the same end, and by the same means. There can be no collision, no controversy between them. He is at peace with the universe, in the sense, that he has no ill-will, and no malicious feelings or wish to gratify, in the injury of any one of all the creatures of God. He has no fear, but to sin against God. He is not influenced on the one hand by the fear of hell, nor on the other by the hope of reward. He is not anxious about his own salvation, but prayerfully and calmly leaves that question in the hands of God, and concerns himself only to promote the highest glory of God, and the good of being. "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

(7.) The sinner's experience is the opposite of this. He is under condemnation, and seldom can so far deceive himself, even in his most religious moods, as to imagine that he has a consciousness of acceptance either with his own conscience or with God. There is almost never a time in which he has not a greater or less degree of restlessness and misgiving within. Even when he is most engaged in religion, as he supposes, he finds himself dissatisfied with himself. Something is wrong. There is a struggle and a pang. He may not exactly see where and what the difficulty is. He does not, after all, obey reason and conscience, and is not governed by the law and will of God. Not having the consciousness of this obedience, his conscience does not smile. He sometimes feels deeply, and acts as he feels, and is conscious of being sincere in the sense of feeling what he says, and acting in obedience to deep feeling. But this does not satisfy conscience. He is more or less wretched after all. He has not true peace. Sometimes he has a self-righteous quiet and enjoyment. But this is neither peace of conscience nor peace with God. He, after all, feels uneasy and condemned, notwithstanding all his feeling, and zeal, and activity. They are not of the right kind. Hence they do not satisfy the conscience. They do not meet the demands of his intelligence. Conscience does not approve. He has not, after all, true peace. He is not justified; he cannot be fully and permanently satisfied that he is. He is not, for any length of time, satisfied with his best performances. He is conscious, after all, of sinning in all his holiest duties, and he is the more sure of this, in proportion as he is more enlightened. He thinks that this is the universal experience of all true saints; that although neither conscience nor God is satisfied with his obedience,--not even in his best frames and states,--yet he thinks, to be sure, he has some degree of holiness and conformity to the will of God, although not enough to bring out the approbation of conscience, and the smile of God upon his soul. He imagines that he has some true religion; some half-way obedience. He is a true, though an imperfect, saint, whose best obedience can and does satisfy neither his own sense of duty nor his God. With him, justification is a mere theory, a doctrine, an opinion, an article of faith, and not a living-felt reality; not an experience, but an idea, a notion, and, at best, a pleasing and dreamy delusion.

(8.) The saint has made the will of God his law, and asks for no other reason to influence his decisions and actions than that such is the will of God. He has received the will of God as the unfailing index, pointing always to the path of duty. His intelligence affirms that God's will is, and ought to be, law, or perfect evidence of what law is; and therefore he has received it as such. He therefore expects to obey it always, and in all things. He makes no calculations to sin in anything; nor in one thing more than another. He does not cast about, and pick and choose among the commandments of God; professing obedience to those that are the least offensive to him, and trampling on those that call to a sterner morality, and a harder self-denial. With him there are no little sins in which he expects to indulge. He no more expects to eat too much, than he expects to be a drunkard; and gluttony is as much a sin as drunkenness. He no more expects to take an advantage of his neighbour, than he expects to rob him on the highway. He no more designs and expects to indulge in secret, than in open uncleanness. He no more expects to indulge a wanton eye, than to commit adultery with his brother's wife. He no more expects to exaggerate and give a false colouring to the truth, than he expects and intends to commit perjury. All sin is an abomination to him. He has renounced it *ex animo*. His heart has rejected sin as sin. His heart has embraced the will of God as his law. It has embraced the whole will of God. He waits only for a knowledge of what the will of God is. He needs not, he seeks not, excitement to determine or to strengthen his will. The law of his being has come to be the will of God. A "thus saith the Lord," immediately awakens from the depths of his soul the whole-hearted "amen." He does not go about to plead for sin, to trim his ways so as to serve two masters. To serve God and Mammon is no part of his policy, and no part of his wish. No: he is God's man, God's subject, God's child. All his sympathies are with God; and surely "his fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." What Christ wills, he wills; what Christ rejects, he rejects.

(9.) But right over against this you will find the sinner, or deceived professor. God's will is not his law; but his own sensibility is his law. With him it is not enough to know the will of God; he must also have his sensibility excited in that direction, before he goes. He does not mean, nor expect, to avoid every form and degree of iniquity. His heart has not renounced sin as sin. It has not embraced the will of God from principle, and of course has not embraced the whole will of God. With him it is a small thing to commit what he calls little sins. This shows, conclusively, where he is. If the will of God were his law--as this is as really opposed to what he calls little, as to what he calls great sins, he would not expect and intend to disobey God in one thing more than in another. He could know no little sins, since they conflict with the will of God. But he goes about to pick and choose among the commandments of God, sometimes yielding an outward obedience to those that conflict least with his inclinations, and which therefore will cost him the least self-denial, but evading and disregarding those that lay the axe to the root of the tree, and prohibit all selfishness. The sinner, or deceived professor, does not in fact seriously mean, or expect, wholly to obey God. He thinks that this is common to all Christians. He as much expects to sin every day against God, as he expects to live, and does not think this at all inconsistent with his being a real, though imperfect, Christian. He is conscious of indulging in some sins, and that he has never repented of them and put them away, but he thinks that this also is common to all Christians, and therefore it does not slay his false hope. He would much sooner indulge in gluttony than in drunkenness, because the latter would more seriously affect his reputation. He would not hesitate to indulge wanton thoughts and imaginations when he would not allow himself in outward licentiousness, because of its bearing upon his character, and, as he says, upon the cause of God. He will not hesitate to take little advantages of his neighbour, to amass a fortune in this way, while he would recoil from robbing on the highway, or on the high seas; for this would injure his reputation with man, and, as he thinks, more surely destroy his soul. Sinners sometimes become exceedingly self-righteous, and aim at what they call perfection. But unless they are very ignorant, they soon become discouraged, and cry out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They, however, almost always satisfy themselves with a mere outward morality, and that, as I have said, not descending to what they call little sins.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLVI.

REGENERATION.

IN WHAT SAINTS AND SINNERS DIFFER.

(10.) *Saints are interested in, and sympathize with, every effort to reform mankind, and promote the interests of truth and righteousness in the earth.*

The good of being is the end for which the saint really and truly lives. This is not merely held by him as a theory, as an opinion, as a theological or philosophical speculation. It is in his heart, and precisely for this reason he is a saint. He is a saint just because the theory, which is lodged in the head of both saint and sinner, has also a lodgement and a reigning power in his heart, and consequently in his life. The fact is, that saints, as such, have no longer a wicked heart. They are "born again," "born of God," and "they cannot sin, for his seed remaineth in them, so that they cannot sin, because they are born of God." "They have a new heart," "are new creatures," "old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new." They are holy or sanctified persons. The Bible representations of the new birth forbid us to suppose that the truly regenerate have still a wicked heart. The nature of regeneration also renders it certain that the regenerate heart cannot be a wicked heart. His heart or choice is fixed upon the highest good of God and the universe as an end. Moral agents are so constituted, that they necessarily regard truth and righteousness, as conditions of the highest good of moral agents. These being necessarily regarded by them as indispensable to the end, will, and must be considered as important, as the end to which they sustain the relation of indispensable conditions. As they supremely value the highest good of being, they will, and must take a deep interest in whatever is promotive of that end. Hence, their spirit is necessarily that of the reformer. To the universal reformation of the world they stand committed. To this end they are devoted. For this end they live, and move, and have their being. Every proposed reform interests them, and naturally leads them to examine its claims. The fact is, they are studying and devising ways and means to convert, sanctify, reform mankind. Being in this state of mind, they are predisposed to lay hold on whatever gives promise of good to man. A close examination will show a remarkable difference between saints and sinners in this respect. True saints love reform. It is their business, their profession, their life to promote it; consequently they are ready to examine the claims of any proposed reform; candid and self-denying, and ready to be convinced, however much self-denial it may call them to. They have actually rejected self-indulgence, as the end for which they live, and are ready to sacrifice any form of self-indulgence, for the sake of promoting the good of men and the glory of God. It is not, and cannot be natural to them to be prejudiced against reform, to be apt to array themselves against, or speak lightly of, any proposed reform, until they have thoroughly examined its claims, and found it wanting in the essential attributes of true reform. The natural bearing or bias of the saint's mind is in favour of whatever proposes to do good, and instead of ridiculing reform in general, or speaking lightly or censoriously of reform, the exact opposite is natural to him. It is natural to him to revere reformers, and to honour those who have introduced even what proved in the end not to be wholesome reforms, if so be there is evidence, that they were sincere and self-denying in their efforts to benefit mankind. The saint is truly and greatly desirous, and in earnest, to reform all sin out of the world, and just for this reason is ready to hail with joy, and to try whatever reform seems, from the best light he can get, to bid fair to put down sin, and the evils that are in the world. Even mistaken men, who are honestly endeavouring to reform mankind, and denying their appetites, as many have done in dietetic reform, are deserving of the respect of their fellow men. Suppose their philosophy to be incorrect, yet they have intended well. They have manifested a disposition to deny themselves, for the purpose of promoting the good of others. They have been honest and zealous in this. Now no true saint can feel or express contempt for such reformers, however much mistaken they may be. No; his natural sentiments and feelings will be, and must be, the reverse of contempt or censoriousness in respect to them. If their mistake has been injurious, he may mourn over the evil, but will not, cannot, severely judge the honest reformer. War, slavery, licentiousness, and all such like evils and abominations, are necessarily regarded by the saint as great and sore evils, and he longs for their complete and final overthrow. It is impossible that a truly benevolent mind should not thus regard these abominations of desolation. The cause of peace, the cause of anti-slavery, and that of the overthrow of licentiousness, must lie near the heart of every truly benevolent mind. I know that sinners often have a certain kind of interest in these and other reforms. This will be noticed and explained in the proper place. But whatever is true of sinners under certain circumstances, it must be always true of Christians, that they hail the cause of peace, of the abolition of slavery, and of the abolition of every form of sin, and of every evil, moral and physical, with joy, and cannot but give them a hearty God-speed. If they see that they are advocated on wrong principles, or with a bad spirit, or by bad men, and that injurious measures are used to promote them, the saints will mourn, will be faithful in trying to find out and to proclaim a more excellent way. Do but keep in mind the fact, that saints are truly benevolent, and are really and heartily consecrated to the highest good of being, and then it will surely be seen, that these things must be true of real saints.

The saints in all ages have been reformers. I know it is said, that neither prophets, Christ, nor apostles, nor primitive saints and martyrs declaimed against war and slavery, &c. But they did. The entire instructions of Christ, and of apostles and prophets, were directly opposed to these and all other evils. If they did not come out against certain legalized forms of sin, and denounce them by name, and endeavour to array public sentiment against them, it is plainly because they were, for the most part, employed in a preliminary work. To introduce the gospel as a divine revelation; to set up and organize the visible kingdom of God on earth; to lay a foundation for universal reform, was rather their business, than the pushing forward of particular branches of reform. The overthrow of state idolatry, the great and universal sin of the world in that age; the labour of getting the world and the governments of earth to tolerate and receive the gospel as a revelation from the one only living and true God; the controversy with the Jews, to overthrow their objections to Christianity; in short, the great and indispensable and preliminary work of gaining for Christ and his gospel a hearing, and an acknowledgment of its divinity, was rather their work, than the pushing of particular precepts and doctrines of the gospel to their legitimate results and logical consequences. This work once done has left it for later saints to bring the particular truths, precepts, and doctrines of the blessed gospel to bear down every form of sin. Prophets, Christ, and his apostles, have left on the pages of inspiration no dubious testimony against every form of sin. The spirit of the whole Bible breathes from every page blasting and annihilation upon every unholy abomination, while it smiles upon everything of good report that promises blessings to man and glory to God. The saint is not merely sometimes a reformer; he is always so. He is necessarily so, if he abide a saint. It is a contradiction to say, that a true saint is not devoted to reform; for, as I have said, he is a true saint just because he is devoted, heart, and soul, and life, and all, to the promotion of the good of universal being.

(11.) *The sinner is never a reformer in any proper sense of the word.*

He is selfish and never opposed to sin, or to any evil whatever, from any such motive as renders him worthy the name of reformer. He sometimes selfishly advocates and pushes certain outward reforms; but as certain as it is that he is an unregenerate sinner, so certain is it, that he is not endeavouring to reform sin out of the world from any disinterested love to God or to man. Many considerations of a selfish nature may engage him at times in certain branches of reform. Regard to his reputation may excite his zeal in such an enterprize. Self-righteous considerations may also lead him to enlist in the army of reformers. His relation to particular forms of vice may influence him to set his face against them. Constitutional temperament and tendencies may lead to his engaging in certain reforms. For example, his constitutional benevolence, as phrenologists call it, may be such that from natural compassion he may engage in reforms. But this is only giving way to an impulse of the sensibility, and it is not principle that governs him. His natural conscientiousness may modify his outward character, and lead him to take hold of some branches of reform. But whatever other motives he may have, sure it is that he is not a reformer; for he is a sinner, and it is absurd to say that a sinner is truly engaged in opposing sin as sin. No, it is not sin that he is opposing, but he is seeking to gratify an ambitious, a self-righteous, or some other spirit, the gratification of which is selfishness.

But as a general thing, it is easy to distinguish sinners, or deceived professors from saints by looking steadfastly at their temper and deportment in their relations to reform. They are self-indulgent, and sinners just for the reason that they are devoted to self-indulgence. Sometimes their self-indulgent spirit takes on one type, and sometimes another. Of course they need not be expected to ridicule or oppose every branch of reform, just because it is not every reformer that will rebuke their favourite indulgences, and call them to reform their lives. But as every sinner has one or more particular form of indulgence to which he is wedded, and as saints are devising and pushing reforms in all directions, it is natural that some sinners should manifest particular hostility to one reform, and some to another. Whenever a reform is proposed that would reform them out of their favourite indulgences, they will either ridicule it, and those that propose it, or storm and rail, or in some way oppose or wholly neglect it. Not so, and so it cannot be, with a true saint. He has no indulgence that he values when put in competition with the good of being. Nay, he holds his all and his life at the disposal of the highest good. Has he, in ignorance of the evils growing out of his course, used ardent spirits, wine, tobacco, ale, or porter? Has he held slaves; been engaged in any traffic that is found to be injurious; has he favoured war through ignorance; or, in short, has he committed any mistake whatever? let but a reformer come forth and propose to discuss the tendency of such things; let the reformer bring forth his strong reasons; and from the very nature of true religion, the saint will listen with attention, weigh with candour, and suffer himself to be carried by truth, heart, and hand, and influence with the proposed reform, if it be worthy of support, how much soever it conflict with his former habits. This must be true, if he has a single eye to the good of being, which is the very characteristic of a saint.

But the sinner, or deceived professor, is naturally a conservative as opposed to a reformer. He says, Let me alone in my indulgences, and I will let you alone in yours, provided they in no way interfere with my own. Consequently, he is in general disposed to distrust, to discountenance, and to ridicule reforms and those that advocate them. He is uncandid and hard to convince; will demand an express, "Thus saith the Lord," or what is equivalent to a demonstration, of the wisdom and utility and practicability of a proposed reform. He will evince in many ways, that his heart is not predisposed to reforms. He will be eagle-eyed in respect to any faults in the character or measures of the reformers; he will be eager to detect and seize upon any error in their logic, and is easily displeased and repelled with their measures.

In short, sinners will be almost sure to manifest a latent dislike to reforms. They will dwell much and almost exclusively upon the evils of revivals of religion, for example; the danger of spurious excitements; of promoting fanaticism and misrule; of encouraging false hopes; and they will in various ways manifest a disrelish for revivals of religion, but always under the pretence of a concern for the purity of the church, and honour of God. They will be too much taken up with the evils and dangers, ever to give themselves heartily to the promotion of pure revivals. They act on the defensive. They have enough to do to resist and oppose what they call evils, without even trying to show a more excellent way. They in general take substantially the same course in respect to almost every branch of reformation, and especially to every reform that can touch their idols. They are so much afraid of mistakes and evils, that they withhold their influence, when in fact the difficulty is, they have no heart to the work. Benevolence has been for thousands of years endeavouring to reform the world, and selfishness is opposing it. And often, very often, under the sanctimonious garb of a concern for the honour of religion, selfishness utters its sighs and lamentations over the supposed ignorance, mistakes, fanaticism, and injurious measures, of those whose hearts and hands and entire being are devoted to the work.

(12.) *Christians overcome the world*. I will here introduce an extract from a discourse of my own upon this text, reported in the Oberlin Evangelist:--

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."-- 1Jo 5:4.

FIRST. What is it to overcome the world?

(i.) It is to get above the spirit of covetousness which possesses the men of the world. The spirit of the world is eminently the spirit of covetousness. It is a greediness after the things of the world. Some worldly men covet one thing, and some another; but all classes of worldly men are living in the spirit of covetousness, in some of its forms. This spirit has supreme possession of their minds.

Now the first thing in overcoming the world is, that the spirit of covetousness in respect to worldly things and objects, be overcome. The man who does not overcome this spirit of bustling and scrambling after the good which this world proffers, has by no means overcome it.

(ii.) Overcoming the world implies, rising above its engrossments. When a man has overcome the world, his thoughts are no longer engrossed and swallowed up with worldly things. A man certainly does not overcome the world, unless he gets above being engrossed and absorbed with its concerns.

Now we all know how exceedingly engrossed worldly men are with some form of worldly good. One is swallowed up with study; another with politics; a third with money-getting; and a fourth, perhaps, with fashion and pleasure; but each in his chosen way makes earthly good the all-engrossing object.

The man who gains the victory over the world, must overcome not one form only of its pursuits, but every form--must overcome the world itself, and all that it has to present, as an allurement to the human heart.

(iii.) Overcoming the world implies overcoming the fear of the world.

It is a mournful fact that most men, and indeed all men of worldly character have so much regard to public opinion, that they dare not act according to the dictates of their consciences, when acting thus would incur the popular frown. One is afraid lest his business should suffer, if his course runs counter to public opinion; another fears, lest if he stands up for the truth, it will injure his reputation, and curiously imagines and tries to believe, that advocating an unpopular truth will diminish and perhaps destroy his good influence--as if a man could exert a good influence in any possible way besides maintaining the truth.

Great multitudes, it must be admitted, are under this influence of fearing the world; yet some of them, and perhaps many of them, are not aware of this fact. If you, or if they, could thoroughly sound the reasons of their backwardness in duty, fear of the world would be among the chief. Their fear of the world's displeasure is so much stronger than their fear of God's displeasure, that they are completely enslaved by it. Who does not know that some ministers dare not preach what they know is true, and even what they know is important truth, lest they should offend some whose good opinion they seek to retain? The society is weak perhaps, and the favour of some rich man in it seems indispensable to its very existence. Hence the terror of this rich man is continually before their eyes, when they write a sermon, or preach, or are called to stand up in favour of any truth or cause, which may be unpopular with men of more wealth than piety or conscience. Alas! this bondage to man! Many gospel ministers are so troubled by it, that their time serving policy becomes virtually renouncing Christ, and serving the world.

Overcoming the world is thoroughly subduing this servility to men.

(iv.) Overcoming the world implies overcoming a state of worldly anxiety. You know there is a state of great carefulness and anxiety which is common and almost universal among worldly men. It is perfectly natural, if the heart is set upon securing worldly good, and has not learned to receive all good from the hand of a great Father, and trust him to give or withhold, with his own unerring wisdom. But he who loves the world is the enemy of God, and hence can never have this filial trust in a parental Benefactor, nor the peace of soul which it imparts. Hence worldly men are almost incessantly in a fever of anxiety lest their worldly schemes should fail. They sometimes get a momentary relief when all things seem to go well: but some mishap is sure to befall them at some point soon, so that scarce a day passes that brings not with it some corroding anxiety. Their bosoms are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the man who gets above the world, gets above this state of ceaseless and corroding anxiety.

(v.) The victory under consideration implies, that we cease to be enslaved and in bondage by the world, in any of its forms.

There is a worldly spirit, and there is also a heavenly spirit; and one or the other exists in the heart of every man, and controls his whole being. Those who are under the control of the world, of course have not overcome the world. No man overcomes the world till his heart is imbued with the spirit of Heaven.

One form which the spirit of the world assumes is, being enslaved to the customs and fashions of the day.

It is marvellous to see what a goddess Fashion becomes. No heathen goddess was ever worshipped with costlier offerings or more devout homage, or more implicit subjection. And surely no heathen deity, since the world began, has ever had more universal patronage. Where will you go to find the man of the world, or the woman of the world, who does not hasten to worship at her shrine? But overcoming the world implies, that the spirit of this goddess-worship is broken.

They who have overcome the world are no longer careful either to secure its favour or avert its frown, and the good or the ill opinion of the world is to them a small matter. "To me," said Paul, "it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment." So of every real Christian; his care is to secure the approbation of God; this is his chief concern, to commend himself to God and to his own conscience. No man has overcome the world unless he has attained this state of mind. Scarcely any feature of Christian character is more striking or more decisive than this,--indifference to the opinions of the world.

Since I have been in the ministry I have been blessed with the acquaintance of some men who were peculiarly distinguished by this quality of character. Some of you may have known the Rev. James Patterson, late of Philadelphia. If so, you know him to have been eminently distinguished in this respect. He seemed to have the least possible disposition to secure the applause of men, or to avoid their censure. It seemed to be of no consequence to him to commend himself to men. For him it was enough if he might please God. Hence you were sure to find him in everlasting war against sin, all sin, however popular, however entrenched by custom, or sustained by wealth, or public opinion. Yet he always opposed sin with a most remarkable spirit, a spirit of inflexible decision, and yet of great mellowness and tenderness. While he was saying the most severe things in the most severe language, you might see the big tears rolling down his cheeks.

It is wonderful that most men never complained of his having a bad spirit. Much as they dreaded his rebuke, and writhed under his strong and daring exposures of wickedness, they could never say that father Patterson had any other than a good spirit. This was a most beautiful and striking exemplification of having overcome the world.

Men who are not thus dead to the world have not escaped its bondage. The victorious Christian is in a state where he is no longer in bondage to man. He is bound only to serve God.

SECONDLY. We must inquire, who are those that overcome the world?

Our text gives the ready answer. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." You cannot fail to observe, that this is a universal proposition,--all who are born of God overcome the world--all these, and it is obviously implied, none others. You may know who are born of God by this characteristic--they overcome the world. Of course the second question is answered.

THIRDLY. Our next question is, Why do believers overcome the world? On what principle is this result effected?

I answer, this victory over the world, results as naturally from the spiritual or heavenly birth, as coming into bondage to the world results from the natural birth.

It may be well to revert a moment to the law of connection in the latter case: namely, between coming into the world by natural birth, and bondage to the world. This law obviously admits of a philosophical explanation, at once simple and palpable to every one's observation. Natural birth reveals to the mind objects of sense, and these only. It brings the mind into contact with worldly things. Of course, it is natural that the mind should become deeply interested in these objects, thus presented through its external senses, especially as most of them sustain so intimate a relation to our sentient nature, and become the first and chief sources of our happiness. Hence our affections are gradually entwined around these objects, and we become thoroughly lovers of this world, ere our eyes have been opened upon it many months.

Now, alongside of this universal fact, let another be placed of equal importance, and not less universal; namely, that those intuitive powers of the mind, which were created to take cognizance of our moral relations, and hence to counteract the too great influence of worldly objects, come into action very slowly, and are not developed so as to act vigorously, until years are numbered as months are, in the case of the external organs of sense. The very early and vigorous developement of the latter brings the soul so entirely under the control of worldly objects, that when the reason and the conscience come to speak, their voice is little heeded. As a matter of fact, we find it universally true that, unless Divine power interpose, the bondage to the world thus induced upon the soul, is never broken.

But the point which I particularly desired to elucidate was simply this, that natural birth, with its attendant laws of physical and mental developement, becomes the occasion of bondage to this world.

Right over against this, lies the birth into the kingdom of God by the Spirit. By this the soul is brought into new relations, we might rather say, into intimate contact with spiritual things. The Spirit of God seems to usher the soul into the spiritual world, in a manner strictly analogous to the result of the natural birth upon our physical being. The great truths of the spiritual world are opened to our view, through the illumination of the Spirit of God; we seem to see with new eyes, and to have a new world of spiritual objects around us.

As in regard to natural objects, men not only speculate about them, but realize them; so in the case of spiritual children do spiritual things become, not merely matters of speculation, but of full and practical realization also. When God reveals himself to the mind, spiritual things are seen in their real light, and make the impression of realities.

Consequently, when spiritual objects are thus revealed to the mind, and thus apprehended, they will supremely interest that mind. Such is our mental constitution that the truth of God, when thoroughly apprehended, cannot fail to interest us. If these truths were clearly revealed to the wickedest man on earth, so that he should apprehend them as realities, it could not fail to rouse up his soul to most intense action. He might hate the light, and might stubbornly resist the claims of God upon his heart, but he could not fail to feel a thrilling interest in truths that so take hold of the great and vital things of human well-being.

Let me ask, Is there a sinner, or can there be a sinner on this wide earth, who does not see, that if God's presence were made as manifest and as real to his mind as the presence of his fellow men, it would supremely engross his soul, even though it might not subdue his heart?

This revelation of God's presence and character might not convert him, but it would, at least for the time being, kill his attention to the world.

You often see this in the case of persons deeply convicted; you have doubtless seen persons so fearfully convicted of sin, that they cared nothing at all for their food nor their dress. O, they cried out in the agony of their souls, what matter all these things to us, if we even get them all, and then must lie down in hell!

But these thrilling and all-absorbing convictions do not necessarily convert the soul, and I have alluded to them here only to show the controlling power of realizing views of divine truth.

When regeneration has taken place, and the soul is born of God, then realizing views of truth not only awaken interest, as they might do in an unrenewed mind, but they also tend to excite a deep and ardent love for these truths. They draw out the heart. Spiritual truth now takes possession of his mind, and draws him into its warm and life-giving embrace. Before, error, falsehood, death, had drawn him under their power; now the Spirit of God draws him into the very embrace of God. Now, he is begotten of God, and breathes the spirit of sonship. Now, according to the Bible, "the seed of God remaineth in him," that very truth, and those movings of the Spirit which gave him birth into the kingdom of God, continue still in power upon his mind, and hence he continues a Christian, and as the Bible states it, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The seed of God is in him, and the fruit of it brings his soul deeply into sympathy with his Father in heaven.

Again: the first birth makes us acquainted with earthly things, the second with God; the first with the finite, the second with the infinite; the first with things correlated with our animal nature, the second with those great things which stand connected with our spiritual nature, things so lovely, and glorious as to overcome all the ensnarements of the world.

Again: the first begets a worldly, and the second a heavenly, temper; under the first, the mind is brought into a snare, under the second, it is delivered from that snare. Under the first, the conversation is earthly, under the second, "our conversation is in heaven.". . . .

He who does not habitually overcome the world, is not born of God. In saying this, I do not intend to affirm that a true Christian may not sometime be overcome by temptation; but I do affirm that overcoming the world is the general rule, and falling into sin is only the exception. This is the least that can be meant by the language of our text, and by similar declarations which often occur in the Bible. Just as in the passage: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Nothing less can be meant than this--that he cannot sin habitually--cannot make sinning his business, and can sin, if at all, only occasionally and aside from the general current of his life. In the same manner, we should say of a man who is almost universally truthful, that he is not a liar.

I will not contend for more than this, respecting either of these passages; but for so much as this I must contend, that the new-born souls here spoken of do, all of them, habitually overcome the world. The general fact respecting them is, that they do not sin, and are not in bondage to Satan. The affirmations of Scripture respecting them must, at least, embrace their general character.

What is a religion good for that does not overcome the world? What is the benefit of being born into such a religion, if it leaves the world still swaying its dominion over our hearts? What avails a new birth, which, after all, fails to bring us into a likeness to God, into the sympathies of his family, and of his kingdom, which leaves us still in bondage to the world and to Satan? What can there be of such a religion more than the name? With what reason can any man suppose, that such a religion fits his soul for heaven, supposing it leaves him earthly-minded, sensual, and selfish?

We see why it is that infidels have proclaimed the gospel of Christ to be a failure. You may not be aware that of late infidels have taken this ground, that the gospel of Christ is a failure. They maintain that it professes to bring men out from the world, but fails to do so; and hence is manifestly a failure. Now, you must observe, that the Bible does indeed affirm, as infidels say, that those who are truly born of God do overcome the world. This we cannot deny, and we should not wish to deny it. Now, if the infidel can show that the new birth fails to produce this result, he has carried his point, and we must yield ours. This is perfectly plain, and there can be no escape for us.

But the infidel is in fault in his premises. He assumes the current Christianity of the age as a specimen of real religion, and builds his estimate upon this. He proves, as he thinks,--and perhaps truly proves--that the current Christianity does not overcome the world.

We must demur to his assuming this current Christianity as real religion. For this religion of the mass of nominal professors does not answer the descriptions given of true piety in the word of God. And, moreover, if this current type of religion were all that the gospel and the Divine Spirit can do for lost man, then we might as well give up the point in controversy with the infidel; for such a religion could not give us much evidence of having come from God, and would be of very little value to man,--so little as scarcely to be worth contending for. Truly, if we must take the professedly Christian world, as Bible Christians, who would not be ashamed and confounded in attempting to confront the infidel? We know but too well, that the great mass of professed Christians do not overcome the world, and we should be confounded quickly if we were to maintain that they do. Those professed Christians themselves know, that they do not overcome the world. Of course they could not testify concerning themselves, that in their own case the power of the gospel is exemplified.

In view of facts like these, I have often been astonished to see ministers setting themselves to persuade their people, that they are truly converted, trying to lull their fears and sustain their tottering hopes. Vain effort! Those same ministers, it would seem, must know that they themselves do not overcome the world, and equally well must they know that their people do not. How fatal then to the soul must be such efforts to "heal the hurt of God's professed people, slightly; crying peace, peace, when there is no peace!"

Let us sift this matter to the bottom, pushing the inquiry--Do the great mass of professed Christians really overcome the world? It is a fact beyond question, that with them the things of the world are realities, and the things of God are mere theories. Who does not know that this is the real state of great multitudes in the nominal church?

Let the searching inquiry run through this congregation--What are those things that set your soul on fire--that stir up your warmest emotions, and deeply agitate your nervous system? Are these the things of earth, or the things of heaven? the things of time, or the things of eternity? the things of self, or the things of God?

How is it when you go into your closets? Do you go there to seek and to find God? Do you, in fact, find there a present God, and do you hold communion there as friend with friend? How is this?

Now you certainly should know, that if your state is such that spiritual things are mere theories and speculations, you are altogether worldly and nothing more. It would be egregious folly and falsehood to call you spiritual-minded; and for you to think yourselves spiritual, would be the most fatal and foolish self-deception. You give none of the appropriate proofs of being born of God. Your state is not that of one who is personally acquainted with God, and who loves him personally with supreme affection.

Until we can put away from the minds of men the common error, that the current Christianity of the church is true Christianity, we can make but little progress in converting the world. For, in the first place, we cannot save the church itself from bondage to the world in this life, nor from the direst doom of the hypocrite in the next. We cannot unite and arm the church in vigorous onset upon Satan's kingdom, so that the world may be converted to God. We cannot even convince intelligent men of the world that our religion is from God, and brings to fallen men a remedy for their depravity. For if the common Christianity of the age is the best that can be, and this does not give men the victory over the world, what is it good for? And if it is really of little worth or none, how can we hope to make thinking men prize it as of great value?

There are but very few infidels who are as much in the dark as they profess to be on these points. There are very few of that class of men, who are not acquainted with some humble Christians, whose lives commend Christianity and condemn their own ungodliness. Of course they know the truth, that there is a reality in the religion of the Bible, and they blind their own eyes selfishly and most foolishly, when they try to believe that the religion of the Bible is a failure, and that the Bible is therefore a fabrication. Deep in their heart lies the conviction that here and there are men who are real Christians, who overcome the world, and live by a faith unknown to themselves. In how many cases does God set some burning examples of Christian life before those wicked, sceptical men, to rebuke them for their sin and their scepticism--perhaps their own wife or their children--their neighbours or their servants. By such means the truth is lodged in their mind, and God has a witness for himself in their consciences.

(13.) *But the sinner does not overcome the world*. The world in some form overcomes him. Its cares, engrossments, pleasures, business, politics, influence, in some form, are his master. Nor does he escape from its dominion over his heart, if he resorts to a nunnery or a monastery, or betakes himself to the life of an ascetic or of a recluse, and shuts himself out from human society. The world is still his master, and holds him in a state of banishment from its domain. Many think they have overcome the world, merely because the world has so completely overcome them. It is so completely their master, as to force them to back out of it, to hide themselves from it. They have not got the world under their feet, but it has got them into banishment from that field of labour and of usefulness, where God and reason call them to labour. The world has prevailed to rout them from their stronghold in Christ, and drive them to take refuge in monasteries, nunneries, and in caves and dens of the earth. What an infinite mistake to suppose that this is overcoming the world! To forsake our field of labour, to give over our work, to let the world of sinners go down to hell, and go ourselves into exile from the world. Or at the bidding of the world, be driven completely from the battle field, and hide in caves and dens, and proclaim ourselves the victors, when in fact we have fled before, and unbelievingly succumbed to, the enemy, instead of subduing and overcoming him by faith.

But in general. Sinners do not betake themselves to flight in this way, but abide in the world, and tamely submit to wear its chains. Let it be distinctly understood, that the true difference between saints and sinners is, that while they both live in the world, both mingle in its scenes, and engage in its affairs, both have families or not, as the case may be, both provide for the body, cultivate the soil, or follow some occupation, the saint has not a worldly, selfish end in view. He is not enslaved by the world, but his heart is steadfast, serving the Lord. Whatever he does, he does it, not for some selfish end, but for God. Does he provide for himself and his family? he does it as a service rendered to God. He regards himself as the Lord's and not his own. He regards himself as the Lord's steward, and in whatever employment he is engaged, he accounts it the Lord's business, and himself as the Lord's servant in transacting it. He is not his own; he has no business of his own. The world is not his, nor is he the world's. He does not bow down to it, nor serve it. He has been chosen out of the world, and therefore, while employed by his Master in it, he does all, not for self, but for God.

Not so with the sinner. He counts his business his own. Hence he is full of cares and anxieties. The losses in business are his losses, and the profits are his profits. Living and transacting business for the Lord is only a theory with him. The practical fact with him is, that he is in bondage to the world. He serves the world, or rather, he serves himself of the world. The world he serves as a means of self-gratification. The saint serves God of, or with, the world; the sinner, himself. The saint uses the world as not abusing it; the sinner abuses it, and uses it to gratify his own lusts. The saint overcomes the world, because he uses it for God: the sinner is overcome by the world, because he uses it for himself.

(14.) *The true saint overcomes the flesh*. This term is sometimes used in the gospel to signify the sensibility, as distinguished from the intelligence, and at other times in a more literal sense, and signifies the bodily appetites and passions. The true saint is represented in the Bible as one who overcomes both his bodily appetites and passions, and also as overcoming the flesh, in the still wider sense of the sensibility. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."-- Gal 5:16-24. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life."-- Rom 6:1-4. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."-- Rom 8:1-14.

With the saint it is not merely acknowledged to be a duty to overcome the flesh, but he actually does overcome, and he is a saint just because he is delivered from the bondage of the flesh, and introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Saints no longer mind or obey the flesh. Their God is not their belly, nor do they mind earthly things. This is the uniform representation of scripture respecting them. They are not the slaves of appetite, or passion, or lust, under any form, but they are the Lord's freemen. This is not only the representation of scripture, but must of course be true from the nature of regeneration. Regeneration consists, let it be remembered, in the will's ceasing to be governed by the propensities of the flesh, and committing itself to the good of being. If the Bible did not represent the regenerate as overcoming the world and the flesh, it would not only be inconsistent with itself, but also with matter of fact. It would not, in such case, recognize the nature of regeneration. We are now considering, not what is true of the mass of professing Christians, but what is and must be true of real saints. Of them it must be true, that they do overcome the world and the flesh. While they live in the flesh, they walk not after the flesh; for if they did, they would not be saints. What is a religion worth that does not, as a matter of fact, overcome the flesh? The dominion of the flesh is sin, and does not the new birth imply a turning away from sin? Let it be for ever understood, that regeneration implies, not merely the conviction and the theory that the flesh ought to be overcome, but that it actually is overcome. The regenerate "do not sow to the flesh;" "do not live after the flesh;" "do not mind the flesh;" "do not war after the flesh;" "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" "through the Spirit do mortify (kill) the deeds of the body;" "keep under their bodies, and bring them into subjection." This not only ought to be, but it must be, the character of a true saint.

(15.) *The sinner is overcome by the flesh*. Self-indulgence is his law. Some one or more of the phrenological, or constitutional impulses always control his will. He not only "lives in the flesh, but walks after the flesh." He "fulfills the desires of the flesh and of the mind." He is "carried away with his own lusts, and enticed." "His God is his belly," and "he minds earthly things." He "is in bondage to the flesh." This is his unfailing characteristic, that he is governed, not by the law of God, but by his own desires. He is the creature of impulse, and a sinner, just because he is so. With him to conquer the flesh is a matter of duty, of opinion, of theory, and not of actual performance and experience. He holds that he ought to overcome, but knows that he does not. He acknowledges the obligation in theory, but denies it in practice. He knows what he ought to do, but does it not. He knows what a Christian ought to be, but is aware that he is not what a Christian ought to be. There seems to be an infatuation among sinners, those especially that profess to be Christians. They can profess to be Christians, and yet know and acknowledge that they are not what Christians ought to be, strangely assuming that a man can be and is a Christian, who is not what a Christian ought to be: in other words, that he can be a Christian without possessing just that which constitutes a Christian; to wit, a heart conformed to the intellect's apprehension of duty. This is just what makes a Christian; not his seeing and acknowledging what he ought to be, but his actually doing his duty, his actually embracing and conforming to the truth. The deceived professor knows, that he is not free, that he is in bondage to his flesh and his desires, but hopes on, because he thinks that this is common to all Christians. He sees and approves the truth, and often resolves to overcome his flesh, but, as in the seventh of Romans, he "finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members." He can resolve, but does not carry out his resolves. When he resolves to do good, evil is present with him, and conquers him. Of all this he is conscious, but he has taken up the fatal delusion that this was Paul's experience at the time he wrote this chapter, and consequently, that it must be the experience of all Christians. He does not run his eye along into the eighth chapter, and see the contrast between the experience there portrayed, and affirmed to be the experience of all Christians. He does not observe, that the apostle is designing in these two chapters to contrast a Christian, with a legal and self-righteous experience, but holds on to his delusion, and observes not, that the apostle begins the eighth chapter by the affirmation, that all who are in Christ Jesus are delivered from the bondage of which he was speaking in the seventh chapter, and no longer walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has actually made them free from the law of sin and death, which is in their members. How strange that these chapters are so misunderstood and perverted. And how monstrous and how melancholy the fact, that the great mass of professing Christians, to this day, recognize the seventh and not the eighth chapter of Romans, as their own experience! According to this, the new birth or regeneration does not break the power of the propensities over the will. The truth is, and must not be disguised, that they have not a just idea of regeneration. They mistake conviction for regeneration. They are so enlightened, as to perceive and affirm their obligation to deny the flesh, and often resolve to do it, but, in fact, do it not. They only struggle with the flesh, but are continually worsted and brought into bondage; and this they call a regenerate state. O! sad. What then is regeneration good for? What does it avail? The Bible represents regeneration as a "being born from above," "being born of God," and expressly affirms, that "whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world," and affirms, that "whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, and cannot sin, because his seed (God's seed) remaineth in him, so that he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" "that he is a new creature, that old things are passed away, and that all things are become new;" "that he is alive from the dead;" that he "has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" that "he is dead to sin, and alive unto God," and many such like representations: and yet, infinitely strange to tell, the seventh chapter of Romans is recognized as a Christian experience, in the face of the whole Bible, and in opposition to the very nature of regeneration, and the experience of every true saint. The sinner is a sinner just, and only, because he knows his duty and does it not. He apprehends the law of the intelligence, but minds the impulses of his sensibility. This is the very character which the apostle is so graphically portraying in the seventh chapter of Romans. He could not possibly have given a more graphic picture of a sinner when he is enlightened, and yet enslaved by his propensities. It is a full-length portrait of a sinner, enlightened and struggling for liberty, and yet continually falling and floundering under the galling bondage of his own lusts. And that this should be considered the experience of a regenerate heart!

Now let it be remembered, that just the difference between saints and sinners, and especially deceived professors, is expressed and clearly illustrated in the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans; and to do this was the very design of the writer of this epistle. The difference consists in just this: they both see what they ought to do; the one does it in fact, while the other only resolves to do it, but does it not. They both have bodies, and both have all the constitutional propensities. But the saint overcomes them all. He has the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him he is delivered from the body of sin and of death, and made free from the law of sin in his members. He is a conqueror, and more than a conqueror. The sinner only cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he cannot add, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord," I am delivered, which is the evident meaning of the apostle, as appears from what immediately follows, in the beginning of the eighth chapter. The sinner sees his captivity and groans under it, but does not escape. They are both tempted. The saint overcomes through Christ. The sinner is overcome. The sinner is conquered, instead of being like the saint, a conqueror. He cannot exultingly say with the saint, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death;" but still complains with the captive, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!"

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLVII.

REGENERATION.

WHEREIN SAINTS AND SINNERS DIFFER.

(15.) *The saints overcome Satan.*

This is expressly taught in the scriptures. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father," 1Jo 2:13. The wicked are characterized as the "children of the devil;" "as led by him captive at his will;" as being "the subjects of Satan, the god of this world," and as having Satan ruling in their hearts.

But the saints are represented as being set at liberty from his power, as being delivered, not from his temptations, but actually saved from his dominion. The difference between the saint and the sinner, in this respect, is represented in the scriptures as consisting, not in the fact that sinners are tempted, while saints are not, but in this, that while Satan tempts both the saint and the sinner, he actually overcomes the sinner and the deceived professor, and leads him captive at his will. The true saint, through faith and strength in Christ, overcomes, and is more than a conqueror. The saint, through Christ, triumphs, while the sinner yields to his infernal influence, and is bound fast in his infernal chain.

(16.) The true saint denies himself. Self-denial must be his characteristic, just for the reason that regeneration implies this. Regeneration, as we have seen, consists in turning away the heart or will from the supreme choice of self-gratification, to a choice of the highest well-being of God and of the universe. This is denying self. This is abandoning self-indulgence, and pursuing or committing the will, and the whole being to an opposite end. This is the dethroning of self, and the enthroning of God in the heart. Self-denial does not consist, as some seem to imagine, in acts of outward austerity, in an ascetic and penance-doing course of starvation, and mere legal and outward retrenchment, in wearing plain clothes and using plain language, or in wearing a coat with one button, and in similar acts of "will worship and voluntary humility, and neglecting the body;" but self-denial consists in the actual and total renunciation of selfishness in the heart. It consists in ceasing wholly to live for self, and can be exercised just as truly upon a throne, surrounded with the paraphernalia of royalty, as in a cottage of logs, or as in rags, and in caves and dens of the earth. The king upon his throne may live and reign to please himself. He may surround himself with all that can minister to his pleasure, his ambition, his pride, his lusts, and his power. He may live to and for himself. Self-pleasing, self-gratification, self-aggrandizement, may be the end for which he lives. This is selfishness. But he may also live and reign for God, and for his people. He may be just as really self-denying on his throne, and surrounded by the trappings of state and of royalty, as any person in any other station of life. That is, he may be as really devoted to God, and render this as a service to God, as well as anything else. No doubt his temptation is great: but, nevertheless, he may be perfectly self-denying in all this. He may not do what he does for his own sake, nor be what he is, nor possess what he possesses for his own sake, but, accommodating his state and equipage to his relations, he may be as truly self-denying as others in the humbler walks of life. This is not an impossible, though, in all probability, a rare case. A man may as truly be rich for God as poor for him, if his relations and circumstances make it essential to his highest usefulness that he should possess a large capital. He is in the way of great temptation; but if this is plainly his duty, and submitted to for God and the world, he may have grace to be entirely self-denying in these circumstances, and all the more commendable, for standing fast under these circumstances. So a poor man may be poor from principle, or from necessity. He may be submissive and happy in his poverty. He may deny himself even the comforts of life, and do all this to promote the good of being, or he may do it to promote his own interest, temporal or eternal, to secure a reputation for piety, to appease a morbid conscience, to appease his fears, or to secure the favour of God. In all things he may be selfish. He may be happy in this, because it may be real self-denial; or he may be murmuring at his poverty, may complain, and be envious at others who are not poor. He may be censorious, and think everybody proud and selfish who dresses better, or possesses a better house or equipage than he does. He may set up his views as a standard, and denounce as proud and selfish all who do not square their lives by his rule. This is selfishness, and these manifestations demonstrate the fact. A man may forego the use of a coat, or a cloak, or a horse, or a carriage, or any and every comfort and convenience of life. And all this may proceed from either a benevolent or a selfish state of mind. If it be benevolence and true self-denial, it will be cheerfully and happily submitted to, without murmuring and repining, without censoriousness, and without envy towards others, without insisting that others shall do and be, just what and as he is. He will allow the judge his ermine, the king his robes of state, and the merchant his capital, and the husbandman his fields and his flocks, and will see the reasonableness and propriety of all this.

But if it be selfishness and the spirit of self-gratification instead of self-denial, he will be ascetic, caustic, sour, ill-natured, unhappy, severe, censorious, envious, and disposed to complain of, and pick at the extravagance and self-indulgence of others.

The true saint, in whatever relation of life, is truly self-denying. Whether on a throne, or on the dunghill, he neither lives, nor moves, nor breathes, nor eats, nor drinks, nor has his being for himself. Self is dethroned. God is enthroned in his heart. He lives to please God, and not to please himself. And whether he wears the crown and the purple, the ermine of the judge, or the gown of the counsellor, whether he cultivates the field or occupies the pulpit, whether he is engaged in merchandize, or whether he opens the ditch or plies a handicraft, whether in affluence or poverty, it matters not how circumstanced or how employed, as certainly as he is a true saint, just so certainly does he not live to or for himself. Of this he is as conscious as he is of living at all. He may be mistaken by others, and selfish ones may suppose him to be actuated by selfishness as they are; but in this they are deceived. The true saint will be sure to be found self-denying, when observed by the spirit of love, and judged by the law of love. Love would readily perceive, that those things which a censorious and selfish spirit ascribe to selfishness are to be accounted for in another way; that they are really consistent with, and indeed instances of self-denial. The spirit of self-pleasing and of accommodating ourselves to our circumstances and relations for benevolent reasons, may by a candid mind be generally readily distinguished from each other. The selfish will naturally confound them and stumble at them, simply because they have only the experience of selfishness, and judge others by themselves. A truly self-denying mind will naturally also judge others by itself, in such a sense as to take it for granted, that others are self-denying, unless the manifest indications strongly urge to an opposite opinion.

A man of truth is not wont to suspect others of lying, without strong evidence of the fact, and then, although he may be sure that he tells a falsehood, the man of truth is ready rather to ascribe the falsehood to mistake, than to call it a lie. So the truly benevolent man is not wont to suspect others of selfishness without strong evidence. Nor will the truly self-denying man readily suspect his brother of selfishness, even in things that, *prima facie*, have that appearance. He will rather naturally infer, that his health, or circumstances, or something consistent with self-denial accounts for what he does.

Especially does the true saint deny his appetites and passions. His artificial appetites he denies absolutely, whenever his attention is called to the fact and the nature of the indulgence. The Christian is such just because he has become the master of his appetites and passions, has denied them, and consecrated himself to God. The sinner is a sinner just because his appetites and passions and the impulses of his desires are his masters, and he bows down to them, and serves them. They are his masters, instead of his servants, as they are made to be. He is consecrated to them and not to God. But the saint has ceased to live to gratify his lusts. Has he been a drunkard, a rake, a tobacco user? has he been in self-indulgent habits of any kind; he is reformed: old things are past away, and behold all things are become new. Has he still any habit the character of which he has either mistaken or not considered; such as smoking, chewing, or snuffing tobacco, using injurious stimulants of any kind, high and unwholesome living, extravagant dressing, or equipage, retiring late at night and rising late in the morning, eating too much, or between meals, or in short, has there been any form of self-indulgence about him whatever? only let his attention be called to it, he will listen with candour, be convinced by reasonable evidence, and renounce his evil habits without conferring with flesh and blood. All this is implied in regeneration, and must follow from its very nature. This also the Bible everywhere affirms to be true of the saints. "They have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." It should be for ever remembered, that a self-indulgent Christian is a contradiction. Self-indulgence and Christianity are terms of opposition. The states of mind designated by these two words are opposite states of mind. This is precisely the difference between a saint and a sinner, that the saint is self-denying, and the sinner self-indulgent. The saint is the lord and master of all his appetites and passions. He rules them, and not they him. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all for God and not to gratify himself. The sinner is the slave of his appetites and passions. It is not in his heart to deny them. Some appetite or propensity always rules over him. He complains that he cannot abandon certain indulgences. He is in bondage to his own lusts, and led captive by them. Seest thou then a self-indulgent professor of religion? If he be really so, imagine not that you have found a Christian, but know assuredly, that you behold a hypocrite; for this is as certain as that he is alive. The true saint does not complain that he cannot give up any self-indulgent habit whatever. He can, and must, and does, if he be truly regenerate, give up and forsake every species of mere self-indulgence. Grace has obtained for him a victory; and instead of his complaining that he cannot conquer his propensities, he knows that he is more than a conqueror through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(17.) *The sinner does not deny himself.* He may not gratify all his desires, because the desires are often contradictory, and he must deny one for the sake of indulging another. Avarice may be so strong as to forbid his indulging in extravagance in eating, drinking, dressing, or equipage. His love of reputation may be so strong as to prevent his engaging in anything disgraceful, and so on. But self-indulgence is his law notwithstanding. The fear of hell, or his desire to be saved, may forbid his outward indulgence in any known sin. But still he lives, and moves, and has his being only for the sake of indulging himself. He may be a miser, and starve and freeze himself, and deny himself the necessaries of life, yet self-indulgence is his law. One propensity may lord it over and starve the rest; but it is only self-indulgence after all. The nun may take the veil; the monk may retire to the cloister; the miser take his rags; the harlot seek the brothel; the debauchee his indulgences; the king his throne; the priest his desk; all for the same ultimate reason, to wit, to gratify self, to indulge each one his reigning lust. But in every possible case every sinner, whatever may be his station, his habits or pursuits, is self-indulgent, and only self-indulgent, and that continually. Some lusts he may and must control, as they may be inconsistent with others. But others he knows, and it will be seen that he does not control. He is a slave. He bows down to his lusts and serves them. He is enslaved by his propensities, so that he cannot overcome them. This demonstrates that he is a sinner and unregenerate, whatever his station and profession may be. One who cannot, because he will not, conquer himself and his lusts; this is the definition of an unregenerate sinner. He is one over whom some form of desire, or lust, or appetite, or passion has dominion. He cannot, or rather will not, overcome it. This one is just as certainly in sin, as that sin is sin. Do you hear that professor of religion? He says he knows that he ought to give up such a lust or habit, but he cannot give it up. Why, in thus saying, he gives higher evidence of being an unregenerate sinner or a loathsome backslider, than if he should take his oath of it. O that it were known and constantly borne in mind, what regeneration is! How many thousands of deceived professors would it undeceive! A self-indulgent regenerate soul is a perfect contradiction, as much so as to speak of a disinterestedly benevolent selfishness, or of a self-indulgent self-denial, or an unregenerate regeneration, a sinful holiness, or a holy sinfulness. These things are eternal and necessary opposites. They never do nor can, by any possibility, be reconciled, or dwell together in the same heart. With the sinner or selfish professor, self-denial is a theory, an opinion, an article of faith. But he knows if he will but admit the conviction, that he does not live for God; that he does not eat and drink, and dress, and sleep, and wake, and do whatever he does--for God. He knows he ought to do so, and hopes he does in some measure, but he knows all the while that the preponderance of his life is self-indulgent. When this is so, nothing but infatuation can cause him to cling to his delusion.

(18.) *The truly regenerate soul overcomes sin.*

Let the Bible be heard upon this subject. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."-- 1Jo 2:3-4. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."-- 1Jo 3:3-10. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."-- 1Jo 5:1-4.

These passages, understood and pressed to the letter, would not only teach, that all regenerate souls overcome and live without sin, but also that sin is impossible to them. This last circumstance, as well as other parts of Scripture, forbid us to press this strong language to the letter. But this much must be understood and admitted, that to overcome sin is the rule with every one who is born of God, and that sin is only the exception; that the regenerate habitually live without sin, and fall into sin only at intervals, so few and far between, that in strong language it may be said in truth they do not sin. This is surely the least which can be meant by the spirit of these texts, not to press them to the letter. And this is precisely consistent with many other passages of Scripture, several of which I have quoted; such as these:-- "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."-- 2Co 5:17. "For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."-- Gal 5:6. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."-- Gal 6:15. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."-- Rom 8:1-4. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is free from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."-- Rom 6:1-14.

There is not a greater heresy and a more dangerous dogma, than that true Christians actually live a great majority of their days in sin. Such an opinion is in palpable contradiction of the Bible, and absurd in principle. Many persons seem to have the idea, and this idea is often dropped, directly or indirectly implied from the pulpit, that truly regenerate souls may, and do often live mostly in sin; that they live by far the greater part of their time in a backslidden state, so far at least as their heart is concerned; that they seldom or never truly and fully obey God, and live up to their duty. Now such representations are not only flatly contrary to the Bible, but they are a greater snare and stumbling-block than universalism, or almost any form of heresy that can be named. The fact is, if God is true, and the Bible is true, the truly regenerate soul has overcome the world, the flesh, and Satan, and sin, and is a conqueror, and more than a conqueror. He triumphs over temptation as a general thing, and the triumphs of temptation over him are so far between, that it is said of him in the living oracles, that he does not, cannot sin. He is not a sinner, but a saint. He is sanctified; a holy person; a child and son of God. If at any time he is overcome, it is only to rise again, and soon return like the weeping prodigal. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."-- Psa 37:23-24.

I know that it is natural and common to appeal to experience and observation, in support of the dogma I am opposing. But how infinitely dangerous and wicked this is! What! appeal to supposed facts in history and Christian experience, to confront and withstand the express assertions of inspiration? When God expressly tells us who are Christians, and what is true of them, does it become us to turn round and say, Nay, Lord, for we and our neighbours are Christians, and this is not true of us. Who does not see the guilt and danger of this? And yet it seems to be common for professors of religion tacitly to assume, if not openly to avow, that true Christians may and do live, for the greater part of their lives, in sin.

This persuasion seems to be strengthened by the supposed fact, that David and Solomon lived a greater part of their time in sin. But this is an unwarrantable assumption. The psalms of David, taking their subject, and spirit, and dates into view, as well as many other considerations, render it evident, that he was a highly spiritual man, and that his backslidings were few and far between, and of but short duration.

The Proverbs, the Song and the Ecclesiastes of Solomon, are sufficient proof, that most of his days were not spent in sin. Some have supposed that, inasmuch as the high places were not removed, and that idolatry was openly practised under a great part of his reign, that therefore he must all this time have been away from God. But this may be accounted for if we consider, that the high places and idolatry continued through the reigns of some of the pious kings who succeeded him, doubtless for the reason, that neither he nor they had political power and influence enough to suppress it. The book of Ecclesiastes gives, on the face of it, the highest evidence of having been written after his return from a season of backsliding and scepticism, for very much of it is only a statement of his sceptical views at that time. But really there is no sufficient proof that Solomon, who was manifestly a type of Christ, lived a majority, or anything like a majority, of his days in sin.

But whatever may have been true of Solomon, and of the saints of those comparatively dark days, the New Testament has settled the question, that now, under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, whoever is born of God doth not commit sin. The passages that I have quoted must settle this point. The sixth and eighth of Romans is the experience of the regenerate soul.

In considering the attributes of benevolence, I have shown, that stability is one of its attributes, to which I would here refer the reader (Lecture XXII. 24). In respect to the philosophy of Christians overcoming sin, I would observe, that the Bible assures us, that whosoever is born of God does not, cannot sin, because his seed remaineth in him, that is, God's seed remaineth in him. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." In 1Pe 1:23, we are informed, that this seed is "the word of God." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." God has begotten him (for so the word should be rendered in 1Jo 3:9.) by his word, and his seed remaineth in him. The truth that overcame his will, and subdued or regenerated him, remains in him, in such a sense, that it is said he cannot sin. It is so lodged in his memory, and so pressed upon him by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, as to secure his habitual obedience; and he is only sometimes overcome by force of strong temptation, when, for the time, his attention is drawn away from the truth or seed of God, which after all is lodged within him. It has a permanent lodgement in his memory, although it may not be attended to in some moments of strong temptation. Now, whatever the philosophy of this fact may be, it is a declared fact of inspiration that "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The connection in which these words are found, as well as other parts of scripture, shows that this must respect the general character of regenerate souls; that having been subdued by the word and the Spirit of God, and the seed remaining in them, they cannot consent to live in sin; that they love God and hate sin so much by virtue of their new and heavenly birth, that they will not sin, unless it may possibly be, that by force of great temptation they may fall into occasional sins, and those so seldom, that it can be said in general language that they do not, cannot sin.

(19.) The sinner and the deceived professor is the slave of sin. The seventh of Romans is his experience in his best estate. When he has the most hope of himself, and others have the most hope of his good estate, he goes no further than to make and break resolutions. His life is but a death in sin. He has not the victory. He sees the right, but does it not. Sin is his master, to whom he yields himself a servant to obey. He only tries, as he says, to forsake sin, but does not in fact forsake it, in his heart. And yet, because he is convicted, and has desires, and forms resolutions of amendment, he hopes he is regenerated. O, what a horrible delusion! Stop short with conviction, with the hope that he is already a Christian! Alas! how many are already in hell who have stumbled at this stumbling-stone!

(20.) *The Christian is charitable in his judgments*.

This is natural to him by reason of his regeneration. He now loves everybody, and seeks their good. "Love hopeth all things, and believeth all things." It is natural to us to judge charitably of those whom we love, and whose virtue and happiness we greatly desire. It is also natural for us to interpret the conduct of others by reference to our own consciousness. If we are conscious of uprightness of intention, it is natural to ascribe the conduct of others to upright intentions, unless it be manifest that it is not so. Not only the Bible forbids rash and censorious judging of the motives or character of others, but it everywhere assumes, and implies, and teaches that truly regenerate persons are charitable in their judgments. This is an attribute of true religion, and there is scarcely anything in which the difference between saints and sinners is more manifest, than in regard to this feature of their characters. A truly benevolent mind cannot be censorious. It is a contradiction to say, that one who is benevolent can judge, and think, and speak censoriously of any one. Charity is kind, is courteous, is forbearing. A ruling disposition to promote the good of any one, cannot lead or allow us rashly to impeach his motives, to judge him in a manner more severe than the circumstances of the case compel us to do.

Again: as a regenerate state consists in benevolence or good-will to all beings, it implies as sacred a regard to the feelings and reputation of our neighbour, as we have to our own. Therefore a regenerate soul cannot be a slanderer, a tale-bearer, or a busy-body in other men's matters. A regenerate soul will not, and, remaining regenerate, cannot, take up an evil report of a neighbour, and believe it, but upon the strongest evidence. And when compelled to believe an evil report, he will not give any greater publicity to it, than the interests of religion seem imperiously to demand. This must be universally true of a truly benevolent mind. A disposition to believe evil, and to report it of any one, is totally incompatible with good-will to universal being, so that, if we see this disposition in a professor of religion toward any one, we may know that his profession of religion is vain. "If any man seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

The saint loves his enemies. The things commanded in the gospel are really true of the saints. They are not only required of all men, but they are facts in the life and experience of the saints. The saints really love their enemies, bless them that curse them, do good to those that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute them.

(21.) The impenitent, whether professors of religion or not, are censorious in their judgments, and slanderous in their conversation. They are selfish, and, of course, have ambitious projects and envious feelings, and these petty interests and projects are continually interfered with by the interests and projects of others around them. They judge others by themselves. They know themselves to be hypocritical in their professions, selfish in their aims, false in their pretences, ambitious in their schemes, envious in their spirit; and, in short, they are conscious of so much that is wrong, that they naturally interpret the motives and character of others by their own. They do not realize, that their censorious speeches and rash and uncharitable judgments are but a result and a revelation of their hypocrisy. But their own oath, that they are hypocrites, could not add to the weight of evidence afforded by their manifest want of charity, as revealed in their taking up a suspicion, a rumour, and giving it publicity to the dishonour and injury of their neighbour. I have learned never to confide in a censorious man or woman. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret! unto their assembly, mine honour be not thou united." They are false, and will betray Christ to justify self.

(22.) Christians, or truly regenerate souls, experience great and present blessedness in their religion. They do not seek their own happiness as the supreme good, but find it in their disinterested efforts to promote the well-being of others. Their state of mind is itself the harmony of the soul. Happiness is both a natural result of virtue, and also its governmental reward. Christians enjoy religion just for the reason, that they are disinterested in it, that is, precisely for the reason, that their own enjoyment is not the end which they seek: and selfish professors do not enjoy their religion, just for the reason, that their own enjoyment is the end at which they aim. If I seek the good of being as an end, I am happy for three reasons:--

(i.) It results from the approbation of my own conscience.

(ii.) From the smile of God upon my soul, and the conscious communion and fellowship I have with him; and:--

(iii.) I gain my end upon which my heart is set, and this is a sweet gratification. Thus I am triply blessed. But if I seek my own happiness as an end, I fail to obtain it, for three reasons:--

(i.) My conscience, instead of approving, upbraids me.

(ii.) God, instead of smiling, either withholds his face altogether from, or frowns upon me. He withdraws communion and fellowship from me.

(iii.) I do not secure my end, and therefore I am not gratified but disappointed. Suppose I seek the conversion of a sinner, not from disinterested love to his soul, but from a desire to promote my own happiness. Now, if he is converted, I am not made happy thereby, for three reasons--

(i.) My conscience is not satisfied with my motives.

(ii.) God is not; therefore, he does not smile upon me.

(iii.) His conversion was not the end I sought, and therefore in his conversion I am not gratified; that is, I have not attained my end, which was not the salvation of that soul, but my own happiness. But, if I seek his salvation disinterestedly, I am doubly blessed if he is not converted, and triply blessed if he is:--

(i.) Whether he is saved or not, my conscience approves my intentions and efforts, and smiles upon my soul.

(ii.) God accepts the will for the deed, and blesses me, as if I had succeeded. Thus, I am doubly blessed.

(iii.) But, if he is saved, I have gained my end, and thus am gratified.

So, I am triply blessed. A saint is and must be happy in his religion. He has his temptations, but the Lord delivers him, and makes him blessed.

(23.) *The selfish professor*--

(i.) Has not true peace of conscience.

(ii.) He has not the smile, communion, and fellowship of God.

(iii.) He is not disinterested, and cannot rejoice in the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom for its own sake, and, therefore, his soul is not filled with peace and joy in believing. His religion is rather his task, than his life, and his joy. He is rather religious, because he must be, than because he may be. He prays because he must, rather than because he may. With him, religion is rather what it will not do to neglect, than what he delights in for its own sake. His enjoyment, such as it is, is only a self-righteous enjoyment. It is not the soul's harmony with itself, with God, and with all the holy, and with the eternal laws of order. He knows that his religion is not soul-satisfying, but sees so many professors around him manifesting the same state of mind in which he knows himself to be, that he thinks that all Christians find religion in this world rather a task and a burden than a delight, and therefore he is not disposed to relinquish his hope. He anticipates happiness in future, but, at present, he knows he is not happy.

(24.) True saints rejoice to see souls converted and God glorified by any instrumentality. But hypocrites do not rejoice in this for its own sake, and are apt to be envious and jealous, unless they, or their friends, or denomination, are the instruments.

(25.) Christians would do all they could for God's glory and the world's conversion, whether it was ever known or rewarded, or not. But sinners would do little or nothing, except out of respect to applause and reward.

(26.) Christians have the Spirit of Christ.

(i.) Their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"-- 1Co 6:19. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."-- Rom 8:9-11.

(ii.) Their bodies are the temple of Christ. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."-- Rom 8:9-10. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?"-- 2Co 13:5. "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."-- Col 1:27. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."-- Joh 14:23. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."-- Gal 2:20. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."-- Eph 3:17.

(27.) Christians have the Spirit of adoption. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."-- Rom 8:15. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."-- Gal 4:6.

(28.) They have the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."-- Gal 5:22-24.

(29.) Christians are led by the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."-- Rom 8:14. "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."-- Gal 5:18, Gal 5:25.

(30.) They have the Spirit of prayer. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."-- Rom 8:26-27.

(31.) They have the law written in their hearts. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."-- Jer 31:31-34. This passage the apostle quotes in Heb 8:8-12, and applies to Christians under the new dispensation. The law that was written upon the tables of stone is written, by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of Christians. That is, the spirit of love demanded by the law, is begotten in their hearts. In other words, they are truly regenerated, and love God with all their hearts, and their neighbour as themselves.

I might notice many other particulars in which saints and sinners differ, but perhaps I have said enough for this course of study. If you return to the attributes of selfishness and benevolence, you will there find a fuller developement of this subject. Of course, the manifestation of the attributes of benevolence is conclusive proof of a regenerate state, for all those attributes are only so many modifications of true religion, and their manifestation is proof of its existence.

So, on the other hand, the attributes of selfishness are only so many modifications of sin, and their manifestation is proof positive of an unholy and unregenerate state of mind.

There are many other things that might be said, indeed volumes might be written upon this subject, in addition to what has appeared. But one thing is worthy of special remark. Mistaken notions in regard to the nature of regeneration have led to false methods of estimating the evidences of regeneration. Most persons and most writers seem to appeal almost exclusively, or at least in a great measure, to the feelings or states of the sensibility, for evidence of regeneration. Nothing can be more dangerous and deceptive than this. They, regarding regeneration as a change in or of the sensibility, look thither of course for the evidences of the change. The Bible appeals to the life, instead of the feelings, for evidence of regeneration. It assumes the true philosophy of regeneration, that it belongs to the will, and that it must, of course, and of necessity, appear directly and uniformly in the life. So many circumstances influence the feelings that they cannot be depended on. They will effervesce, or be calm, as circumstances change. But the outward life must, by a law of necessity, always obey the will. Therefore the appeal can more safely be made to it than to anything else that lies open to the inspection of human eyes.

The subject of regeneration may know, and if honest he must know, for what end he lives. There is, perhaps, nothing of which he may be more certain than of his regenerate or unregenerate state; and if he will keep in mind what regeneration is, it would seem that he can hardly mistake his own character, so far as to imagine himself to be regenerate when he is not. The great difficulty that has been in the way of the regenerate soul's knowing his regeneration, and has led to so much doubt and embarrassment upon this subject, is that regeneration has been regarded as belonging to the sensibility, and hence the attention has been directed to the ever-fluctuating feelings for evidence of the change. No wonder that this has led conscientious souls into doubt and embarrassment. But let the subject of regeneration be disenthralled from a false philosophy, and let it be known that the new heart consists in supreme disinterested benevolence, or in entire consecration to God, and then who cannot know for what end he lives, or what is the supreme preference or intention of his soul? If men can settle any question whatever beyond all doubt by an appeal to consciousness, it would seem that this must be the question. Hence the Bible enjoins it as an imperative duty to know ourselves, whether we are Christians. We are to know each other by our fruits. This is expressly given in the Bible as the rule of judgment in the case. The question is not so much, What are the man's opinions? as, What does he live for? Does he endeavour to promote true religion, love to God and man? Does he manifest a charitable state of mind? Does he manifest the attributes of benevolence in the various circumstances in which he is placed? O, when shall the folly of judging men more by their opinions and feelings, than by the tenor of their lives cease? It seems difficult to rid men of the prejudice that religion consists in feelings and in experiences, in which they are altogether passive. Hence they are continually prone to delusion upon the most momentous of all questions. Nothing can break this spell but the steady and thorough inculcation of the truth, in regard to the nature of regeneration.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLVIII.

NATURAL ABILITY.

We next proceed to the examination of the question of man's ability or inability to obey the commandments of God. This certainly must be a fundamental question in morals and religion; and as our views are upon this subject, so, if we are consistent, must be our views of God, of his moral government, and of every practical doctrine of morals and religion. This is too obvious to require proof. The question of ability has truly been a vexed question. In the discussion of it, I shall consider the elder President Edwards as the representative of the common Calvinistic view of this subject, because he has stated it more clearly than any other Calvinistic author with whom I am acquainted. When, therefore, I speak of the Edwardean doctrine of ability and inability, you will understand me to speak of the common view of Calvinistic theological writers, as stated, summed up, and defended by Edwards.

In discussing this subject I will endeavour to show,--

I. PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S NOTION OF NATURAL ABILITY.

II. THAT THIS NATURAL ABILITY IS NO ABILITY AT ALL.

III. WHAT CONSTITUTES NATURAL INABILITY ACCORDING TO THIS SCHOOL.

IV. THAT THIS NATURAL INABILITY IS NO INABILITY AT ALL.

V. THAT NATURAL ABILITY IS PROPERLY IDENTICAL WITH FREEDOM OR LIBERTY OF WILL.

VI. THAT THE HUMAN WILL IS FREE, AND THEREFORE MEN ARE NATURALLY ABLE TO OBEY GOD.

I. *I am to show what is President Edwards's notion of natural ability.*

Edwards considers freedom and ability as identical. He defines freedom or liberty to consist in "the power, opportunity, or advantage, that any one has, to do as he pleases." "Or, in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing or conducting in any respect as he wills."--Works, vol. ii., page 38.

Again, page 39, he says, "One thing more I should observe concerning what is vulgarly called liberty; namely, that power and opportunity for one to do and conduct as he will, or according to his choice, is all that is meant by it; without taking into the meaning of the word anything of the cause of that choice; or at all considering how the person came to have such a volition; whether it was caused by some external motive, or internal habitual bias; whether it was determined by some internal antecedent volition, or whether it happened without a cause; whether it was necessarily connected with something foregoing, or not connected. Let the person come by his choice anyhow, yet, if he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and exerting his will, the man is perfectly free, according to the primary and common notion of freedom." In the preceding paragraph, he says, "There are two things contrary to what is called liberty in common speech. One is, constraint; which is a person's being necessitated to do a thing contrary to his will: the other is, restraint, which is his being hindered, and not having power to do according to his will."

Power, ability, liberty, to do as you will, are synonymous with this writer. The foregoing quotations, with many like passages that might be quoted from the same author, show that natural liberty, or natural ability, according to him, consists in the natural and established connexion between volition and its effects. Thus he says in another place, "Men are justly said to be able to do what they can do, if they will." His definition of natural ability, or natural liberty, as he frequently calls it, wholly excludes the power to will, and includes only the power or ability to execute our volitions. Thus it is evident, that natural ability, according to him, respects external action only, and has nothing to do with willing. When there is no restraint or hindrance to the execution of volition, when there is nothing interposed to disturb and prevent the natural and established result of our volitions, there is natural ability according to this school. It should be distinctly understood, that Edwards, and those of his school, hold that choices, volitions, and all acts of will, are determined, not by the sovereign power of the agent, but are caused by the objective motive, and that there is the same connexion, or a connexion as certain and as unavoidable between motive and choice, as between any physical cause and its effect: "the difference being," according to him, "not in the nature of the connexion, but in the terms connected." Hence, according to his view, natural liberty or ability cannot consist in the power of willing or of choice, but must consist in the power to execute our choices or volitions. Consequently, this class of philosophers define free or moral agency to consist in the power to do as one wills, or power to execute one's purposes, choices, or volitions. That this is a fundamentally false definition of natural liberty or ability, and of free or moral agency, we shall see in due time. It is also plain, that the natural ability or liberty of Edwards and his school, has nothing to do with morality or immorality. Sin and holiness, as we have seen in a former lecture, are attributes of acts of will only. But this natural ability respects, as has been said, outward or muscular action only. Let this be distinctly borne in mind as we proceed.

II. *This natural ability is no ability at all.*

We know from consciousness that the will is the executive faculty, and that we can do absolutely nothing without willing. The power or ability to will is indispensable to our acting at all. If we have not the power to will, we have not power or ability to do anything. All ability or power to do resides in the will, and power to will is the necessary condition of ability to do. In morals and religion, as we shall soon see, the willing is the doing. The power to will is the condition of obligation to do. Let us hear Edwards himself upon this subject. Vol. ii. p. 156, he says, "The will itself, and not only those actions which are the effects of the will, is the proper object of precept or command. That is, such a state or acts of men's wills, are in many cases properly required of them by commands; and not only those alterations in the state of their bodies or minds that are the consequences of volition. This is most manifest; for it is the mind only that is properly and directly the subject of precepts or commands; that only being capable of receiving or perceiving commands. The motions of the body are matters of command only as they are subject to the soul, and connected with its acts. But the soul has no other faculty whereby it can, in the most direct and proper sense, consent, yield to, or comply with any command, but the faculty of the will; and it is by this faculty only that the soul can directly disobey or refuse compliance; for the very notions of consenting, yielding, accepting, complying, refusing, rejecting, &c., are, according to the meaning of terms, nothing but certain acts of will." Thus we see that Edwards himself held, that the will is the executive faculty, and that the soul can do nothing except as it wills to do it, and that for this reason a command to do is strictly a command to will. We shall see by and by, that he held also that the willing and the doing are identical, so far as moral obligation, morals, and religion are concerned. For the present, it is enough to say, whether Edwards or anybody else ever held it or not, that it is absurd and sheer nonsense to talk of an ability to do when there is no ability to will. Every one knows with intuitive certainty that he has no ability to do what he is unable to will to do. It is, therefore, the veriest folly to talk of a natural ability to do anything whatever, when we exclude from this ability the power to will. If there is no ability to will, there is, and can be no ability to do; therefore the natural ability of the Edwardean school is no ability at all.

Let it be distinctly understood, that whatever Edwards held in respect to the ability of man to do, ability to will entered not at all into his idea and definition of natural ability or liberty. But according to him, natural ability respects only the connection that is established by a law of nature between volition and its sequents, excluding altogether the inquiry how the volition comes to exist. This the foregoing quotations abundantly show. Let the impression, then, be distinct, that the Edwardean natural ability is no ability at all, and nothing but an empty name, a metaphysico-theological fiction.

III. *What constitutes natural inability according to this school.*

Edwards, vol. ii. p. 35, says, "We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing when we cannot do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature, does not allow of it; or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will; either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects." This quotation, together with much that might be quoted from this author to the same effect, shows that natural inability, according to him, consists in a want of power to execute our volitions. In the absence of power to do as we will, if the willing exists and the effect does not follow, it is only because we are unable to do as we will, and this is natural inability. We are naturally unable, according to him, to do what does not follow by a natural law from our volitions. If I will to move my arm, and the muscles do not obey volition, I am naturally unable to move my arm. So with anything else. Here let it be distinctly observed, that natural inability, as well as natural ability, respects and belongs only to outward action or doing. It has nothing to do with ability to will. Whatever Edwards held respecting ability to will, which will be shown in its proper place, I wish it to be distinctly understood that his natural inability had nothing to do with willing, but only with the effects of willing. When the natural effect of willing does not follow volition, its cause, here is a proper natural inability.

IV. *This natural inability is no inability at all.*

By this is intended that, so far as morals and religion are concerned, the willing is the doing, and therefore where the willing actually takes place, the real thing required or prohibited is already done. Let us hear Edwards upon this subject. Vol. ii. p. 164, he says, "If the will fully complies and the proposed effect does not prove, according to the laws of nature, to be connected with his volition, the man is perfectly excused; he has a natural inability to the thing required. For the will itself, as has been observed, is all that can be directly and immediately required by command, and other things only indirectly, as connected with the will. If, therefore, there be a full compliance of will, the person has done his duty; and if other things do not prove to be connected with his volition, that is not criminally owing to him." Here, then, it is manifest, that the Edwardean notions of natural ability and inability have no connection with moral law or moral government, and, of course, with morals and religion. That the Bible everywhere accounts the willing as the deed, is most manifest. Both as it respects sin and holiness, if the required or prohibited act of the will takes place, the moral law and the lawgiver regard the deed as having been done, or the sin committed, whatever impediment may have prevented the natural effect from following. Here, then, let it be distinctly understood and remembered that Edwards's natural inability is, so far as morals and religion are concerned, no inability at all. An inability to execute our volitions, is in no case an inability to do our whole duty, since moral obligation, and of course, duty, respect strictly only acts of will. A natural inability must consist, as we shall see, in an inability to will. It is truly amazing that Edwards could have written the paragraph just quoted, and others to the same effect, without perceiving the fallacy and absurdity of his speculation--without seeing that the ability or inability about which he was writing, had no connection with morals or religion. How could he insist so largely that moral obligation respects acts of will only, and yet spend so much time in writing about an ability or inability to comply with moral obligation that respects outward action exclusively? This, on the face of it, was wholly irrelevant to the subject of morals and religion, upon which subjects he was professedly writing.

V. *Natural ability is identical with freedom or liberty of will.*

It has been, I trust, abundantly shown in a former lecture, and is admitted and insisted on by Edwards,--

1. That moral obligation respects strictly only acts of will.

2. That the whole of moral obligation resolves itself into an obligation to be disinterestedly benevolent, that is, to will the highest good of being for its own sake.

3. That willing is the doing required by the true spirit of the moral law.

Ability, therefore, to will in accordance with the moral law, must be natural ability to obey God. But,--

4. This is and must be the only proper freedom of the will, so far as morals and religion, or so far as moral law is concerned. That must constitute true liberty of will that consists in the ability or power to will, either in accordance with, or in opposition to the requirements of moral law. Or in other words, true freedom or liberty of will must consist in the power or ability to will in every instance either in accordance with, or in opposition to, moral obligation. Observe, moral obligation respects acts of will. What freedom or liberty of will can there be in relation to moral obligation, unless the will or the agent has power or ability to act in conformity with moral obligation? To talk of a man's being free to will, or having liberty to will, when he has not the power or ability, is to talk nonsense. Edwards himself holds that ability to do, is indispensable to liberty to do. But if ability to do be a *sine quà non* of liberty to do, must not the same be true of willing? that is, must not ability to will be essential to liberty to will? Natural ability and natural liberty to will, must then be identical. Let this be distinctly remembered, since many have scouted the doctrine of natural ability to obey God, who have nevertheless been great sticklers for the freedom of the will. In this they are greatly inconsistent. This ability is called a natural ability, because it belongs to man as a moral agent, in such a sense that without it he could not be a proper subject of command, of reward or punishment. That is, without this liberty or ability he could not be a moral agent, and a proper subject of moral government. He must then either possess this power in himself as essential to his own nature, or must possess power, or be able to avail himself of power to will in every instance in accordance with moral obligation. Whatever he can do, he can do only by willing; he must therefore either possess the power in himself directly to will as God commands, or he must be able by willing it to avail himself of power, and to make himself willing. If he has power by nature to will directly as God requires, or by willing to avail himself of power, so to will, he is naturally free and able to obey the commandments of God. Then let it be borne distinctly in mind, that natural ability, about which so much has been said, is nothing more nor less than the freedom or liberty of the will of a moral agent. No man knows what he says or whereof he affirms, who holds to the one and denies the other, for they are truly and properly identical.

VI. *The human will is free, therefore men have power or ability to do all their duty.*

1. The moral government of God everywhere assumes and implies the liberty of the human will, and the natural ability of men to obey God.

Every command, every threatening, every expostulation and denunciation in the Bible implies and assumes this. Nor does the Bible do violence to the human intelligence in this assumption; for,--

2. The human mind necessarily assumes the freedom of the human will as a first truth of reason.

First truths of reason, let it be remembered, are those that are necessarily assumed by every moral agent. They are assumed always and necessarily by a law of the intelligence, although they may seldom be the direct objects of thought or attention. It is a universal law of the intelligence, to assume the truths of causality, the existence and the infinity of space, the existence and infinity of duration, and many other truths. These assumptions every moral agent always and necessarily takes with him, whether these things are matters of attention or not. And even should he deny any one or all of the first truths of reason, he knows them to be true notwithstanding, and cannot but assume their truth in all his practical judgments. Thus, should any one deny the law and the doctrine of causality, as some in theory have done, he knows, and cannot but know,--he assumes, and cannot but assume, its truth at every moment. Without this assumption he could not so much as intend, or think of doing, or of any one else doing anything whatever. But a great part of his time, he may not, and does not, make this law a distinct object of thought or attention. Nor is he directly conscious of the assumption that there is such a law. He acts always upon the assumption, and a great part of his time is insensible of it. His whole activity is only the exercise of his own causality, and a practical acknowledgment of the truth, which in theory he may deny. Now just so it is with the freedom of the will, and with natural ability. Did we not assume our own liberty and ability, we should never think of attempting to do anything. We should not so much as think of moral obligation, either as it respects ourselves or others, unless we assumed the liberty of the human will. In all our judgments respecting our own moral character and that of others, we always and necessarily assume the liberty of the human will, or natural ability to obey God. Although we may not be distinctly conscious of this assumption, though we may seldom make the liberty of the human will the subject of direct thought or attention, and even though we may deny its reality, and strenuously endeavour to maintain the opposite, we, nevertheless, in this very denial and endeavour, assume that we are free. This truth never was, and never can be rejected in our practical judgments. All men assume it. All men must assume it. Whenever they choose in one direction, they always assume, whether conscious of the assumption or not, and cannot but assume, that they have power to will in the opposite direction. Did they not assume this, such a thing as election between two ways or objects would not be, and could not be so much as thought of. The very ideas of right and wrong, of the praise and blameworthiness of human beings, imply the assumption on the part of those who have these ideas, of the universal freedom of the human will, or of the natural ability of men as moral agents to obey God. Were not this assumption in the mind, it were impossible from its own nature and laws that it should affirm moral obligation, right or wrong, praise or blameworthiness of men. I know that philosophers and theologians have in theory denied the doctrine of natural ability or liberty, in the sense in which I have defined it; and I know, too, that with all their theorizing, they did assume, in common with all other men, that man is free in the sense that he has liberty or power to will as God commands. I know that, but for this assumption, the human mind could no more predicate praise or blameworthiness, right or wrong of man, than it could of the motions of a windmill. Men have often made the assumption in question without being aware of it, have affirmed right and wrong of human willing without seeing and understanding the conditions of this affirmation. But the fact is, that in all cases the assumption has laid deep in the mind as a first truth of reason, that men are free in the sense of being naturally able to obey God: and this assumption is a necessary condition of the affirmation that moral character belongs to man.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE XLIX.

MORAL ABILITY AND INABILITY.

I. WHAT CONSTITUTES MORAL INABILITY, ACCORDING TO EDWARDS AND THOSE WHO HOLD WITH HIM.

II. THAT THEIR MORAL INABILITY TO OBEY GOD CONSISTS IN REAL DISOBEDIENCE AND A NATURAL INABILITY TO OBEY.

III. THAT THIS PRETENDED DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATURAL AND MORAL INABILITY IS NONSENSICAL.

IV. WHAT CONSTITUTES MORAL ABILITY ACCORDING TO THIS SCHOOL.

V. THAT THEIR MORAL ABILITY TO OBEY GOD IS NOTHING ELSE THAN REAL OBEDIENCE, AND A NATURAL INABILITY TO DISOBEY.

I. *What constitutes moral inability, according to Edwards and those who hold with him.*

I examine their views of moral inability first in order, because from their views of moral inability we ascertain more clearly what are their views of moral ability. Edwards regards moral ability and inability as identical with moral necessity. Concerning moral necessity, he says, vol. ii., pp. 32, 33, "And sometimes by moral necessity is meant that necessity of connexion and consequence which arises from such moral causes as the strength of inclination or motives, and the connexion which there is in many cases between these and such certain volitions and actions. And it is in this sense that I shall use the phrase moral necessity in the following discourse. By natural necessity, as applied to men, I mean such necessity as men are under through the force of natural causes, as distinguished from what are called moral causes, such as habits and dispositions of the heart, and moral motives and inducements. Thus men placed in certain circumstances are the subjects of particular sensations by necessity. They feel pain when their bodies are wounded; they see the objects presented before them in a clear light when their eyes are open: so they assent to the truth of certain propositions as soon as the terms are understood; as that two and two make four, that black is not white, that two parallel lines can never cross one another; so by a natural necessity men's bodies move downwards when there is nothing to support them. But here several things may be noted concerning these two kinds of necessity. 1. Moral necessity may be as absolute as natural necessity. That is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a natural effect is with its natural cause. Whether the will is in every case necessarily determined by the strongest motive, or whether the will ever makes any resistance to such a motive, or can ever oppose the strongest present inclination or not; if that matter should be controverted, yet I suppose none will deny, but that, in some cases a previous bias and inclination, or the motive presented may be so powerful, that the act of the will may be certainly and indissolubly connected therewith. When motives or previous bias are very strong, all will allow that there is some difficulty in going against them. And if they were yet stronger, the difficulty would be still greater. And therefore if more were still added to their strength up to a certain degree, it might make the difficulty so great that it would be wholly impossible to surmount it, for this plain reason, because whatever power men may be supposed to have to surmount difficulties, yet that power is not infinite, and so goes not beyond certain limits. If a certain man can surmount ten degrees of difficulty of this kind, with twenty degrees of strength, because the degrees of strength are beyond the degrees of difficulty, yet if the difficulty be increased to thirty, or a hundred, or to a thousand degrees, and his strength not also increased, his strength will be wholly insufficient to surmount the difficulty. As therefore it must be allowed that there may be such a thing as a sure and perfect connexion between moral causes and effects; so this only is what I call by the name of moral necessity." Page 35, he says: "What has been said of natural and moral necessity may serve to explain what is intended by natural and moral inability. We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing when we cannot do it if we will, because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will, either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects. Moral inability consists not in any of these things, but either in a want of inclination, or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary. Or both these may be resolved into one, and it may be said in one word that moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination. For when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing, through a defect of motives or prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination in such circumstances, and under the influence of such views."

From these quotations, and much more that might be quoted to the same purpose, it is plain that Edwards, as the representative of his school, holds moral inability to consist, either in an existing choice or attitude of the will opposed to that which is required by the law of God, which inclination or choice is necessitated by motives in view of the mind, or in the absence of such motives as are necessary to cause or necessitate the state of choice required by the moral law, or to overcome an opposing choice. Indeed he holds these two to be identical. Observe, his words are, "Or these may be resolved into one, and it may be said in one word, that moral inability consists in opposition or want of inclination. For when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing, through a defect of motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, in such circumstances and under the influence of such views," that is, in the presence of such motives. If there is a present prevalent contrary inclination, it is, according to him: 1. Because there are present certain reasons that necessitate this contrary inclination; and 2. Because there are not sufficient motives present to the mind to overcome these opposing motives and inclination, and to necessitate the will to determine or choose in the direction of the law of God. By inclination Edwards means choice or volition, as is abundantly evident from what he all along says in this connexion. This no one will deny who is at all familiar with his writings.

It was the object of the treatise from which the above quotations have been made, to maintain that the choice invariably is as the greatest apparent good is. And by the greatest apparent good he means, a sense of the most agreeable. By which he means, as he says, that the sense of the most agreeable, and choice or volition, are identical. Vol. ii., page 20, he says, "And therefore it must be true in some sense, that the will always is as the greatest apparent good is." "It must be observed in what sense I use the term 'good,' namely, as of the same import with agreeable. To appear good to the mind, as I use the phrase, is the same as to appear agreeable, or seem pleasing to the mind." Again, pp. 21, 22, he says: "I have rather chosen to express myself thus, that the will always is as the greatest apparent good is, or as what appears most agreeable, than to say that the will is determined by the greatest apparent good, or by what seems most agreeable; because an appearing most agreeable to the mind and the mind's preferring, seem scarcely distinct. If strict propriety of speech be insisted on, it may more properly be said, that the voluntary action, which is the immediate consequence of the mind's choice, is determined by that which appears most agreeable, than the choice itself." Thus it appears that the sense of the most agreeable, and choice or volition, according to Edwards, are the same things. Indeed, Edwards throughout confounds desire and volition, making them the same thing. Edwards regarded the mind as possessing but two primary faculties--the will and the understanding. He confounded all the states of the sensibility with acts of will. The strongest desire is with him always identical with volition or choice, and not merely that which determines choice. When there is a want of inclination or desire, or the sense of the most agreeable, there is a moral inability according to the Edwardean philosophy. This want of the strongest desire, inclination, or sense of the most agreeable, is always owing; 1. To the presence of such motives as to necessitate an opposite desire, choice, &c.; and 2. To the want of such objective motives as shall awaken this required desire, or necessitate this inclination or sense of the most agreeable. In other words, when volition or choice, in consistency with the law of God, does not exist, it is, 1. Because an opposite choice exists, and is necessitated by the presence of some motive; and 2. For want of sufficiently strong objective motives to necessitate the required choice or volition. Let it be distinctly understood and remembered, that Edwards held that motive, and not the agent is the cause of all actions of the will. Will, with him, is always determined in its choice by motives as really as physical effects are produced by their causes. The difference with him in the connexion of moral and physical causes and effects "lies not in the nature of the connexion, but in the terms connected."

"That every act of the will has some cause, and consequently (by what has already been proved) has a necessary connection with its cause, and so is necessary by a necessity of connection and consequence, is evident by this, that every act of the will whatsoever is excited by some motive, which is manifest; because, if the mind, in willing, after the manner it does, is excited by no motive or inducement, then it has no end which it proposes to itself, or pursues in so doing; it aims at nothing, and seeks nothing. And if it seeks nothing, then it does not go after anything, or exert any inclination or preference towards anything; which brings the matter to a contradiction; because for the mind to will something, and for it to go after something by an act of preference and inclination, are the same thing.

"But if every act of the will is excited by a motive, then that motive is the cause of the act. If the acts of the will are excited by motives, then motives are the causes of their being excited; or, which is the same thing, the cause of their existence. And if so, the existence of the acts of the will is properly the effect of their motives. Motives do nothing, as motives or inducements, but by their influence; and so much as is done by their influence is the effect of them. For that is the notion of an effect, something that is brought to pass by the influence of something else.

"And if volitions are properly the effects of their motives, then they are necessarily connected with their motives. Every effect and event being, as was proved before, necessarily connected with that which is the proper ground and reason of its existence. Thus it is manifest that volition is necessary, and is not from any self-determining power in the will."--Vol. ii., pp. 86, 87.

Moral inability, then, according to this school, consists in a want of inclination, desire, or sense of the most agreeable, or the strength of an opposite desire or sense of the most agreeable. This want of inclination, &c., or this opposing inclination, &c., are identical with an opposing choice or volition. This opposing choice or inclination, or this want of the required choice, inclination, or sense of the most agreeable is owing, according to Edwards, 1. To the presence of such motives as to necessitate the opposing choice; and 2. To the absence of sufficient motives to beget or necessitate them. Here then we have the philosophy of this school. The will or agent is unable to choose as God requires in all cases, when, 1. There are present such motives as to necessitate an opposite choice; and, 2. When there is not such a motive or such motives in the view of the mind, as to determine or necessitate the required choice or volition; that is, to awaken a desire, or to create an inclination or sense of the agreeable stronger than any existing and opposing desire, inclination, or sense of agreeable. This is the moral inability of the Edwardeans.

II. *Their moral inability to obey God consists in real disobedience and a natural inability to obey.*

1. If we understand Edwardeans to mean that moral inability consists,--

(1.) In the presence of such motives as to necessitate an opposite choice; and,--

(2.) In the want or absence of sufficient motives to necessitate choice or volition, or, which is the same thing, a sense of the most agreeable, or an inclination, then their moral inability is a proper natural inability.

Edwards says, he "calls it a moral inability, because it is an inability of will." But by his own showing, the will is the only executive faculty. Whatever a man can do at all, he can accomplish by willing, and whatever he cannot accomplish by willing he cannot accomplish at all. An inability to will then must be a natural inability.

We are, by nature, unable to do what we are unable to will to do. Besides, according to Edwards, moral obligation respects strictly only acts of will, and willing is the doing that is prohibited or required by the moral law. To be unable to will then, is to be unable to do. To be unable to will as God requires, is to be unable to do what he requires, and this surely is a proper, and the only proper natural inability.

2. But if we are to understand this school, as maintaining that moral inability to obey God, consists in a want of the inclination, choice, desire, or sense of the most agreeable that God requires, or in an inclination or existing choice, volition, or sense of the most agreeable, which is opposed to the requirement of God, this surely is really identical with disobedience, and their moral inability to obey consists in disobedience. For, be it distinctly remembered, that Edwards holds, as we have seen, that obedience and disobedience, properly speaking, can be predicated only of acts of will. If the required state of the will exists, there is obedience. If it does not exist, there is disobedience. Therefore, by his own admission and express holding, if by moral inability we are to understand a state of the will not conformed, or, which is the same thing, opposed to the law and will of God, this moral inability is nothing else than disobedience to God. A moral inability to obey is identical with disobedience. It is not merely the cause of future or present disobedience, but really constitutes the whole of present disobedience.

3. But suppose that we understand his moral inability to consist both in the want of an inclination, choice, volition, &c., or in the existence of an opposing state of the will, and also,--

(1.) In the presence of such motives as to necessitate an opposite choice, and,--

(2.) In the want of sufficient motives to overcome the opposing state, and necessitate the required choice, volition, &c., then his views stand thus: moral inability to choose as God commands, consists in the want of this choice, or in the existence of an opposite choice, which want of choice, or, which is the same thing with him, which opposite choice is caused:--

(i.) By the presence of such motives as to necessitate the opposite choice, and,--

(ii.) By the absence of such motives as would necessitate the required choice.

Understand him which way you will, his moral inability is real disobedience, and is in the highest sense a proper natural inability to obey. The cause of choice or volition he always seeks, and thinks or assumes that he finds, in the objective motive, and never for once ascribes it to the sovereignty or freedom of the agent. Choice or volition is an event, and must have some cause. He assumed that the objective motive was the cause, when, as consciousness testifies, the agent is himself the cause. Here is the great error of Edwards.

Edwards assumed that no agent whatever, not even God himself, possesses a power of self-determination. That the will of God and of all moral agents is determined, not by themselves, but by an objective motive. If they will in one direction or another, it is not from any free and sovereign self-determination in view of motives, but because the motives or inducements present to the mind, inevitably produce or necessitate the sense of the most agreeable, or choice.

If this is not fatalism or natural necessity, what is?

III. *This pretended distinction between natural and moral inability is nonsensical.*

What does it amount to? Why this:--

1. This natural inability is an inability to do as we will, or to execute our volitions.

2. This moral inability is an inability to will.

3. This moral inability is the only natural inability that has, or can have, anything to do with duty, or with morality and religion; or, as has been shown,--

4. It consists in disobedience itself. Present moral inability to obey is identical with present disobedience, with a natural inability to obey!

It is amazing to see how so great and good a man could involve himself in a metaphysical fog, and bewilder himself and his readers to such a degree, that an absolutely senseless distinction should pass into the current phraseology, philosophy, and theology of the church, and a score of theological dogmas be built upon the assumption of its truth. This nonsensical distinction has been in the mouth of the Edwardean school of theologians, from Edwards's day to the present. Both saints and sinners have been bewildered, and, I must say, abused by it. Men have been told that they are as really unable to will as God directs, as they were to create themselves; and when it is replied that this inability excuses the sinner, we are directly silenced by the assertion, that this is only a moral inability, or an inability of will, and, therefore, that it is so far from excusing the sinner, that it constitutes the very ground, and substance, and whole of his guilt. Indeed! Men are under moral obligation only to will as God directs. But an inability thus to will, consisting in the absence of such motives as would necessitate the required choice, or the presence of such motives as to necessitate an opposite choice, is a moral inability, and really constitutes the sinner worthy of an "exceeding great and eternal weight" of damnation! Ridiculous! Edwards I revere; his blunders I deplore. I speak thus of this Treatise on the Will, because, while it abounds with unwarrantable assumptions, distinctions without a difference, and metaphysical subtleties, it has been adopted as the text-book of a multitude of what are called Calvinistic divines for scores of years. It has bewildered the head, and greatly embarrassed the heart and the action of the church of God. It is time, high time, that its errors should be exposed, and so exploded, that such phraseology should be laid aside, and the ideas which these words represent should cease to be entertained.

IV. *What constitutes moral ability according to this school.*

It is of course the opposite of moral inability.

Moral ability, according to them, consists in willingness with the cause of it. That is, moral ability to obey God consists in that inclination, desire, choice, volition, or sense of the most agreeable, which God requires together with its cause. Or it consists in the presence of such motives as do actually necessitate the above-named state or determination of the will. Or, more strictly, it consists in this state caused by the presence of these motives. This is as exact a statement of their views as I can make. According to this, a man is morally able to do as he does, and is necessitated to do, or, he is morally able to will as he does will, and as he cannot help willing. He is morally able to will in this manner, simply and only because he is caused thus to will by the presence of such motives as are, according to them, "indissolubly connected" with such a willing by a law of nature and necessity. But this conducts us to the conclusion,--

V. *That their moral ability to obey God is nothing else than real obedience, and a natural inability to disobey.*

Strictly, this moral ability includes both this state of will required by the law of God, and also the cause of this state, to wit, the presence of such motives as necessitate the inclination, choice, volition, or sense of the most agreeable, that God requires. The agent is able thus to will because he is caused thus to will. Or more strictly, his ability, and his inclination or willing, are identical. Or still further, according to Edwards, his moral ability thus to will and his thus willing, and the presence of the motives that cause this willing, are identical. This is a sublime discovery in philosophy; a most transcendental speculation! I would not treat these notions as ridiculous, were they not truly so, or if I could treat them in any other manner, and still do them anything like justice. If, where the theory is plainly stated, it appears ridiculous, the fault is not in me, but in the theory itself. I know it is trying to you, as it is to me, to connect anything ridiculous with so great and so revered a name as that of President Edwards. But if a blunder of his has entailed perplexity and error on the church, surely his great and good soul would now thank the hand that should blot out the error from under heaven.

Thus, when closely examined, this long established and venerated fogbank vanishes away; and this famed distinction between moral and natural ability and inability, is found to be "a thing of nought."

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE L.

INABILITY.

THERE are yet other forms of the doctrine of inability to be stated and considered before we have done with this subject. In the consideration of the one before me, I must--

I. STATE WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE THE FUNDAMENTAL ERRORS OF EDWARDS AND HIS SCHOOL ON THE SUBJECT OF ABILITY.

II. STATE THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHEME OF INABILITY WHICH WE ARE ABOUT TO CONSIDER.

III. CONSIDER ITS CLAIMS.

I. *I am to state what I consider to be the fundamental errors of Edwards and his school upon the subject of ability.*

1. He denied that moral agents are the causes of their own actions. He started, of course, with the just assumption, that every event is an effect, and must have some cause. The choices and volitions of moral agents are effects of some cause. What is that cause? He assumes that every act of will must have been caused by a preceding one, or by the objective motive. By the *reductio ad absurdum*, he easily showed the absurdity of the first hypothesis, and consequently assumed the truth of the last. But how does he know that the sovereign power of the agent is not the cause? His argument against self-determination amounts to nothing; for it is, in fact, only a begging of the whole question. If we are conscious of anything, we are of the rational affirmation that we do, in fact, originate our own choices and volitions. To call this in question, is to question the validity of the intuitions of reason. But if the testimony of this faculty can deceive us, we can be certain of nothing. But it cannot deceive us, and no man can practically doubt the intuitions of the reason. All moral agents do, and always must, in all their practical judgments, assume and admit the truth of all the rational intuitions. Edwards, as really as any other man, believed himself to originate and be the proper cause of his own volitions. In his practical judgment he assumed his own causality, and the proper causality of all moral agents, or he never could have had so much as a conception of moral agency and accountability. But in theory, he adopted the capital error of denying the proper causality of moral agents. This error is fundamental. Every definition of a moral agent that denies or overlooks, his proper causality, is radically defective. It drops out of the definition the very element that we necessarily affirm to be essential to liberty and accountability. Denying, as he did, the proper causality of moral agents, he was driven to give a false definition of free agency, as has been shown. Edwards rightly regarded the choices and volitions of moral agents as effects, but he looks in the wrong direction for the cause. Instead of heeding the rational affirmation of his own mind that causality, or the power of self-determination, is a *sine quà non* of moral agency, he assumed, in theorizing, the direct opposite, and sought for the cause of choice and volition out of the agent, and in the objective motive; thus, in fact, denying the validity of the testimony of the pure reason, and reducing moral agents to mere machines, and stultifying the whole subject of moral government, moral action, and just retribution. No wonder that so capital an error, and defended with so much ability, should have led one of his own sons into scepticism. But the piety of the president was stronger than even his powerful logic. Assuming a false major premise, his straightforward logic conducted him to the dogma of a universal necessity. But his well-developed reason, and deep piety of heart, controlled his practical judgment, so that few men have practically held the doctrines of accountability and retribution with a firmer grasp.

2. Edwards adopted the Lockean philosophy. He regarded the mind as possessing but two primary faculties, the understanding and the will. He considered all the desires, emotions, affections, appetites, and passions as voluntary, and as really consisting in acts of will. This confounding of the states of the sensibility with acts of the will, I regard as another fundamental error of his whole system of philosophy, so far as it respects the liberty of the will, or the doctrine of ability. Being conscious that the emotions, which he calls affections, the desires, the appetites and passions, were so correlated to their appropriate objects, that they are excited by the presence or contemplation of them, and assuming them to be voluntary states of mind, or actions of the will, he very naturally, and with this assumption, necessarily and justly concluded, that the will was governed or decided by the objective motive. Assuming as he did that the mind has but two faculties, understanding and will, and that every state of feeling and of mind that did not belong to the understanding, must be a voluntary state or act of will, and being conscious that his feelings, desires, affections, appetites and passions, were excited by the contemplation of their correlated objects, he could consistently come to no other conclusion than that the will is determined by motives, and that choice always is as the most agreeable is.

Had he not sat down to write with the assumption of the Lockean school of philosophy in his mind, his Treatise on the Will, in anything like its present form, could never have seen the light. But assuming the truth of that philosophy, a mind like his could arrive at no other conclusions than he did. He took upon trust, or assumed without inquiry, an error that vitiated his whole system, and gave birth to that injurious monstrosity and misnomer, "Edwards on the Freedom of the Will." He justly held that moral law legislates and can strictly legislate only over acts of will, and those acts that are under the control of the will. This he, with his mental developement, could not deny, nor think of denying. Had he but given or assumed a correct definition of the will, and excluded from its acts the wholly involuntary states of the sensibility, he never could have asserted that the will is always and necessarily determined by the objective motive. Assuming the philosophy of Locke, and being conscious that the states of his sensibility, which he called acts of will, were controlled or excited by motives, or by the consideration of their correlated objects, his great soul laboured to bring about a reconciliation between the justice of God and this real, though not so called, slavery of the human will. This led him to adopt the distinction which we have examined between a moral and a natural inability. Thus, as a theologian, he committed a capital error in suffering himself to take upon trust another man's philosophy. Happy is the man who takes the trouble to examine for himself, whatever is essential to his system of opinion and belief.

II. *I am to state the philosophy of the scheme of inability which we are about to consider.*

1. This philosophy properly distinguishes between the will and the sensibility. It regards the mind as possessing three primary departments, powers, or susceptibilities--the intellect, the sensibility, and the will. It does not always call these departments or susceptibilities by these names, but if I understand them, the abettors of this philosophy hold to their existence, by whatever name they may call them.

2. This philosophy also holds, that the states of the intellect and of the sensibility are passive and involuntary.

3. It holds that freedom of will is a condition of moral agency.

4. It also teaches that the will is free, and consequently that man is a free moral agent.

5. It teaches that the will controls the outward life and the attention of the intellect, directly, and many of the emotions, desires, affections, appetites, and passions, or many states of the sensibility, indirectly.

6. It teaches that men have ability to obey God so far as acts of will are concerned, and also so far as those acts and states of mind are concerned that are under the direct or indirect control of the will.

7. But they hold that moral obligation may, and in the case of man at least, does extend beyond moral agency and beyond the sphere of ability; that ability or freedom of will is essential to moral agency, but that freedom of will or moral agency does not limit moral obligation; that moral agency and moral obligation are not coextensive; consequently that moral obligation is not limited by ability or by moral agency.

8. This philosophy asserts that moral obligation extends to those states of mind that lie wholly beyond or without the sphere or control of the will; that it extends not merely to voluntary acts and states, together with all acts and states that come within the direct or indirect control of the will, but, as was said, it insists that those mental states that lie wholly beyond the will's direct or indirect control, come within the pale of moral legislation and obligation; and that therefore obligation is not limited by ability.

9. This philosophy seems to have been invented to reconcile the doctrine of original sin in the sense of a sinful nature, or of constitutional moral depravity with moral obligation. Assuming that original sin in this sense is a doctrine of divine revelation, it takes the bold and uncompromising ground already stated, namely, that moral obligation is not merely co-extensive with moral agency and ability, but extends beyond both into the region of those mental states that lie entirely without the will's direct or indirect control.

10. This bold assertion the abettors of this philosophy attempt to support by an appeal to the necessary convictions of men and to the authority of the Bible. They allege that the instinctive judgments of men, as well as the Bible, everywhere assume and affirm moral obligation and moral character of the class of mental states in question.

11. They admit that a physical inability is a bar to or inconsistent with moral obligation; but they of course deny that the inability to which they hold is physical.

III. *This brings us to a brief consideration of the claims of this philosophy of inability.*

1. It is based upon a *petitio principiis*, or a begging of the question. It assumes that the instinctive or irresistible and universal judgments of men, together with the Bible, assert and assume that moral obligation and moral character extend to the states of mind in question. It is admitted that the teachings of the Bible are to be relied upon. It is also admitted that the first truths of reason, or what this philosophy calls the instinctive and necessary judgments of all men, must be true. But it is not admitted that the assertion in question is a doctrine of the Bible or a first truth of reason. On the contrary both are denied. It is denied, at least by me, that either reason or divine revelation affirms moral obligation or moral character of any state of mind, that lies wholly beyond both the direct and the indirect control of the will. Now this philosophy must not be allowed to beg the question in debate. Let it be shown, if it can be, that the alleged truth is either a doctrine of the Bible or a first truth of reason. Both reason and revelation do assert and assume, that moral obligation and moral character extend to acts of will, and to all those outward acts or mental states that lie within its direct or indirect control. "But further these deponents say not." Men are conscious of moral obligation in respect to these acts and states of mind, and of guilt when they fail in these respects to comply with moral obligation. But who ever blamed himself for pain, when, without his fault, he received a blow, or was seized with the tooth-ache, or a fit of bilious cholic?

2. Let us inquire into the nature of this inability. Observe, it is admitted by this school that a physical inability is inconsistent with moral obligation--in other words, that physical ability is a condition of moral obligation. But what is a physical inability? The primary definition of the adjective *physical*, given by Webster, is, "pertaining to nature, or natural objects." A physical inability then, in the primary sense of the term physical, is an inability of nature. It may be either a material or a mental inability, that is, it may be either an inability of body or mind. It is admitted by the school whose views we are canvassing, that all human causality or ability resides in the will, and therefore that there is a proper inability of nature to perform anything that does not come within the sphere of the direct or indirect causality of, or control of the will. It is plain, therefore, that the inability for which they contend must be a proper natural inability, or inability of nature. This they fully admit and maintain. But this they do not call a physical inability. But why do they not? Why, simply because it would, by their own admissions, overthrow their favourite position. They seem to assume that a physical inability must be a material inability. But where is the authority for such an assumption? There is no authority for it. A proper inability of nature must be a physical inability, as opposed to moral inability, or there is no meaning in language. It matters not at all whether the inability belongs to the material organism, or to the mind. If it be constitutional, and properly an inability of nature, it is nonsense to deny that this is a physical inability, or to maintain that it can be consistent with moral obligation. It is in vain to reply that this inability, though a real inability of nature, is not physical but moral, because a sinful inability. This is another begging of the question.

The school, whose views I am examining, maintain, that this inability is founded in the first sin of Adam. His first sin plunged himself and his posterity, descending from him by a natural law, into a total inability of nature to render any obedience to God. This first sin of Adam entailed a nature on all his posterity "wholly sinful in every faculty and part of soul and body." This constitutional sinfulness that belongs to every faculty and part of soul and body, constitutes the inability of which we are treating. But mark, it is not physical inability, because it is a sinful inability! Important theological distinction!--as truly wonderful, surely, as any of the subtleties of the Jesuits. But if this inability is sinful, it is important to inquire, Whose sin is it? Who is to blame for it? Why to be sure, we are told that it is the sin of him upon whom it is thus entailed by the natural law of descent from parent to child without his knowledge or consent. This sinfulness of nature, entirely irrespective of and previous to any actual transgression, renders its possessor worthy of and exposed to the wrath and curse of God for ever. This sinfulness, observe, is transmitted by a natural or physical law from Adam, but it is not a physical inability. It is something that inheres in, and belongs to every faculty and part of soul and body. It is transmitted by a physical law from parent to child. It is, therefore, and must be a physical thing. But yet we are told that it cannot be a physical inability, because first, it is sinful, or sin itself; and, secondly, because a physical inability is a bar to, or inconsistent with, moral obligation. Here, then, we have their reasons for not admitting this to be a physical inability. It would in this case render moral obligation an impossibility; and, besides, if a bar to moral obligation, it could not be sinful. But it is sinful, it is said, therefore it cannot be physical. But how do we know that it is sinful? Why, we are told, that the instinctive judgments of men, and the Bible everywhere affirm and assume it. We are told, that both the instinctive judgments of men and the Bible affirm and assume, both the inability in question and the sinfulness of it; "that we ought to be able, but are not;" that is, that we are so much to blame for this inability of nature entailed upon us without our knowledge or consent by a physical necessity, as to deserve the wrath and curse of God for ever. We are under a moral obligation not to have this sinful nature. We deserve damnation for having it. To be sure, we are entirely unable to put it away, and had no agency whatever in its existence. But what of that? We are told, that "moral obligation is not limited by ability;" that our being as unable to change our nature as we are to create a world, is no reason why we should not be under obligation to do it, since "moral obligation does not imply ability of any kind to do what we are under obligation to do!" . . . . I was about to expose the folly and absurdity of these assertions, but hush! It is not allowable, we are told, to reason on this subject. We shall deceive ourselves if we listen to the "miserable logic of our understandings." We must fall back, then, upon the intuitive affirmations of reason and the Bible. Here, then, we are willing to lodge our appeal. The Bible defines sin to be a transgression of the law. What law have we violated in inheriting this nature? What law requires us to have a different nature from that which we possess? Does reason affirm that we are deserving of the wrath and curse of God for ever, for inheriting from Adam a sinful nature?

What law of reason have we transgressed in inheriting this nature? Reason cannot condemn us, unless we have violated some law which it can recognize as such. Reason indignantly rebukes such nonsense. Does the Bible hold us responsible for impossibilities? Does it require of us what we cannot do by willing to do it? Nay, verily; but it expressly affirms, that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." The plain meaning of this passage is, that if one wills as God directs, he has hereby met all his obligation; that he has done all that is naturally possible to him, and therefore nothing more is required. In this passage, the Bible expressly limits obligation by ability. This we have repeatedly seen in former lectures. The law also, as we have formerly seen, limits obligation by ability. It requires only that we should love the Lord with all our strength, that is, with all our ability, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Does reason hold us responsible for impossibilities, or affirm our obligation to do, or be, what it is impossible for us to do and be? No indeed. Reason never did and never can condemn us for our nature, and hold us worthy of the wrath and curse of God for ever for possessing it. Nothing is more shocking and revolting to reason, than such assumptions as are made by the philosophy in question. This every man's consciousness must testify.

But is it not true that some, at least, do intelligently condemn themselves for their nature, and adjudge themselves to be worthy of the wrath and curse of God for ever for its sinfulness? The framers of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith made this affirmation in words, at least; whether intelligently or unintelligently, we are left to inquire. The reason of a moral agent condemning himself, and adjudging himself worthy of the wrath and curse of God for ever, for possessing a nature entailed on him by a natural law, without his knowledge or consent! This can never be.

But is it not true, as is affirmed, that men instinctively and necessarily affirm their obligation to be able to obey God, while they at the same time affirm that they are not able? I answer, no. They affirm themselves to be under obligation simply, and only, because deeply in their inward being lies the assumption that they are able to comply with the requirements of God. They are conscious of ability to will, and of power to control their outward life directly, and the states of the intellect and of their sensibility, either directly or indirectly, by willing. Upon this consciousness they found the affirmation of obligation, and of praise and blame-worthiness in respect to these acts and states of mind. But for the consciousness of ability, no affirmation of moral obligation, or of praise or blame-worthiness, were possible.

But do not those who affirm both their inability and their obligation, deceive themselves? I answer, yes. It is common for persons to overlook assumptions that lie, so to speak, at the bottom of their minds. This has been noticed in former lectures, and need not be here repeated.

It is true indeed that God requires of men, especially under the gospel, what they are unable to do directly in their own strength. Or more strictly speaking, he requires them to lay hold on his strength, or to avail themselves of his grace, as the condition of being what he requires them to be. With strict propriety, it cannot be said that in this, or in any case, he requires directly any more than we are able directly to do. The direct requirement in the case under consideration, is to avail ourselves of, or to lay hold upon his strength. This we have power to do. He requires us to lay hold upon his grace and strength, and thereby to rise to a higher knowledge of himself, and to a consequent higher state of holiness than would be otherwise possible to us. The direct requirement is to believe, or to lay hold upon his strength, or to receive the Holy Spirit, or Christ, who stands at the door, and knocks, and waits for admission. The indirect requirement is to rise to a degree of knowledge of God, and to spiritual attainments that are impossible to us in our own strength. We have ability to obey the direct command directly, and the indirect command indirectly. That is, we are able by virtue of our nature, together with the proffered grace of the Holy Spirit, to comply with all the requirements of God. So that in fact there is no proper inability about it.

But are not men often conscious of there being much difficulty in the way of rendering to God all that we affirm ourselves under obligation to render? I answer, yes. But strictly speaking, they must admit their direct or indirect ability, as a condition of affirming their obligation. This difficulty, arising out of their physical depravity (See distinction between moral and physical depravity,*(see below), and the power of temptation from without, is the foundation or cause of the spiritual warfare of which the Scriptures speak, and of which all Christians are conscious. But the Bible abundantly teaches, that through grace we are able to be more than conquerors. If we are able to be this through grace, we are able to avail ourselves of the provisions of grace, so that there is no proper inability in the case. However great the difficulties may be, we are able through Christ to overcome them all. This we must and do assume as the condition of the affirmation of obligation.

*See distinction between moral and physical depravity, Lecture XXXVIII. II)

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LI.

GRACIOUS ABILITY.

I. I WILL SHOW WHAT THOSE WHO USE THIS PHRASEOLOGY MEAN BY A GRACIOUS ABILITY.

II. THAT THE DOCTRINE OF A GRACIOUS ABILITY AS HELD BY THOSE WHO MAINTAIN IT IS AN ABSURDITY.

III. IN WHAT SENSE OF THE TERMS A GRACIOUS ABILITY IS POSSIBLE.

Grace is unmerited favour. Its exercise consists in bestowing that which, without a violation of justice, might be withheld.

Ability to obey God, as we have seen, is the possession of power adequate to the performance of that which is required. If, then, the terms are used in the proper sense, by a gracious ability must be intended that the power which men at present possess to obey the commands of God, is a gift of grace relatively to the command; that is, the bestowment of power adequate to the performance of the thing required, is a matter of grace as opposed to justice. But let us enter upon an inquiry into the sense in which this language is used.

I. *I will show what is intended by the term gracious ability.*

The abettors of this scheme hold that by the first sin of Adam, he, together with all his posterity, lost all natural power and all ability of every kind to obey God; that therefore they were, as a race, wholly unable to obey the moral law, or to render to God any acceptable service whatever; that is, that they became, as a consequence of the sin of Adam, wholly unable to use the powers of nature in any other way than to sin. They were able to sin or to disobey God, but entirely unable to obey him; that they did not lose all power to act, but that they had power to act only in one direction, that is, in opposition to the will and law of God. By a gracious ability they intend, that in consequence of the atonement of Christ, God has graciously restored to man ability to accept the terms of mercy, or to fulfil the conditions of acceptance with God; in other words, that by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit which, upon condition of the atonement, God has given to every member of the human family, all men are endowed with a gracious ability to obey God. By a gracious ability is intended, then, that ability or power to obey God, which all men now possess, not by virtue of their own nature or constitutional powers, but by virtue of the indwelling and gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, gratuitously bestowed upon man in consequence of the atonement of Christ. The inability, or total loss of all natural power to obey God into which men as a race fell by the first sin of Adam, they call original sin, &c., perhaps more strictly, this inability is a consequence of that original sin into which man fell; which original sin itself consisted in the total corruption of man's whole nature. They hold, that by the atonement Christ made satisfaction for original sin, in such a sense, that the inability resulting from it is removed, and that now men are by gracious aid able to obey and accept the terms of salvation. That is, they are able to repent and believe the gospel. In short, they are able by virtue of this gracious ability to do their duty, or to obey God. This, if I understand these theologians, is a fair statement of their doctrine of gracious ability. This brings us,--

II. *To show that the doctrine of a gracious ability, as held by those who maintain it, is an absurdity.*

The question is not whether, as a matter of fact, men ever do obey God without the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. I hold that they do not. So the fact of the Holy Spirit's gracious influence being exerted in every case of human obedience, is not a question in debate between those who maintain, and those who deny the doctrine of gracious ability, in the sense above explained. The question in debate is not whether men do, in any case, use the powers of nature in the manner that God requires, without the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, but whether they are naturally able so to use them. Is the fact that they never do so use them without a gracious divine influence, to be ascribed to absolute inability, or to the fact that, from the beginning, they universally and voluntarily consecrate their powers to the gratification of self, and that therefore they will not, unless they are divinely persuaded, by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, in any case turn and consecrate their powers to the service of God? If this doctrine of natural inability and of gracious ability be true, it inevitably follows:--

1. That but for the atonement of Christ, and the consequent bestowment of a gracious ability, no one of Adam's race could ever have been capable of sinning. For in this case the whole race would have been, and remained, wholly destitute of any kind or degree of ability to obey God. Consequently they could not have been subjects of moral government, and of course their actions could have had no moral character. It is a first truth of reason, a truth everywhere and by all men necessarily assumed in their practical judgments, that a subject of moral government must be a moral agent, or that moral agency is a necessary condition of any one's being a subject of a moral government. And in the practical judgment of men, it matters not at all whether a being ever was a moral agent, or not. If by any means whatever he has ceased to be a moral agent, men universally and necessarily assume, that it is impossible for him to be a subject of moral government any more than a horse can be such a subject. Suppose he has by his own fault made himself an idiot or a lunatic; all men know absolutely, and in their practical judgment assume, that in this state he is not, and cannot be a subject of moral government. They know that in this state, moral character cannot justly be predicated of his actions. His guilt in thus depriving himself of moral agency may be exceeding great, and, as was said on a former occasion, his guilt in thus depriving himself of moral agency may equal the sum of all the default of which it is the cause,--but be a moral agent, be under moral obligation in this state of dementation or insanity, he cannot. This is a first truth of reason, irresistibly and universally assumed by all men. If therefore Adam's posterity had by their own personal act cast away and deprived themselves of all ability to obey God, in this state they would have ceased to be moral agents, and consequently they could have sinned no more. But the case under consideration is not the one just supposed, but is one where moral agency was not cast away by the agent himself. It is one where moral agency was never, and never could have been possessed. In the case under consideration, Adam's posterity, had he ever had any, would never have possessed any power to obey God, or to do anything acceptable to him. Consequently, they never could have sustained to God the relation of subjects of his moral government. Of course they never could have had moral character; right or wrong, in a moral sense, never could have been predicated of their actions.

2. It must follow from this doctrine of gracious ability and natural inability, that mankind lost their freedom, or the liberty of the human will in the first sin of Adam; that both Adam himself, and all his posterity would and could have sustained to God only the relation of necessary, as opposed to free agents, had not God bestowed upon them a gracious ability.

We have seen in a former lecture, that natural ability to obey God, and the freedom or liberty of will, are identical. We have abundantly seen that moral law and moral obligation respect strictly only acts of will; that hence, all obedience to God consists strictly in acts of will; that power to will in conformity with the requirements of God, is natural ability to obey him; that freedom or liberty of will, consists in the power or ability to will in conformity or opposition to the will or law of God; that, therefore, freedom or liberty of will, and natural ability to obey God, are identical. Thus we see, that if man lost his natural ability to obey God in the first sin of Adam, he lost the freedom of his will, and thenceforth must for ever have remained a necessary agent, but for the gracious re-bestowment of ability or freedom of will.

But that either Adam or his posterity lost their freedom or free agency by the first sin of Adam, is not only a sheer but an absurd assumption. To be sure Adam fell into a state of total alienation from the law of God, and lapsed into a state of supreme selfishness. His posterity have unanimously followed his example. He and they have become dead in trespasses and sins. Now that this death in sin either consists in, or implies the loss of free agency, is the very thing to be proved by them. But this cannot be proved. I have so fully discussed the subject of human moral depravity or sinfulness on a former occasion, as to render it unnecessary to enlarge upon it here.

3. Again, if it be true, as these theologians affirm, that men have only a gracious ability to obey God, and that this gracious ability consists in the presence and gracious agency of the Holy Spirit, it follows that, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from man, he is no longer a free agent, and from that moment he is incapable of moral action, and of course can sin no more. Hence, should he live any number of years after this withdrawal, neither sin nor holiness, virtue nor vice, praise nor blame-worthiness could be predicated of his conduct. The same will and must be true of all his future eternity.

4. If the doctrine in question be true, it follows, that from the moment of the withdrawal of the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, man is no longer a subject of moral obligation. It is from that moment absurd and unjust to require the performance of any duty of him. Nay, to conceive of him as being any longer a subject of duty; to think or speak of duty as belonging to him, is as absurd as to think or speak of the duty of a mere machine. He has, from the moment of the withholding of a gracious ability, ceased to be a free and become a necessary agent, having power to act but in one direction. Such a being can by no possibility be capable of sin or holiness. Suppose he still possesses power to act contrary to the letter of the law of God: what then? This action can have no moral character, because, act in some way he must, and he can act in no other way. It is nonsense to affirm that such action can be sinful in the sense of blameworthy. To affirm that it can, is to contradict a first truth of reason. Sinners, then, who have quenched the Holy Spirit, and from whom he is wholly withdrawn, are no longer to be blamed for their enmity against God, and for all their opposition to him. They are, according to this doctrine, as free from blame as are the motions of a mere machine.

5. Again, if the doctrine in question be true, there is no reason to believe that the angels that fell from their allegiance to God ever sinned but once. If Adam lost his free agency by the fall, or by his first sin, there can be no doubt that the angels did so too. If a gracious ability had not been bestowed upon Adam, it is certain, according to the doctrine in question, that he never could have been the subject of moral obligation from the moment of his first sin, and consequently, could never again have sinned. The same must be true of devils. If by their first sin they fell into the condition of necessary agents, having lost their free agency, they have never sinned since. That is, moral character cannot have been predicable of their conduct since that event, unless a gracious ability has been bestowed upon them. That this has been done cannot, with even a show of reason, be pretended. The devils, then, according to this doctrine, are not now to blame for all they do to oppose God and to ruin souls. Upon the supposition in question, they cannot help it; and you might as well blame the winds and the waves for the evil which they sometimes do, as blame Satan for what he does.

6. If this doctrine be true, there is not, and never will be, any sin in hell, for the plain reason, that there are no moral agents there. They are necessary agents, unless it be true, that the Holy Spirit and a gracious ability be continued there. This is not, I believe, contended for by the abettors of this scheme. But if they deny to the inhabitants of hell freedom of the will, or, which is the same thing, natural ability to obey God, they must admit, or be grossly inconsistent, that there is no sin in hell, either in men or devils. But is this admission agreeable, either to reason or revelation? I know that the abettors of this scheme maintain, that God may justly hold both men, from whom a gracious ability is withdrawn, and devils, responsible for their conduct, upon the ground that they have destroyed their own ability. But suppose this were true--that they had rendered themselves idiots, lunatics, or necessary as opposed to free agents, could God justly, could enlightened reason still regard them as moral agents, and as morally responsible for their conduct? No, indeed. God and reason may justly blame, and render them miserable, for annihilating their freedom or their moral agency, but to hold them still responsible for present obedience, were absurd.

7. We have seen that the ability of all men of sane mind to obey God, is necessarily assumed as a first truth of reason, and that this assumption is, from the very laws of mind, the indispensable condition of the affirmation, or even the conception, that they are subjects of moral obligation; that, but for this assumption, men could not so much as conceive the possibility of moral responsibility, and of praise and blame-worthiness. If the laws of mind remain unaltered, this is and always will be so. In the eternal world and in hell, men and devils must necessarily assume their own freedom or ability to obey God, as the condition of their obligation to do so, and, consequently to their being capable of sin or holiness. Since revelation informs us that men and devils continue to sin in hell, we know that there also it must be assumed as a first truth of reason, that they are free agents, or that they have natural ability to obey God.

8. But that a gracious ability to do duty or to obey God is an absurdity, will further appear, if we consider that it is a first truth of reason, that moral obligation implies moral agency, and that moral agency implies freedom of will; or in other words, it implies a natural ability to comply with obligation. This ability is necessarily regarded by the intelligence as the *sine quà non* of moral obligation, on the ground of natural and immutable justice. A just command always implies an ability to obey it. A command to perform a natural impossibility would not, and could not, impose obligation. Suppose God should command human beings to fly without giving them power, could such a command impose moral obligation? No, indeed. But suppose he should give them power, or promise them power, upon the performance of a condition within their reach, then he might in justice require them to fly, and a command to do so would be obligatory. But relatively to the requirement, the bestowment of power would not be grace, but justice. Relatively to the results or the pleasure of flying, the bestowment of power might be gracious. That is, it might be grace in God to give me power to fly, that I might have the pleasure and profit of flying, so that relatively to the results of flying, the giving of power might be regarded as an act of grace. But, if God requires me to fly as a matter of duty, he must in justice supply the power or ability to fly. This would in justice be a necessary condition of the command, imposing moral obligation.

Nor would it at all vary the case if I had ever possessed wings, and by the abuse of them had lost the power to fly. In this case, considered relatively to the pleasure, and profit, and results of flying, the restoring of the power to fly might and would be an act of grace. But if God would still command me to fly, he must, as a condition of my obligation, restore the power. It is vain and absurd to say, as has been said, that in such a case, although I might lose the power of obedience, this cannot alter the right of God to claim obedience. This assertion proceeds upon the absurd assumption that the will of God makes or creates law, instead of merely declaring and enforcing the law of nature. We have seen in former lectures, that the only law or rule of action that is, or can be obligatory on a moral agent, is the law of nature, or just that course of willing and acting, which is for the time being, suitable to his nature and relations. We have seen that God's will never makes or creates law, that it only declares and enforces it. If therefore, by any means whatever, the nature of a moral agent should be so changed that his will is no longer free to act in conformity with, or in opposition to, the law of nature, if God would hold him still obligated to obey, he must in justice, relatively to his requirement, restore his liberty or ability. Suppose one had by the abuse of his intellect lost the use of it, and become a perfect idiot, could he by any possibility be still required to understand and obey God? Certainly not. So neither could he be required to perform anything else that had become naturally impossible to him. Viewed relatively to the pleasure and results of obedience, his restoring power would be an act of grace. But viewed relatively to his duty or to God's command, the restoring of power to obey is an act of justice and not of grace. To call this grace were to abuse language, and confound terms. But this brings me to the consideration of the next question to be discussed at present, namely,--

III. *In what sense a gracious ability is possible.*

1. Not, as we have just seen, in the sense that the bestowment of power to render obedience to a command possible, can be properly a gift of grace. Grace is undeserved favour, something not demanded by justice, that which under the circumstances might be withholden without injustice. It never can be just in any being to require that which under the circumstances is impossible. As has been said, relatively to the requirement and as a condition of its justice, the bestowment of power adequate to the performance of that which is commanded, is an unalterable condition of the justice of the command. This I say is a first truth of reason, a truth everywhere by all men necessarily assumed and known. A gracious ability to obey a command, is an absurdity and an impossibility.

2. But a gracious ability considered relatively to the advantages to result from obedience is possible.

Suppose, for example, that a servant who supports himself and his family by his wages, should by his own fault render himself unable to labour and to earn his wages. His master may justly dismiss him, and let him go with his family to the poor-house. But in this disabled state his master cannot justly exact labour of him. Nor could he do so if he absolutely owned the servant. Now suppose the master to be able to restore to the servant his former strength. If he would require service of him, as a condition of the justice of this requirement, he must restore his strength so far at least as to render obedience possible. This would be mere justice. But suppose he restored the ability of the servant to gain support for himself and his family by labour. This, viewed relatively to the good of the servant, to the results of the restoration of his ability to himself and to his family, is a matter of grace. Relatively to the good or rights of the master in requiring the labour of the servant, the restoration of ability to obey is an act of justice. But relatively to the good of the servant, and the benefits that result to him from this restoration of ability, and making it once more possible for him to support himself and his family, the giving of ability is properly an act of grace.

Let this be applied to the case under consideration. Suppose the race of Adam to have lost their free agency by the first sin of Adam, and thus to have come into a state in which holiness and consequent salvation were impossible. Now, if God would still require obedience of them, he must in justice restore their ability. And viewed relatively to his right to command, and their duty to obey, this restoration is properly a matter of justice. But suppose he would again place them in circumstances to render holiness and consequent salvation possible to them:-- viewed relatively to their good and profit, this restoration of ability is properly a matter of grace.

A gracious ability to obey, viewed relatively to the command to be obeyed, is impossible and absurd. But a gracious ability to be saved, viewed relatively to salvation, is possible.

There is no proof that mankind ever lost their ability to obey, either by the first sin of Adam, or by their own sin. For this would imply, as we have seen, that they had ceased to be free, and had become necessary agents. But if they had, and God had restored their ability to obey, all that can be justly said in this case, is, that so far as his right to command is concerned, the restoration of their ability was an act of justice. But so far as the rendering of salvation possible to them is concerned, it was an act of grace.

3. But it is asserted, or rather assumed by the defenders of the dogma under consideration, that the Bible teaches the doctrine of a natural inability, and of a gracious ability in man to obey the commands of God. I admit, indeed, that if we interpret scripture without regard to any just rules of interpretation, this assumption may find countenance in the word of God, just as almost any absurdity whatever may do, and has done. But a moderate share of attention to one of the simplest and most universal and most important rules of interpreting language, whether in the Bible or out of it, will strip this absurd dogma of the least appearance of support from the word of God. The rule to which I refer is this, "that language is always to be interpreted in accordance with the subject-matter of discourse."

When used of acts of will, the term "cannot" interpreted by this rule, must not be understood to mean a proper impossibility. If I say, I cannot take five dollars for my watch, when it is offered to me, every one knows that I do not and cannot mean to affirm a proper impossibility. So when the angel said to Lot, "Haste thee, for I cannot do anything until thou become thither," who ever understood him as affirming a natural or any proper impossibility? All that he could have meant was, that he was not willing to do anything until Lot was in a place of safety. Just so when the Bible speaks of our inability to comply with the commands of God, all that can be intended is, that we are so unwilling that, without divine persuasion, we, as a matter of fact, shall not and will not obey. This certainly is the sense in which such language is used in common life. And in common parlance, we never think of such language, when used of acts of will, as meaning anything more than unwillingness, a state in which the will is strongly committed in an opposite direction.

When Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God," the whole context, as well as the nature of the case, shows that he did not mean to affirm a natural, nor indeed any kind of impossibility. In the same connexion, he requires them to serve the Lord, and leads them solemnly to pledge themselves to serve him. He undoubtedly intended to say, that with wicked hearts they could not render him an acceptable service, and therefore insisted on their putting away the wickedness of their hearts, by immediately and voluntarily consecrating themselves to the service of the Lord. So it must be in all cases where the term "cannot," and such-like expressions which, when applied to muscular action, would imply a proper impossibility, are used in reference to acts of will; they cannot, when thus used be understood as implying a proper impossibility, without doing violence to every sober rule of interpreting language. What would be thought of a judge or an advocate at the bar of an earthly tribunal, who should interpret the language of a witness without any regard to the rule, "that language is to be understood according to the subject-matter of discourse." Should an advocate in his argument to the court or jury, attempt to interpret the language of a witness in a manner that made "cannot," when spoken of an act of will, mean a proper impossibility, the judge would soon rebuke his stupidity, and remind him that he must not talk nonsense in a court of justice; and might possibly add, that such nonsensical assertions were allowable only in the pulpit. I say again, that it is an utter abuse and perversion of the laws of language, so to interpret the Bible as to make it teach a proper inability in man to will as God directs. The essence of obedience to God consists in willing. Language, then, used in reference to obedience must, when properly understood, be interpreted in accordance with the subject-matter of discourse. Consequently, when used in reference to acts of will, such expressions as "cannot," and the like, can absolutely mean nothing more than a choice in an opposite direction. But it may be asked, Is there no grace in all that is done by the Holy Spirit to make man wise unto salvation? Yes, indeed, I answer. And it is grace, and great grace, just because the doctrine of a natural inability in man to obey God is not true. It is just because man is well able to render obedience, and unjustly refuses to do so, that all the influence that God brings to bear upon him to make him willing, is a gift and an influence of grace. The grace is great, just in proportion to the sinner's ability to comply with God's requirements, and the strength of his voluntary opposition to his duty. If man were properly unable to obey, there could be no grace in giving him ability to obey, when the bestowment of ability is considered relatively to the command. But let man be regarded as free, as possessing natural ability to obey all the requirements of God, and all his difficulty as consisting in a wicked heart, or, which is the same thing, in an unwillingness to obey, then an influence on the part of God designed and tending to make him willing, is grace indeed. But strip man of his freedom, render him naturally unable to obey, and you render grace impossible, so far as his obligation to obedience is concerned.

But it is urged in support of the dogma of natural inability and of a gracious ability, that the Bible everywhere represents man as dependent on the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit for all holiness, and consequently for eternal life. I answer, it is admitted that this is the representation of the Bible, but the question is, in what sense is he dependent? Does his dependence consist in a natural inability to embrace the gospel and be saved? or does it consist in a voluntary selfishness--in an unwillingness to comply with the terms of salvation? Is man dependent on the Holy Spirit to give him a proper ability to obey God? or is he dependent only in such a sense that, as a matter of fact, he will not embrace the gospel unless the Holy Spirit makes him willing? The latter, beyond reasonable question, is the truth. This is the universal representation of scripture. The difficulty to be overcome is everywhere in the Bible represented to be the sinner's unwillingness alone. It cannot possibly be anything else; for the willingness is the doing required by God. "If there is but a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

But it is said, if man can be willing of himself, what need of divine persuasion or influence to make him willing? I might ask, suppose a man is able but unwilling to pay his debts, what need of any influence to make him willing? Why, divine influence is needed to make a sinner willing, or to induce him to will as God directs, just for the same reason that persuasion, entreaty, argument, or the rod, is needed to make our children submit their wills to ours. The fact therefore that the Bible represents the sinner as in some sense dependent upon divine influence for a right heart, no more implies a proper inability in the sinner, than the fact that children are dependent for their good behaviour, oftentimes upon the thorough and timely discipline of their parents, implies a proper inability in them to obey their parents without chastisement.

The Bible everywhere, and in every way, assumes the freedom of the will. This fact stands out in strong relief upon every page of divine inspiration. But this is only the assumption necessarily made by the universal intelligence of man. The strong language often found in scripture upon the subject of man's inability to obey God, is designed only to represent the strength of his voluntary selfishness and enmity against God, and never to imply a proper natural inability. It is, therefore, a gross and most injurious perversion of scripture, as well as a contradiction of human reason, to deny the natural ability, or which is the same thing, the natural free agency of man, and to maintain a proper natural inability to obey God, and the absurd dogma of a gracious ability to do our duty.

REMARKS.

1. The question of ability is one of great practical importance. To deny the ability of man to obey the commandments of God, is to represent God as a hard master, as requiring a natural impossibility of his creatures on pain of eternal damnation. This necessarily begets in the mind that believes it hard thoughts of God. The intelligence cannot be satisfied with the justice of such a requisition. In fact, so far as this error gets possession of the mind and gains assent, just so far it naturally and necessarily excuses itself for disobedience, or for not complying with the commandments of God.

2. The moral inability of Edwards is a real natural inability, and so it has been understood by sinners and professors of religion. When I entered the ministry, I found the persuasion of an absolute inability on the part of sinners to repent and believe the gospel almost universal. When I urged sinners and professors of religion to do their duty without delay, I frequently met with stern opposition from sinners, professors of religion, and ministers. They desired me to say to sinners, that they could not repent, and that they must wait God's time, that is, for God to help them. It was common for the classes of persons just named to ask me, if I thought sinners could be Christians whenever they pleased, and whether I thought that any class of persons could repent, believe, and obey God without the strivings and new-creating power of the Holy Spirit. The church was almost universally settled down in the belief of a physical moral depravity, and, of course, in a belief in the necessity of a physical regeneration, and also of course in the belief, that sinners must wait to be regenerated by divine power while they were passive. Professors also must wait to be revived, until God, in mysterious sovereignty, came and revived them. As to revivals of religion, they were settled down in the belief to a great extent, that man had no more agency in producing them than in producing showers of rain. To attempt to effect the conversion of a sinner, or to promote a revival, was an attempt to take the work out of the hands of God, to go to work in your own strength, and to set sinners and professors to do the same. The vigorous use of means and measures to promote a work of grace, was regarded by many as impious. It was getting up an excitement of animal feeling, and wickedly interfering with the prerogative of God. The fact is, that both professors of religion and non-professors were settled down upon their lees, in carnal security. The abominable dogmas of physical moral depravity, or a sinful constitution, with a consequent natural, falsely called moral, inability, and the necessity of a physical and passive regeneration, had chilled the heart of the church, and lulled sinners into a fatal sleep. This is the natural tendency of such doctrines.

3. Let it be distinctly understood before we close this subject, that we do not deny, but strenuously maintain, that the whole plan of salvation, and all the influences, both providential and spiritual, which God exerts in the conversion, sanctification, and salvation, of sinners, is grace from first to last, and that I deny the dogma of a gracious ability, because it robs God of his glory. It really denies the grace of the gospel. The abettors of this scheme, in contending for the grace of the gospel, really deny it. What grace can there be, that should surprise heaven and earth, and cause "the angels to desire to look into it," in bestowing ability on those who never had any, and, of course, who never cast away their ability to obey the requirements of God? According to them all men lost their ability in Adam, and not by their own act. God still required obedience of them upon pain of eternal death. Now he might, according to this view of the subject, just as reasonably command all men, on pain of eternal death, to fly, or undo all that Adam had done, or perform any other natural impossibility, as to command them to be holy, to repent and believe the gospel. Now, I ask again, what possible grace was there, or could there be, in his giving them power to obey him? To have required the obedience without giving the power had been infinitely unjust. To admit the assumption, that men had really lost their ability to obey in Adam, and call this bestowment of ability for which they contend, grace, is an abuse of language, an absurdity, and a denial of the true grace of the gospel not to be tolerated. I reject the dogma of a gracious ability, because it involves a denial of the true grace of the gospel. I maintain that the gospel, with all its influences, including the gift of the Holy Spirit, to convict, convert, and sanctify the soul, is a system of grace throughout. But to maintain this, I must also maintain, that God might justly have required obedience of men without making these provisions for them. And to maintain the justice of God in requiring obedience, I must admit and maintain that obedience was possible to man. But this the abettors of this scheme deny, and maintain, on the contrary, that notwithstanding men were deprived of all ability, not by their own act or consent, but by Adam, long before they were born, still God might justly, on pain of eternal damnation, require them to be holy, and that the giving them ability to obey is a matter of infinite grace; not, as they hold, the restoring of a power which they had cast away, but the giving of a power which they had never possessed. This power or ability, viewed relatively to the command to obey on pain of eternal death, a gift of grace! This baffles, and confounds, and stultifies the human intellect. The reason of a moral agent cannot but reject this dogma. It will, in spite of himself, assume and affirm, the absence of ability being granted, that the bestowment of an ability, viewed relatively to the command, was demanded by justice, and that to call it a gracious ability is an abuse of language.

Let it not be said then, that we deny the grace of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, nor that we deny the reality and necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit to convert and sanctify the soul, nor that this influence is a gracious one; for all these we most strenuously maintain. But I maintain this upon the ground, that men are able to do their duty, and that the difficulty does not lie in a proper inability, but in a voluntary selfishness, in an unwillingness to obey the blessed gospel. I say again, that I reject the dogma of a gracious ability, as I understand its abettors to hold it, not because I deny, but solely because it denies the grace of the gospel. The denial of ability is really a denial of the possibility of grace in the affair of man's salvation. I admit the ability of man, and hold that he is able, but utterly unwilling, to obey God. Therefore I consistently hold, that all the influences exerted by God to make him willing, are of free grace abounding through Christ Jesus.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LII.

THE NOTION OF INABILITY.

PROPER METHOD OF ACCOUNTING FOR IT.

I have represented ability, or the freedom of the will, as a first truth of reason. I have also defined first truths of reason to be those truths that are necessarily known to all moral agents. From these two representations the inquiry may naturally arise, How then is it to be accounted for that so many men have denied the liberty of the will, or ability to obey God? That these first truths of reason are frequently denied is a notorious fact. A recent writer thinks this denial a sufficient refutation of the affirmation, that ability is a first truth of reason. It is important that this denial should be accounted for. That mankind affirm their obligation upon the real, though often latent and unperceived assumption of ability, there is no reasonable ground of doubt. I have said that first-truths of reason are frequently assumed, and certainly known without being always the direct object of thought or attention; and also that these truths are universally held in the practical judgments of men, while they sometimes in theory deny them. They know them to be true, and in all their practical judgments assume their truth, while they reason against them, think they prove them untrue, and not unfrequently affirm, that they are conscious of an opposite affirmation. For example, men have denied, in theory, the law of causality, while they have at every moment of their lives acted upon the assumption of its truth. Others have denied the freedom of the will, who have, every hour of their lives, assumed, and acted, and judged, upon the assumption that the will is free. The same is true of ability, which, in respect to the commandments of God, is identical with freedom. Men have often denied the ability of man to obey the commandments of God, while they have always, in their practical judgments of themselves and of others, assumed their ability, in respect to those things that are really commanded by God. Now, how is this to be accounted for?

1. Multitudes have denied the freedom of the will, because they have loosely confounded the will with the involuntary powers--with the intellect and the sensibility. Locke, as is well known, regarded the mind as possessing but two primary faculties, the understanding and the will. President Edwards, as was said in a former lecture, followed Locke, and regarded all the states of the sensibility as acts of the will. Multitudes, nay the great mass of Calvinistic divines, with their hearers, have held the same views. This confounding of the sensibility with the will has been common for a long time. Now everybody is conscious, that the states of the sensibility or mere feelings cannot be produced or changed by a direct effort to feel thus or thus. Everybody knows from consciousness that the feelings come and go, wax and wane, as motives are presented to excite them. And they know also that these feelings are under the law of necessity and not of liberty; that is, that necessity is an attribute of these feelings, in such a sense, that under the circumstances, they will exist in spite of ourselves, and that they cannot be controlled by a direct effort to control them. Everybody knows that our feelings, or the states of our sensibility can be controlled only indirectly, that is, by the direction of our thoughts. By directing our thoughts to an object calculated to excite certain feelings, we know that when the excitability is not exhausted, feelings correlated to that object will come into play, of course and of necessity. So when any class of feelings exist, we all know that by diverting the attention from the object that excites them, they subside of course, and give place to a class correlated to the new object that at present occupies the attention. Now, it is very manifest how the freedom of the will has come to be denied by those who confound the will proper with the sensibility. These same persons have always known and assumed, that the actions of the will proper were free. Their error has consisted in not distinguishing in theory between the action of the proper will, and the involuntary states of the sensibility. In their practical judgments, and in their conduct, they have recognized the distinction which they have failed to recognize in their speculations and theories. They have every hour been exerting their own freedom, have been controlling directly their attention and their outward life, by the free exercise of their proper will. They have also, by the free exercise of the same faculty, been indirectly controlling the states of their sensibility. They have all along assumed the absolute freedom of the will proper, and have always acted upon the assumption, or they would not have acted at all, or even attempted to act. But since they did not in theory distinguish between the sensibility and the will proper, they denied in theory the freedom of the will. If the actions of the will be confounded with desires and emotions, as President Edwards confounded them, and as has been common, the result must be a theoretical denial of the freedom of the will. In this way we are to account for the doctrine of inability, as it has been generally held. It has not been clearly understood that moral law legislates directly, and, with strict propriety of speech, only over the will proper, and over the involuntary powers only indirectly through the will. It has been common to regard the law and the gospel of God, as directly extending their claims to the involuntary powers and states of mind; and, as was shown in a former lecture, many have regarded, in theory, the law as extending its claims to those states that lie wholly beyond, either the direct or indirect control of the will. Now, of course, with these views of the claims of God, ability is and must be denied. I trust we have seen in past lectures, that, strictly and properly speaking, the moral law restricts its claims to the actions of the will proper, in such a sense that, if there be a willing mind, it is accepted as obedience; that the moral law and the lawgiver legislate over involuntary states only indirectly, that is, through the will; and that the whole of virtue, strictly speaking, consists in good-will or disinterested benevolence. Sane minds never practically deny, or can deny, the freedom of the will proper, or the doctrine of ability, when they make the proper discriminations between the will and the sensibility, and properly regard moral law as legislating directly only over the will. It is worthy of all consideration, that those who have denied ability, have almost always confounded the will and the sensibility; and that those who have denied ability, have always extended the claims of moral law beyond the pale of proper voluntariness; and many of them even beyond the limits of either the direct or the indirect control of the will.

But the inquiry may arise, how it comes to pass that men have so extensively entertained the impression, that the moral law legislates directly over those feelings, and over those states of mind which they know to be involuntary? I answer, that this mistake has arisen out of a want of just discrimination between the direct and indirect legislation of the law, and of the lawgiver. It is true that men are conscious of being responsible for their feelings and for their outward actions, and even for their thoughts. And it is really true that they are responsible for them, in so far as they are under either the direct or indirect control of the will. And they know that these acts and states of mind are possible to them, that is, that they have an indirect ability to produce them. They, however, loosely confound the direct and indirect ability and responsibility. The thing required by the law directly and presently is benevolence or good-will. This is what, and all that the law strictly, presently or directly requires. It indirectly requires all those outward and inward acts and states that are connected directly and indirectly with this required act of will, by a law of necessity; that is, that those acts and states should follow as soon as by a natural and necessary law they will follow from a right action of the will. When these feelings, and states, and acts do not exist, they blame themselves generally with propriety, because the absence of them is in fact owing to a want of the required act of the will. Sometimes, no doubt, they blame themselves unjustly, not considering that, although the will is right, of which they are conscious, the involuntary state or act does not follow, because of exhaustion, or because of some disturbance in the established and natural connection between the acts of the will and its ordinary sequents. When this exhaustion or disturbance exists, men are apt, loosely and unjustly, to write bitter things against themselves. They often do the same in hours of temptation, when Satan casts his fiery darts at them, lodging them in the thoughts and involuntary feelings. The will repels them, but they take effect, for the time being, in spite of himself, in the intellect and sensibility. Blasphemous thoughts are suggested to the mind, unkind thoughts of God are suggested, and in spite of one's self, these abominable thoughts awaken their correlated feelings. The will abhors them and struggles to suppress them, but for the time being, finds itself unable to do anything more than to fight and resist.

Now, it is very common for souls in this state to write the most bitter accusations against themselves. But should it be hence inferred that they really are as much in fault as they assume themselves to be? No, indeed. But why do ministers, of all schools, unite in telling such tempted souls, You are mistaken, my dear brother or sister, these thoughts and feelings, though exercises of your own mind, are not yours in such a sense that you are responsible for them. The thoughts are suggested by Satan, and the feelings are a necessary consequence. Your will resists them, and this proves that you are unable, for the time being, to avoid them. You are therefore not responsible for them while you resist them with all the power of your will, any more than you would be guilty of murder should a giant overpower your strength, and use your hand against your will to shoot a man. In such cases it is, so far as I know, universally true, that all schools admit that the tempted soul is not responsible or guilty for those things which it cannot help. The inability is here allowed to be a bar to obligation; and such souls are justly told by ministers, You are mistaken in supposing yourself guilty in this case. The like mistake is fallen into when a soul blames itself for any state of mind whatever that lies wholly and truly beyond the direct or indirect control of the will, and for the same reason, inability in both cases is alike a bar to obligation. It is just as absurd, in the one case as in the other, to infer real responsibility from a feeling or persuasion of responsibility. To hold that men are always responsible, because they loosely think themselves to be so is absurd. In cases of temptation, such as that just supposed, as soon as the attention is directed to the fact of inability to avoid those thoughts and feelings, and the mind is conscious of the will's resisting them, and of being unable to banish them, it readily rests in the assurance that it is not responsible for them. Its own irresponsibility in such cases appears self-evident to the mind, the moment the proper inability is considered, and the affirmation of irresponsibility attended to. Now if the soul naturally and truly regarded itself as responsible, when there is a proper inability and impossibility, the instructions above referred to could not relieve the mind. It would say, To be sure I know that I cannot avoid having these thoughts and feelings, any more than I can cease to be the subject of consciousness, yet I know I am responsible notwithstanding. These thoughts and feelings are states of my own mind, and no matter how I come by them, or whether I can control or prevent them or not. Inability, you know, is no bar to obligation; therefore, my obligation and my guilt remain. Woe is me, for I am undone. The idea, then, of responsibility, when there is in fact real inability, is a prejudice of education, a mistake.

The mistake, unless strong prejudice of education has taken possession of the mind, lies in overlooking the fact of a real and proper inability. Unless the judgment has been strongly biassed by education, it never judges itself bound to perform impossibilities, nor even conceive of such a thing. Who ever held himself bound to undo what is past, to recall past time, or to substitute holy acts and states of mind in the place of past sinful ones? No one ever held himself bound to do this; first, because he knows it to be impossible; and secondly, because no one that I have heard of ever taught or asserted any such obligation; and therefore none have received so strong a bias from education as loosely to hold such an opinion. But sometimes the bias of education is so great, that the subjects of it seem capable of believing almost anything, however inconsistent with the intuitions of the reason, and consequently in the face of the most certain knowledge. For example, President Edwards relates of a young woman in his congregation, that she was deeply convicted of being guilty for Adam's first sin, and deeply repented of it. Now suppose that this and like cases should be regarded as conclusive proof that men are guilty of that sin, and deserve the wrath and curse of God for ever for that sin; and that all men will suffer the pains of hell for ever, except they become convinced of their personal guilt for that sin, and repent of it as in dust and ashes! President Edwards's teaching on the subject of the relation of all men to Adam's first sin, it is well known, was calculated in a high degree to pervert the judgment upon that subject; and this sufficiently accounts for the fact above alluded to. But apart from education, no human being ever held himself responsible for, or guilty of, the first or any other sin of Adam, or of any other being, who existed and died before he himself existed. The reason is that all moral agents naturally know, that inability or a proper impossibility is a bar to moral obligation and responsibility; and they never conceive to the contrary, unless biassed by a mystifying education that casts a fog over their primitive and constitutional convictions.

2. Some have denied ability because they have strangely held, that the moral law requires sinners to be just in all respects what they might have been had they never sinned. That is, they maintain that God requires of them just as high and perfect a service as if their powers had never been abused by sin; as if they had always been developed by the perfectly right use of them. This they admit to be a natural impossibility; nevertheless they hold that God may justly require it, and that sinners are justly bound to perform this impossible service, and that they sin continually in coming short of it. To this sentiment I answer, that it might be maintained with as much show of reason, and as much authority from the Bible, that God might and does require of all sinners to undo all their acts of sin, and to substitute holy ones in their places, and that he holds them as sinning every moment by the neglect to do this. Why may not God as well require one as the other? They are alike impossibilities. They are alike impossibilities originating in the sinner's own act or fault. If the sinner's rendering himself unable to obey in one case does not set aside the right of God to command, so does it not for the same reason in the other. If an inability resulting from the sinner's own act cannot bar the right of God to make the requisition in the one case, neither can it for the same reason in the other. But every one can see that God cannot justly require the sinner to recall past time, and to undo past acts. But why? No other reason can be assigned than that it is impossible. But the same reason, it is admitted, exists in its full extent in the other case. It is admitted that sinners, who have long indulged in sin, or who have sinned at all, are really as unable to render as high a degree of service as they might have done had they never sinned, as they are to recall past time, or to undo all their past acts of sin. On what ground, then, of reason or revelation does the assertion rest, that in one case an impossibility is a bar to obligation, and not in the other? I answer, there is no ground whatever for the assertion in question. It is a sheer and an absurd assumption, unsupported by any affirmation of reason, or any truth or principle of revelation.

But to this assumption I reply again, as I have done on a former occasion, that if it be true, it must follow, that no one on earth or in heaven who has ever sinned will be able to render as perfect a service as the law demands; for there is no reason to believe, that any being who has abused his powers by sin will ever in time or eternity be able to render as high a service as he might have done had he at every moment duly developed them by perfect obedience. If this theory is true, I see not why it does not follow that the saints will be guilty in heaven of the sin of omission. A sentiment based upon an absurdity in the outset, as the one in question is, and resulting in such consequences as this must, is to be rejected without hesitation.

3. A consciousness of the force of habit, in respect to all the acts and states of body and mind, has contributed to the loose holding of the doctrine of inability. Every one who is at all in the habit of observation and self-reflection is aware, that for some reason we acquire a greater and greater facility in doing anything by practice or repetition. We find this to be true in respect to acts of will as really as in respect to the involuntary states of mind. When the will has been long committed to the indulgence of the propensities, and in the habit of submitting itself to their impulses, there is a real difficulty of some sort in the way of changing its action. This difficulty cannot really impair the liberty of the will. If it could, it would destroy, or so far impair, moral agency and accountability. But habit may, and, as every one knows, does interpose an obstacle of some sort in the way of right willing, or, on the other hand, in the way of wrong willing. That is, men both obey and disobey with greatest facility from habit. Habit strongly favours the accustomed action of the will in any direction. This, as I said, never does or can properly impair the freedom of the will, or render it impossible to act in a contrary direction; for if it could and should, the actions of the will, in that case, being determined by a law of necessity in one direction, would have no moral character. If benevolence became a habit so strong that it were utterly impossible to will in an opposite direction, or not to will benevolently, benevolence would cease to be virtuous. So, on the other hand, with selfishness. If the will came to be determined in that direction by habit grown into a law of necessity, such action would and must cease to have moral character. But, as I said, there is a real conscious difficulty of some sort in the way of obedience, when the will has been long accustomed to sin. This is strongly recognized in the language of inspiration and in devotional hymns, as well as in the language of experience by all men. The language of scripture is often so strong upon this point, that, but for a regard to the subject-matter of discourse, we might justly infer a proper inability. For example, Jer 13:23 : "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." This and similar passages recognize the influence of habit. "Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil:" custom or habit is to be overcome, and, in the strong language of the prophet, this is like changing the Ethiop's skin or the leopard's spots. But to understand the prophet as here affirming a proper inability were to disregard one of the fundamental rules of interpreting language, namely, that it is to be understood by reference to the subject of discourse. The latter part of the seventh chapter of Romans affords a striking instance and an illustration of this. It is, as has just been said, a sound and most important rule of interpreting all language, that due regard be had to the subject-matter of discourse. When "cannot," and such like terms, that express an inability are applied to physical or involuntary actions or states of mind, they express a proper natural inability; but when they are used in reference to actions of free will, they express not a proper impossibility, but only a difficulty arising out of the existence of a contrary choice, or the law of habit, or both. Much question has been made about the seventh of Romans in its relation to the subject of ability and inability. Let us, therefore, look a little into this passage, Romans vii. 15-23: "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Now, what did the Apostle mean by this language? Did he use language here in the popular sense, or with strictly philosophical propriety? He says he finds himself able to will, but not able to do. Is he then speaking of a mere outward or physical inability? Does he mean merely to say, that the established connexion between volition and its sequents was disturbed, so that he could not execute his volitions? This his language, literally interpreted, and without reference to the subject-matter of discourse, and without regard to the manifest scope and design of the writer, would lead us to conclude. But whoever contended for such an interpretation? The apostle used popular language, and was describing a very common experience. Convicted sinners and backslidden saints often make legal resolutions, and resolve upon obedience under the influence of legal motives, and without really becoming benevolent, and changing the attitude of their wills. They, under the influence of conviction, purpose selfishly to do their duty to God and man, and, in the presence of temptation, they constantly fail of keeping their resolutions. It is true, that with their selfish hearts, or in the selfish attitude of their wills, they cannot keep their resolutions to abstain from those inward thoughts and emotions, nor from those outward actions that result by a law of necessity from a selfish state or attitude of the will. These legal resolutions the apostle popularly calls willings. "To will is present with me, but how to do good I find not. When I would do good, evil is present with me, so that the good I would I do not, and the evil I would not that I do. If then I do the evil I would not, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I delight in the law of God after the inner man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," &c. Now, this appears to me to be descriptive of a very familiar experience of every deeply convicted sinner or backslider. The will is committed to the propensities, to the law in the members, or to the gratification of the impulses of the sensibility. Hence, the outward life is selfish. Conviction of sin leads to the formation of resolutions of amendment, while the will does not submit to God. These resolutions constantly fail of securing the result contemplated. The will still abides in a state of committal to self-gratification; and hence resolutions to amend in feeling or the outward life, fail of securing those results.

Nothing was more foreign from the apostle's purpose, it seems to me, than to affirm a proper inability of will to yield to the claims of God. Indeed, he affirms and assumes the freedom of his will. "To will," he says, "is present with me;" that is, to resolve. But resolution is an act of will. It is a purpose, a design. He purposed, designed to amend. To form resolutions was present with him, but how to do good he found not. The reason why he did not execute his purposes was, that they were selfishly made; that is, he resolved upon reformation without giving his heart to God, without submitting his will to God, without actually becoming benevolent. This caused his perpetual failure. This language, construed strictly to the letter, would lead to the conclusion, that the apostle was representing a case where the will is right, but where the established and natural connexion between volition and its sequents is destroyed, so that the outward act did not follow the action of the will. In this case all schools would agree that the act of the will constitutes real obedience. The whole passage, apart from the subject-matter of discourse, and from the manifest design and scope of the writer, might lead us to conclude, that the apostle was speaking of a proper inability, and that he did not therefore regard the failure as his own fault. "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me. O wretched man that I am," &c. Those who maintain that the apostle meant to assert a proper inability to obey, must also admit that he represented this inability as a bar to obligation, and regarded his state as calamitous, rather than as properly sinful. But the fact is, he was portraying a legal experience, and spoke of finding himself unable to keep selfish resolutions of amendment in the presence of temptation. His will was in a state of committal to the indulgence of the propensities. In the absence of temptation, his convictions, and fears, and feelings were the strongest impulses, and under their influence he would form resolutions to do his duty, to abstain from fleshly indulgences, &c. But as some other appetite or desire came to be more strongly excited, he yielded to that of course, and broke his former resolution. Paul writes as if speaking of himself, but was doubtless speaking as the representative of a class of persons already named. He found the law of selfish habit exceedingly strong, and so strong as to lead him to cry out, "O wretched man," &c. But this is not affirming a proper inability of will to submit to God.

4. All men who seriously undertake their own reformation find themselves in great need of help and support from the Holy Spirit, in consequence of the physical depravity of which I have formerly spoken, and because of the great strength of their habit of self-indulgence. They are prone, as is natural, to express their sense of dependence on the Divine Spirit in strong language, and to speak of this dependence as if it consisted in a real inability, when, in fact, they do not really consider it as a proper inability. They speak upon this subject just as they do upon any and every other subject, when they are conscious of a strong inclination to a given course. They say in respect to many things, "I cannot," when they mean only "I will not," and never think of being understood as affirming a proper inability. The inspired writers expressed themselves in the common language of men upon such subjects, and are doubtless to be understood in the same way. In common parlance, "cannot" often means "will not," and perhaps is used as often in this sense as it is to express a proper inability. Men do not misinterpret this language, and suppose it to affirm a proper inability, when used in reference to acts of will, except on the subject of obedience to God; and why should they assign a meaning to language when used upon this subject which they do not assign to it anywhere else?

But, as I said in a former lecture, under the light of the gospel, and with the promises in our hands, God does require of us what we should be unable to do and be, but for these promises and this proffered assistance. Here is a real inability to do directly in our own strength all that is required of us, upon consideration of the proffered aid. We can only do it by strength imparted by the Holy Spirit. That is, we cannot know Christ, and avail ourselves of his offices and relations, and appropriate to our own souls his fulness, except as we are taught by the Holy Spirit. The thing immediately and directly required, is to receive the Holy Spirit by faith to be our teacher and guide, to take of Christ's and show it to us. This confidence we are able to exercise. Who ever really and intelligently affirmed that he had not power or ability to trust or confide in the promise and oath of God?

Much that is said of inability in poetry, and in the common language of the saints, respects not the subjection of the will to God, but those experiences, and states of feeling that depend on the illuminations of the Spirit just referred to. The language that is so common in prayer and in the devotional dialect of the church, respects generally our dependence upon the Holy Spirit for such divine discoveries of Christ, as to charm the soul into a steadfast abiding in him. We feel our dependence upon the Holy Spirit so to enlighten us, as to break up for ever the power of sinful habit, and draw us away from our idols entirely and for ever.

In future lectures I shall have occasion to enlarge much upon the subject of our dependence upon Christ and the Holy Spirit. But this dependence does not consist in a proper inability to will as God directs, but, as I have said, partly in the power of sinful habit, and partly in the great darkness of our souls in respect to Christ and his mediatorial work and relations. All these together do not constitute a proper inability, for the plain reason, that through the right action of our will which is always possible to us, these difficulties can all be directly or indirectly overcome. Whatever we can do or be, directly or indirectly, by willing, is possible to us. But there is no degree of spiritual attainment required of us, that may not be reached directly or indirectly by right willing. Therefore these attainments are possible. "If any man," says Christ, "will do his will," that is, has an obedient will, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." "If thine eye be single," that is, if the intention or will is right, "thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." The scriptures abound with assurances of light and instruction, and of all needed grace and help, upon condition of a right will or heart, that is, upon condition of our being really willing to obey the light, when and as fast as we receive it. I have abundantly shown on former occasions, that a right state of the will constitutes, for the time being, all that, strictly speaking, the moral law requires. But I said, that it also, though in a less strict and proper sense, requires all those acts and states of the intellect and sensibility which are connected by a law of necessity with the right action of the will. Of course, it also requires that cleansing of the sensibility, and all those higher forms of Christian experience that result from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is, the law of God requires that these attainments shall be made when the means are provided and enjoyed, and as soon as, in the nature of the case, these attainments are possible. But it requires no more than this. For the law of God can never require absolute impossibilities. That which requires absolute impossibilities, is not and cannot be moral law. For, as was formerly said, moral law is the law of nature, and what law of nature would that be that should require absolute impossibilities? This would be a mockery of a law of nature. What! a law of nature requiring that which is impossible to nature, both directly and indirectly! Impossible.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LIII

In the Original Text, the lectures were misnumbered. Following Lecture number LII was number LIV, entirely ovelooking the number LIII for a lecture.

Please continue on to Lecture LIV, being assured that you have missed nothing.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LIV.

REPENTANCE AND IMPENITENCE.

In the discussion of this subject I shall show,--

I. WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT.

II. WHAT IT IS.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

IV. WHAT IMPENITENCE IS NOT.

V. WHAT IT IS.

VI. SOME THINGS THAT ARE IMPLIED IN IMPENITENCE.

VII. NOTICE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OR EVIDENCES OF IMPENITENCE.

I. *I am to show what repentance is not.*

1. The Bible everywhere represents repentance as a virtue, and as constituting a change of moral character; consequently, it cannot be a phenomenon of the intelligence: that is, it cannot consist in conviction of sin, nor in any intellectual apprehension of our guilt or ill-desert. All the states or phenomena of the intelligence are purely passive states of mind, and of course moral character, strictly speaking, cannot be predicated of them.

2. Repentance is not a phenomenon of the sensibility: that is, it does not consist in a feeling of regret or remorse, of compunction or sorrow for sin, or of sorrow in view of the consequences of sin to self or to others, nor in any feelings or emotions whatever. All feelings or emotions belong to the sensibility, and are, of course, purely passive states of mind, and consequently can have no moral character in themselves.

It should be distinctly understood, and always borne in mind, that repentance cannot consist in any involuntary state of mind, for it is impossible that moral character, strictly speaking, should pertain to passive states.

II. *What repentance is.*

There are two Greek words which are translated by the English word, repent.

1. *Metamelomai*, "to care for," or to be concerned for one's self; hence to change one's course. This term seems generally to be used to express a state of the sensibility, as regret, remorse, sorrow for sin, &c. But sometimes it also expresses a change of purpose as a consequence of regret, or remorse, or sorrow; as in Mat 21:29, "He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and went." It is used to represent the repentance of Judas, which evidently consisted of remorse and despair.

2. *Metanoeo*, "to take an after view;" or more strictly, to change one's mind as a consequence of, and in conformity with, a second and more rational view of the subject. This word evidently expresses a change of choice, purpose, intention, in conformity with the dictates of the intelligence.

This is no doubt the idea of evangelical repentance. It is a phenomenon of will, and consists in the turning or change of the ultimate intention from selfishness to benevolence. The term expresses the act of turning; the changing of the heart, or of the ruling preference of the soul. It might with propriety be rendered by the terms "changing the heart." The English word "repentance" is often used to express regret, remorse, sorrow, &c., and is used in so loose a sense as not to convey a distinct idea to the common mind of the true nature of evangelical repentance. A turning from sin to holiness, or more strictly, from a state of consecration to self to a state of consecration to God, is and must be the turning, the change of mind, or the repentance that is required of all sinners. Nothing less can constitute a virtuous repentance, and nothing more can be required.

III. *What is implied in repentance.*

1. Such is the correlation of the will to the intellect, that repentance must imply reconsideration or after-thought. It must imply self-reflection, and such an apprehension of one's guilt as to produce self-condemnation. That selfishness is sin, and that it is right and duty to consecrate the whole being to God and his service, are first truths of reason. They are necessarily assumed by all moral agents. They are, however, often unthought of, not reflected upon. Repentance implies the giving up of the attention to the consideration and self-application of these first truths, and consequently implies conviction of sin, and guilt, and ill-desert, and a sense of shame and self-condemnation. It implies an intellectual and a hearty justification of God, of his law, of his moral and providential government, and of all his works and ways.

It implies an apprehension of the nature of sin, that it belongs to the heart, and does not essentially consist in, though it leads to, outward conduct; that it is an utterly unreasonable state of mind, and that it justly deserves the wrath and curse of God for ever.

It implies an apprehension of the reasonableness of the law and commands of God, and of the folly and madness of sin. It implies an intellectual and a hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point.

It implies a conviction, that God is wholly right, and the sinner wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin. It implies an entire and universal acquittal of God from every shade and degree of blame, a thorough taking of the entire blame of sin to self. It implies a deep and thorough abasement of self in the dust, a crying out of soul against self, and a most sincere and universal, intellectual, and hearty exaltation of God.

2. Such, also, is the connexion of the will and the sensibility, that the turning of the will, or evangelical repentance, implies sorrow for sin as necessarily resulting from the turning of the will, together with the intellectual views of sin which are implied in repentance. Neither conviction of sin, nor sorrow for it, constitutes repentance. Yet from the correlation which is established between the intelligence, the sensibility, and the will, both conviction of sin, and sorrow for it, are implied in evangelical repentance, the one as necessarily preceding, and the other as often preceding, and always and necessarily resulting from repentance. During the process of conviction, it often happens, that the sensibility is hardened and unfeeling; or, if there is much feeling, it is often only regret, remorse, agony, and despair. But when the heart has given way, and the evangelical turning has taken place, it often happens that the fountain of the great deep in the sensibility is broken up, the sorrows of the soul are stirred to the very bottom, and the sensibility pours forth its gushing tides like an irresistible torrent. But it frequently happens, too, in minds less subject to deep emotion, that the sorrows do not immediately flow in deep and broad channels, but are mild, melting, tender, tearful, silent, subdued.

Self-loathing is another state of the sensibility implied in evangelical repentance. This state of mind may, and often does, exist where repentance is not, just as outward morality does. But, like outward morality, it must exist where true repentance is. Self-loathing is a natural and a necessary consequence of those intellectual views of self that are implied in repentance. While the intelligence apprehends the utter, shameful guilt of self, and the heart yields to the conviction, the sensibility necessarily sympathizes, and a feeling of self-loathing and abhorrence is the inevitable consequence.

It implies a loathing and abhorrence of the sins of others, a most deep and thorough feeling of opposition to sin--to all sin, in self and everybody else. Sin has become, to the penitent soul, the abominable thing which it hates.

3. It implies a holy indignation toward all sin and all sinners, and a manifest opposition to every form of iniquity.

Repentance also implies peace of mind. The soul that has full confidence in the infinite wisdom and love of God, in the atonement of Christ, and in his universal providence, cannot but have peace. And further, the soul that has abandoned all sin, and turned to God, is no longer in a state of warfare with itself and with God. It must have peace of conscience--and peace with God. It implies heart-complacency in God, and in all the holy. This must follow from the very nature of repentance.

It implies confession of sin to God and to man, as far as sin has been committed against men. If the heart has thoroughly renounced sin, it has become benevolent, and is of course disposed, as far as possible, to undo the wrong it has committed, to confess sin, and humble self on account of it, before God and our neighbour, whom we have injured. Repentance implies humility, or a willingness to be known and estimated according to our real character. It implies a disposition to do right, and to confess our faults to God and man, as far as man has a right to know them. Let no one who has refused, and still refuses or neglects to confess his sins to God, and those sins to men that have been committed against them, profess repentance unto salvation; but let him remember that God has said, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy:" and again, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Repentance implies a willingness to make restitution, and the actual making of it as far as ability goes. He is not just, and of course is not penitent, who has injured his neighbour in his person, reputation, property, or in anything, and is unwilling to make restitution. And he is unwilling to make restitution who neglects to do so whenever he is able. It is impossible that a soul truly penitent should neglect to make all practicable restitution, for the plain reason that penitence implies a benevolent and just attitude of the will, and the will controls the conduct by a law of necessity.

Repentance implies reformation of outward life. This follows from reformation of heart by a law of necessity. It is naturally impossible that a penitent soul, remaining penitent, should indulge in any known sin. If the heart be reformed, the life must be as the heart is.

It implies a universal reformation of life, that is, a reformation extending to all outward sin. The penitent does not, and remaining penitent, cannot, reform in respect to some sins only. If penitent at all, he must have repented of sin as sin, and of course of all sin. If he has turned to God, and consecrated himself to God, he has of course ceased from sin, from all sin as such. Sin, as we have seen on a former occasion, is a unit, and so is holiness. Sin consists in selfishness, and holiness in disinterested benevolence: it is therefore sheer nonsense to say that repentance can consist with indulgence in some sins. What are generally termed little, as well as what are termed great sins, are alike rejected and abhorred by the truly penitent soul, and this from a law of necessity, he being truly penitent.

4. It implies faith or confidence in God in all things. It implies, not only the conviction that God is wholly right in all his controversy with sinners, but also that the heart has yielded to this conviction, and has come fully over to confide most implicitly in him in all respects, so that it can readily commit all interests for time and eternity to his hands. Repentance is a state of mind that implies the fullest confidence in all the promises and threatenings of God, and in the atonement and grace of Christ.

IV. *What impenitence is not.*

1. It is not a negation, or the mere absence of repentance. Some seem to regard impenitence as a nonentity, as the mere absence of repentance; but this is a great mistake.

2. It is not mere apathy in the sensibility in regard to sin, and a mere want of sorrow for it.

3. It is not the absence of conviction of sin, nor the consequent carelessness of the sinner in respect to the commandments of God.

4. It is not an intellectual self-justification, nor does it consist in a disposition to cavil at truth and the claims of God. These may and often do result from impenitence, but are not identical with it.

5. It does not consist in the spirit of excuse-making, so often manifested by sinners. This spirit is a result of impenitence, but does not constitute it.

6. Nor does it consist in the love of sin for its own sake, nor in the love of sin in any sense. It is not a constitutional appetite, relish, or craving for sin. If this constitutional craving for sin existed, it could have no moral character, inasmuch as it would be a wholly involuntary state of mind. It could not be the crime of impenitence.

V. *What impenitence is.*

1. It is everywhere in the Bible represented as a heinous sin, as in Mat 11:20-24 : "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." Here, as elsewhere, impenitence is represented as most aggravated wickedness.

Impenitence is a phenomenon of the will, and consists in the will's cleaving to self-indulgence under light. It consists in the will's pertinacious adherence to the gratification of self, in despite of all the light with which the sinner is surrounded. It is not, as has been said, a passive state nor a mere negation, nor the love of sin for its own sake; but it is an active and obstinate state of the will, a determined holding on to that course of self-seeking which constitutes sin, not from a love to sin, but for the sake of the gratification. This, under light, is of course, aggravated wickedness. Considered in this view, it is easy to account for all the woes and denunciations that the Saviour uttered against it. When the claims of God are revealed to the mind, it must necessarily yield to them, or strengthen itself in sin. It must, as it were, gird itself up, and struggle to resist the claims of duty. This strengthening self in sin under light is the particular form of sin which we call impenitence. All sinners are guilty of it because all have some light, but some are vastly more guilty of it than others.

VI. *Notice some things that are implied in impenitence.*

As it essentially consists in a cleaving to self-indulgence under light, it implies,--

1. That the impenitent sinner obstinately prefers his own petty and momentary gratification to all the other and higher interests of God and the universe; that because these gratifications are his own, or the gratification of self, he therefore gives them the preference over all the infinite interests of all other beings.

2. It implies the deliberate and actual setting at naught, not only of the interests of God and of the universe, as of no value, but it implies also a total disregard, and even contempt, of the rights of all other beings. It is a practical denial that they have any rights or interests to be promoted.

3. It implies a rejection of the authority of God, and contempt for it, as well as a spurning of his law and gospel.

4. It implies a bidding defiance to God, and a virtual challenge to him to do his worst.

5. It implies the utmost fool-hardiness, and a state of utter recklessness of consequences.

6. It implies the utmost injustice and disregard of all that is just and equal, and this, be it remembered, under light.

7. It implies a present justification of all past sin. The sinner who holds on to his self-indulgence, in the presence of the light of the gospel, really in heart justifies all his past rebellion.

8. Consequently present impenitence, especially under the light of the glorious gospel, is a heart-justification of all sin. It is taking sides deliberately with sinners against God, and is a virtual endorsing of all the sins of earth and hell. This principle is clearly implied in Christ's teaching, Mat 23:34-36 : "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily, I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

9. Present impenitence, under all the light and experience which the sinner now has, involves the guilt of all his past sin. If he still holds on to it, he in heart justifies it. If he in heart justifies it, he virtually recommits it. If in the presence of accumulated light, he still persists in sin, he virtually endorses, recommits, and is again guilty of all past sin.

10. Impenitence is a charging God with sin; it is self-justification, and consequently it condemns God. It is a direct controversy with God, and a denial of his right to govern, and of the sinner's duty to obey.

11. It is a deliberate rejection of mercy, and a virtual declaration that God is a tyrant, and that he ought not to govern, but that he ought to be resisted.

12. It implies a total want of confidence in God; want of confidence in his character and government; in his works and ways. It virtually charges God with usurpation, falsehood, and selfishness in all their odious forms. It is a making war on every moral attribute of God, and is utter enmity against him. It is mortal enmity, and would of course always manifest itself in sinners, as it did when Christ was upon the earth. When he poured the light upon them, they hardened themselves until they were ripe for murdering him. This is the true nature of impenitence. It involves the guilt of a mortal enmity against God.

VII. *Notice some of the characteristics or evidences of impenitence.*

1. A manifested indifference to the sins of men is evidence of an impenitent and sin-justifying state of mind. It is impossible that a penitent soul should not be deeply and heartily opposed to all sin; and if heartily opposed to it, it is impossible that he should not manifest this opposition, for the heart controls the life by a law of necessity.

2. Of course a manifest heart-complacency in sin or in sinners is, sure evidence of an impenitent state of mind. "He that will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." Heart-complacency in sinners is that friendship with the world that is enmity against God.

3. A manifest want of zeal in opposing sin and in promoting reformation, is a sure indication of an impenitent state of mind. The soul that has been truly convinced of sin, and turned from sin to the love and service of God, cannot but manifest a deep interest in every effort to expel sin out of the world. Such a soul cannot but be zealous in opposing sin, and in building up and establishing righteousness in the earth.

4. A manifest want of sympathy with God in respect to his government, providential and moral, is an evidence of impenitence of heart. A penitent soul, as has been said, will and must of course justify God in all his ways. This is implied in genuine repentance. A disposition to complain of the strictness and rigour of God's commandments--to speak of the providence of God in a complaining manner, to murmur at its allotments, and repine at the circumstances in which it has placed a soul, is to evince an impenitent and rebellious state of mind.

5. A manifest want of confidence in the character, faithfulness, and promises of God, is also sure evidence of an impenitent state of mind. A distrust of God in any respect cannot consist with a penitent state of heart.

6. The absence of peace of mind is sure evidence of an impenitent state. The penitent soul must have peace of conscience, because penitence is a state of conscious rectitude. It also must have peace with God, in view of, and through confidence in, the atonement of Christ. Repentance is the turning from an attitude of rebellion against God, to a state of universal submission to his will, and approbation of it as wise and good. This must of course bring peace to the soul. When therefore there is a manifest want of peace, there is evidence of impenitence of heart.

7. Every unequivocal manifestation of selfishness is a conclusive evidence of present impenitence. Repentance, as we have seen, consists in the turning of the soul from selfishness to benevolence. It follows of course that the presence of selfishness, or a spirit of self-indulgence, is conclusive evidence of an impenitent state of mind. Repentance implies the denial of self; the denial or subjection of all the appetites, passions, and propensities to the law of the intelligence. Therefore a manifest spirit of self-indulgence, a disposition to seek the gratification of the appetites and passions, such as the subjection of the will to the use of tobacco, of alcohol, or to any of the natural or artificial appetites under light and in opposition to the law of the reason, is conclusive evidence of present impenitence. I say, "under light, and in opposition to the law of the reason." Such articles as those just named, are sometimes used medicinally, and because they are regarded as useful, and even indispensable to health under certain circumstances. In such cases their use may be a duty. But they are more frequently used merely to gratify appetite, and in the face of a secret conviction that they are not only unnecessary, but absolutely injurious. This is indulgence that constitutes sin. It is impossible that such indulgence should consist with repentance. Such a mind must be in impenitence, or there is no such thing as impenitence.

8. A spirit of self-justification is another evidence of impenitence. This manifestation must be directly the opposite of that which the truly penitent soul will make.

9. A spirit of excuse-making for neglect of duty is also a conclusive evidence of an impenitent heart. Repentance implies the giving up of all excuses for disobedience, and a hearty obedience in all things. Of course, where there is a manifest disposition to make excuses for not being what and all God requires us to be, it is certain that there is, and must be an impenitent state of mind. It is war with God.

10. A fearfulness that implies a want of confidence in the perfect faithfulness of God, or that implies unbelief in any respect, is an indication of an impenitent state of mind.

11. A want of candour upon any moral subject relating to self, also betrays an impenitent heart. A penitent state of the will is committed to know and to embrace all truth. Therefore a prejudiced, uncandid state of mind must be inconsistent with penitence, and a manifestation of prejudice must evince present impenitence.

12. An unwillingness to be searched, and to have all our words and ways brought into the light of truth, and to be reproved when we are in error, is a sure indication of an impenitent state of mind. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

13. Only partial reformation of life, also indicates that the heart has not embraced the whole will of God. When there is a disposition manifested to indulge in some sin, no matter how little, it is sure evidence of impenitence of heart. The penitent soul rejects sin as sin; of course every kind or degree of iniquity is put away, loathed, and abhorred. "Whoso keepeth the whole law and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all;" that is, if a man in one point unequivocally sins or disobeys God, it is certain that he truly from the heart obeys him in nothing. He has not an obedient state of mind. If he really had supreme respect to God's authority, he could not but obey him in all things. If therefore it be found, that a professor of penitence does not manifest the spirit of universal obedience; if in some things he is manifestly self-indulgent, it may be known that he is altogether yet in sin, and that he is still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

14. Neglect or refusal to confess and make restitution, so far as opportunity and ability are enjoyed, is also a sure indication of an unjust and impenitent state of mind. It would seem impossible for a penitent soul not at once to see and be impressed with the duty of making confession and restitution to those who have been injured by him. When this is refused or neglected, there must be impenitence. The heart controls the life by a law of necessity; when, therefore, there is a heart that confesses and forsakes sin, it is impossible that this should not appear in outward confession and restitution.

15. A spirit of covetousness, or grasping after the world, is a sure indication of impenitence. "Covetousness is idolatry." It is a hungering and thirsting after, and devotion to this world. Acquisitiveness indulged must be positive proof of an impenitent state of mind. If any man love the world, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

16. A want of interest in, and compassion for, sinners, is a sure indication of impenitence. If one has seen his own guilt and ruin, and has found himself sunk in the horrible pit and miry clay of his own abominations, and has found the way of escape, to feel deeply for sinners, to manifest a great compassion and concern for them, and a zeal for their salvation, is as natural as to breathe. If this sympathy and zeal are not manifested, we may rely upon it that there is still impenitence. There is a total want of that love to God and souls that is always implied in repentance. Seest thou a professed convert to Christ whose compassions are not stirred, and whose zeal for the salvation of souls is not awakened? Be assured that you behold a hypocrite.

17. A disposition to apologize for sin, to take part with sinners, or a want of fulness and clearness in condemning them, and taking sides altogether with God, is evidence of an impenitent state of mind. A hesitancy, or want of clearness in the mind's apprehension of the justice of God in condemning sinners to an eternal hell, shows that the eyes have not yet been thoroughly open to the nature, guilt, and desert of sin, and consequently this state of spiritual blindness is sad evidence of an impenitent heart.

18. A want of moral or spiritual perception, is also an indication of impenitence. When an individual is seen to have little or no conscience on many moral questions, can use tobacco, alcohol, and such like things, under the present light that has been shed on these practices; when self can be indulged without compunctions, this is a most certain indication of an impenitent heart. True repentance is infallibly connected with a sensitive and discriminating conscience. When, therefore, there is a seared conscience, you may know there is a hard and impenitent heart.

19. Spiritual sloth or indolence is another evidence of an impenitent heart. The soul that thoroughly turns to God, and consecrates itself to him, and wholly commits itself to promote his glory in the building up of his kingdom, will be, must be, anything but slothful. A disposition to spiritual idleness, or to lounging or indolence of any kind, is an evidence that the heart is impenitent. I might pursue this subject to an indefinite length; but what has been said must suffice for this course of instruction, and is sufficient to give you the clue by which you may detect the windings and delusions of the impenitent heart.

I must conclude this discussion with several

REMARKS.

1. Many confound conviction of sin, and the necessarily resulting emotions of remorse, regret, and sorrow, with evangelical repentance. They give the highest evidence of having fallen into this mistake.

2. Considering the current teaching upon this subject, and the great want of discrimination in public preaching, and in writings on the subject of repentance, this mistake is natural. How few divines sufficiently discriminate between the phenomena of the intelligence, the sensibility, and the will. But until this discrimination is thoroughly made, great mistakes upon this subject may be expected both among the clergy and the laity, and multitudes will be self-deceived.

3. It is of the highest importance for the ministry to understand, and constantly insist in their teaching, that all virtuous exercises of mind are phenomena of the will, and in no case merely passive states of mind; that therefore they are connected with the outward life by a law of necessity, and that therefore when there is a right heart, there must be a right life.

4. It is a most gross, as it is a very common delusion, to separate religion from a pure morality, and repentance from reformation. "What God," by an unalterable law of necessity, "has joined together, let not man put asunder."

5. It is also common to fall into the error of separating devotion from practical benevolence. Many seem to be striving after a devotion that is not piety. They are trying to work their sensibility into a state which they suppose to be devotion, while they retain selfishness in their hearts. They live in habitual self-indulgence, and yet observe seasons of what they call devotion. Devotion is with them mere emotion, a state of feeling, a phenomenon of the sensibility, a devotion without religion. This is a grievous delusion.

6. The doctrine of repentance, or the necessity of repentance as a condition of salvation, is as truly a doctrine of natural as of revealed religion. It is a self-evident truth, that the sinner cannot be saved except he repents. Without repentance God cannot forgive him; and if he could and should, such forgiveness could not save him; for, in his sins, salvation is naturally impossible to him. Without just that change which has been described, and which the Bible calls repentance, and which it makes a condition of pardon and salvation, it is plainly, naturally, and governmentally impossible for any sinner to be saved.

7. Repentance is naturally necessary to peace of mind in this life. Until the sinner repents he is at war with himself, and at war with God. There is a mutiny, and a struggle, and a controversy, going on within him. His conscience will not be satisfied. Though cast down from the throne of government and trampled under foot, it will mutter, and sometimes thunder its remonstrances and rebukes; and although it has not the power to control the will, still it will assert the right to control. Then there is war within the breast of the sinner himself, and until he repents he carries the elements of hell within him; and sooner or later they will take fire, and burst upon his soul in a universal and eternal conflagration.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LV.

FAITH AND UNBELIEF.

I. WHAT EVANGELICAL FAITH IS NOT.

II. WHAT IT IS.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

IV. WHAT UNBELIEF IS NOT.

V. WHAT IT IS.

VI. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN UNBELIEF.

VII. CONDITIONS OF BOTH FAITH AND UNBELIEF.

VIII. THE GUILT OF UNBELIEF.

IX. NATURAL AND GOVERNMENTAL RESULTS OF EACH.

I. *What evangelical faith is not.*

1. The term faith, like most other words, has diverse significations, and is manifestly used in the Bible sometimes to designate a state of the intellect, in which case it means an undoubting persuasion, a firm conviction, an unhesitating intellectual assent. This, however, is not its evangelical sense. Evangelical faith cannot be a phenomenon of the intellect, for the plain reason that, when used in an evangelical sense, it is always regarded as a virtue. But virtue cannot be predicated of intellectual states, because these are involuntary, or passive states of mind. Faith is a condition of salvation. It is something which we are commanded to do upon pain of eternal death. But if it be something to be done--a solemn duty, it cannot be a merely passive state, a mere intellectual conviction. The Bible distinguishes between intellectual and saving faith. There is a faith of devils, and there is a faith of saints. James clearly distinguishes between them, and also between an antinomian and a saving faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."-- Jam 2:17-26. The distinction is here clearly marked, as it is elsewhere in the Bible, between intellectual and saving faith.

One produces good works or a holy life; the other is unproductive. This shows that one is a phenomenon of the intellect merely, and does not of course control the conduct. The other must be a phenomenon of the will, because it manifests itself in the outward life. Evangelical faith, then, is not a conviction, a perception of truth. It does not belong to the intellect, though it implies intellectual conviction, yet the evangelical or virtuous element does not consist in it.

2. It is not a feeling of any kind; that is, it does not belong to, and is not a phenomenon of, the sensibility. The phenomena of the sensibility are passive states of mind, and therefore have no moral character in themselves. Faith, regarded as a virtue, cannot consist in any involuntary state of mind whatever. It is represented in the Bible as an active and most efficient state of mind. It works and "works by love." It produces "the obedience of faith." Christians are said to be sanctified by the faith that is in Christ.

Indeed the Bible, in a great variety of instances and ways, represents faith in God and in Christ as a cardinal form of virtue, and as the mainspring of an outwardly holy life. Hence, it cannot consist in any involuntary state or exercise of mind whatever.

II. *What evangelical faith is.*

Since the Bible uniformly represents saving or evangelical faith as a virtue, we know that it must be a phenomenon of will. It is an efficient state of mind, and therefore it must consist in the embracing of the truth by the heart or will. It is the will's closing in with the truths of the gospel. It is the soul's act of yielding itself up, or committing itself to the truths of the evangelical system. It is a trusting in Christ, a committing the soul and the whole being to him, in his various offices and relations to men. It is a confiding in him, and in what is revealed of him, in his word and providence, and by his Spirit.

The same word that is so often rendered faith in the New Testament is also rendered commit; as in Joh 2:24, "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Luk 16:11, "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" In these passages the word rendered *commit* is the same word as that which is rendered faith. It is a confiding in God and in Christ, as revealed in the Bible and in reason. It is a receiving of the testimony of God concerning himself, and concerning all things of which he has spoken. It is a receiving of Christ for just what he is represented to be in his gospel, and an unqualified surrender of the will, and of the whole being to him.

III. *What is implied in evangelical faith.*

1. It implies an intellectual perception of the things, facts, and truths believed. No one can believe that which he does not understand. It is impossible to believe that which is not so revealed to the mind, that the mind understands it. It has been erroneously assumed, that faith did not need light, that is, that it is not essential to faith that we understand the doctrines or facts that we are called upon to believe. This is a false assumption; for how can we believe, trust, confide, in what we do not understand? I must first understand what a proposition, a fact, a doctrine, or a thing is, before I can say whether I believe, or whether I ought to believe, or not. Should you state a proposition to me in an unknown tongue, and ask me if I believe it, I must reply, I do not, for I do not understand the terms of the proposition. Perhaps I should believe the truth expressed, and perhaps I should not; I cannot tell, until I understand the proposition. Any fact or doctrine not understood is like a proposition in an unknown tongue; it is impossible that the mind should receive or reject it, should believe or disbelieve it, until it is understood. We can receive or believe a truth, or fact, or doctrine no further than we understand it. So far as we do understand it, so far we may believe it, although we may not understand all about it. For example: I can believe in both the proper divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. That he is both God and man, is a fact that I can understand. Thus far I can believe. But how his divinity and humanity are united I cannot understand. Therefore, I only believe the fact that they are united; the *quo modo* of their union I know nothing about, and I believe no more than I know. So I can understand that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. That the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God; that these three are Divine persons, I can understand as a fact, that each possesses all divine perfection. I can also understand that there is no contradiction or impossibility in the declared fact, that these three are one in their substratum of being; that is, that they are one in a different sense from that in which they are three; that they are three in one sense, and one in another. I understand that this may be a fact, and therefore I can believe it. But the *quo modo* of their union I neither understand nor believe: that is, I have no theory, no idea, no data on the subject, have no opinion, and consequently no faith, as to the manner in which they are united. That they are three, is as plainly taught upon the face of inspiration as that Peter, James, and John were three. That each of the three is God, is as plainly revealed as that Peter, James, and John were men. These are revealed facts, and facts that any one can understand. That these three are one God, is also a revealed fact. The *quo modo* of this fact is not revealed, I cannot understand it, and have no belief as to the manner of this union. That they are one God is a fact that reason can neither affirm nor deny. The fact can be understood, although the how is unintelligible to us in our present state. It is not a contradiction, because they are not revealed as being one and three in the same sense, nor in any sense that reason can pronounce to be impossible. Faith, then, in any fact or doctrine, implies that the intellect has an idea, or that the soul has an understanding, an opinion of that which the heart embraces or believes.

2. Evangelical faith implies the appropriation of the truths of the gospel to ourselves. It implies an acceptance of Christ as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The soul that truly believes, believes that Christ tasted death for every man, and of course for it. It apprehends Christ as the Saviour of the world, as offered to all, and embraces and receives him for itself. It appropriates his atonement, and his resurrection, and his intercession, and his promises to itself. Christ is thus presented in the gospel, not only as the Saviour of the world, but also to the individual acceptance of men. He is embraced by the world no further than he is embraced by individuals. He saves the world no further than he saves individuals. He died for the world, because he died for the individuals that compose the race. Evangelical faith, then, implies the belief of the truths of the Bible, the apprehension of the truths just named, and a reception of them, and a personal acceptance and appropriation of Christ to meet the necessities of the individual soul.

3. It implies the unreserved yielding up of the mind to Christ, in the various relations in which he is presented in the gospel. These relations will come under review at another time: all I wish here to say is, that faith is a state of committal to Christ, and of course it implies that the soul will be unreservedly yielded to him, in all his relations to it, so far and so fast as these are apprehended by the intellect.

4. Evangelical faith implies an evangelical life. This would not be true if faith were merely an intellectual state or exercise. But since, as we have seen, faith is of the heart, since it consists in the committal of the will to Christ, it follows, by a law of necessity, that the life will correspond with faith. Let this be kept in perpetual remembrance.

5. Evangelical faith implies repentance towards God. Evangelical faith particularly respects Jesus Christ and his salvation. It is an embracing of Christ and his salvation. Of course it implies repentance towards God, that is, a turning from sin to God. The will cannot be submitted to Christ, it cannot receive him as he is presented in the gospel, while it neglects repentance toward God; while it rejects the authority of the Father, it cannot embrace and submit to the Son.

6. Evangelical faith implies a renunciation of self-righteousness. Christ's salvation is opposed to a salvation by law or by self-righteousness. It is therefore impossible for one to embrace Christ as the Saviour of the soul, any further than he renounces all hope or expectation of being saved by his own works, or righteousness.

7. It implies the renunciation of the spirit of self-justification. The soul that receives Christ must have seen its lost estate. It must have been convinced of sin, and of the folly and madness of attempting to excuse self. It must have renounced and abhorred all pleas and excuses in justification or extenuation of sin. Unless the soul ceases to justify self, it cannot justify God; and unless it justifies God, it cannot embrace the plan of salvation by Christ. A state of mind therefore that justifies God and condemns self, is always implied in evangelical faith.

8. Disinterested benevolence, or a state of good-will to being, is implied in evangelical faith; for that is the committal of the soul to God and to Christ in all obedience. It must, therefore, imply fellowship or sympathy with him in regard to the great end upon which his heart is set, and for which he lives. A yielding up of the will and the soul to him, must imply the embracing of the same end that he embraces.

9. It implies a state of the sensibility corresponding to the truths believed. It implies this, because this state of the sensibility is a result of faith by a law of necessity, and this result follows necessarily upon the acceptance of Christ and his gospel by the heart.

10. Of course it implies peace of mind. In Christ the soul finds its full and present salvation. It finds justification, which produces a sense of pardon and acceptance. It finds sanctification, or grace to deliver from the reigning power of sin. It finds all its wants met, and all needed grace proffered for its assistance. It sees no cause for disturbance, nothing to ask or desire that is not treasured up in Christ. It has ceased to war with God--with itself. It has found its resting-place in Christ, and rests in profound peace under the shadow of the Almighty.

11. It implies hope, as soon as the believing soul considers what is conveyed by the gospel, that is, a hope of eternal life in and through Christ. It is impossible that the soul should embrace the gospel for itself, and really accept of Christ, without a hope of eternal life resulting from it by a necessary law.

12. It implies joy in God and in Christ. Peter speaks of joy as the unfailing accompaniment of faith, as resulting from it. Speaking of Christians, he says, 1Pe 1:5-9, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

13. It implies zeal in the cause of Christ. Faith in Christ implies fellowship with him in the great work of man's redemption, and of course, must imply zeal in the same cause for which Christ gave up his life.

14. Evangelical faith must imply a general sympathy with Christ in respect to the affairs of his government. It must imply sympathy with his views of sin and of holiness--of sinners and of saints. It must imply a deep affection for, and interest in, Christ's people.

15. It must imply a consecration of heart, of time, of substance, and of all to this great end.

16. It must imply the existence in the soul of every virtue, because it is a yielding up of the whole being to the will of God. Consequently, all the phases of virtue required by the gospel must be implied as existing, either in a developed or in an undeveloped state, in every heart that truly receives Christ by faith. Certain forms or modifications of virtue may not in all cases have found the occasions of their developement, but certain it is, that every modification of virtue will manifest itself as its occasion shall arise, if there be a true and a living faith in Christ. This follows from the very nature of faith.

17. Present evangelical faith implies a state of present sinlessness. Observe: faith is the yielding and committal of the whole will, and of the whole being to Christ. This, and nothing short of this, is evangelical faith. But this comprehends and implies the whole of present, true obedience to Christ. This is the reason why faith is spoken of as the condition, and as it were, the only condition, of salvation. It really implies all virtue. Faith may be contemplated either as a distinct form of virtue, and as an attribute of love, or as comprehensive of all virtue. When contemplated as an attribute of love, it is only a branch of sanctification. When contemplated in the wider sense of universal conformity of will to the will of God, it is then synonymous with entire present sanctification. Contemplated in either light, its existence in the heart must be inconsistent with present sin there. Faith is an attitude of the will, and is wholly incompatible with present rebellion of will against Christ. This must be true, or what is faith?

18. Faith implies the reception and the practice of all known or perceived truth. The heart that embraces and receives truth as truth, and because it is truth, must of course receive all known truth. For it is plainly impossible that the will should embrace some truth perceived for a benevolent reason, and reject other truth perceived. All truth is harmonious. One truth is always consistent with every other truth. The heart that truly embraces one, will, for the same reason, embrace all truth known. If out of regard to the highest good of being any one revealed truth is truly received, that state of mind continuing, it is impossible that all truth should not be received as soon as known.

IV. *What unbelief is not.*

1. It is not ignorance of truth. Ignorance is a blank; it is the negation or absence of knowledge. This certainly cannot be the unbelief everywhere represented in the Bible as a heinous sin. Ignorance may be a consequence of unbelief, but cannot be identical with it. We may be ignorant of certain truths as a consequence of rejecting others, but this ignorance is not, and, we shall see, cannot be unbelief.

2. Unbelief is not the negation or absence of faith. This were a mere nothing--a nonentity. But a mere nothing is not that abominable thing which the scriptures represent as a great and a damning sin.

3. It cannot be a phenomenon of the intellect, or an intellectual scepticism. This state of the intellect may result from the state of mind properly denominated unbelief, but it cannot be identical with it. Intellectual doubts or unbelief often results from unbelief properly so called, but unbelief, when contemplated as a sin, should never be confounded with theoretic or intellectual infidelity. They are as entirely distinct as any two phenomena of mind whatever.

4. It cannot consist in feelings or emotions of incredulity, doubt, or opposition to truth. In other words, unbelief as a sin, cannot be a phenomenon of the sensibility. The term unbelief is sometimes used to express or designate a state of the intellect, and sometimes of the sensibility. It sometimes is used to designate a state of intellectual incredulity, doubt, distrust, scepticism. But when used in this sense, moral character is not justly predicable of the state of mind which the term unbelief represents.

Sometimes the term expresses a mere feeling of incredulity in regard to truth. But neither has this state of mind moral character; nor can it have, for the very good reason that it is involuntary. In short, the unbelief that is so sorely denounced in the Bible, as a most aggravated abomination, cannot consist in any involuntary state of mind whatever.

V. *What unbelief is.*

The term, as used in the Bible, in those passages that represent it as a sin, must designate a phenomenon of will. It must be a voluntary state of mind. It must be the opposite of evangelical faith. Faith is the will's reception, and unbelief is the will's rejection, of truth. Faith is the soul's confiding in truth and in the God of truth. Unbelief is the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. It is the heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. It is the will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented. Intellectual scepticism or unbelief, where light is proffered, always implies the unbelief of the will or heart. For if the mind knows, or supposes, that light may be had, on any question of duty, and does not make honest efforts to obtain it, this can be accounted for only by ascribing it to the will's reluctance to know the path of duty. In this case light is rejected. The mind has light so far as to know that more is proffered, but this proffered light is rejected. This is the sin of unbelief. All infidelity is unbelief in this sense, and infidels are so, not for want of light, but, in general, they have taken much pains to shut their eyes against it. Unbelief must be a voluntary state or attitude of the will, as distinguished from a mere volition, or executive act of the will. Volition may, and often does, give forth, through words and deeds, expressions and manifestations of unbelief. But the volition is only a result of unbelief, and not identical with it. Unbelief is a deeper and more efficient and more permanent state of mind than mere volition. It is the will in its profoundest opposition to the truth and will of God.

VI. *What is implied in unbelief.*

1. Unbelief implies light, or the perception of truth. If unbelief were but a mere negation, an absence of faith, a quiescent or inactive state of the will, it would not imply the perception of truth. But since unbelief consists in the will's rejection of truth, the truth rejected must be perceived. For example: the heathen who have never heard of the gospel are not properly guilty of unbelief in not embracing it. They are indeed guilty of unbelief in rejecting the light of nature. They are entirely without the light of the gospel; therefore they cannot reject it. The unbelief so much complained of in the Bible, is not ignorance, but a rejection of truth revealed, either by the light of nature, or by Providence or inspiration.

2. It implies obstinate selfishness. Indeed it is only one of the attributes of selfishness, as we have seen on a former occasion. Selfishness is a spirit of self-seeking. It consists in the will's committing itself to self-gratification or self-indulgence. Now unbelief is only selfishness contemplated in its relations to the truth of God. It is only the resistance which the will makes to those truths that are opposed to selfishness. It is the will's stern opposition to them. When these truths are revealed to the intellect, the will must either yield to them and relinquish selfishness, or it must resist them. Remain indifferent to them it cannot. Therefore, unbelief always implies selfishness, because it is only selfishness manifesting itself, or acting like itself, in the presence of truth opposed to it.

3. Unbelief implies a state of present total depravity. Surely there can be nothing but sin in a heart that rejects the truth for selfish reasons. It is naturally impossible that there should be any conformity of heart to the will and law of God, when unbelief, or resistance to known truth, is present in the soul.

4. Unbelief implies the rejection of all truth perceived to be inconsistent with selfishness. The unbelieving soul does not, and, remaining selfish, cannot receive any truth, but for selfish reasons. Whatever truth is received and acted upon by a selfish soul, is received for selfish reasons. But this is not faith. Whatever truth the selfish soul cannot apply to selfish purposes, it will reject. This follows from the very nature of selfishness.

5. On a former occasion it was shown, that where any one attribute of selfishness is, there must be the presence of every other attribute, either in a developed state, or waiting for the occasion of its developement. All sinners are guilty of unbelief, and have this attribute of selfishness developed, in proportion to the amount of light which they have received. Heathens reject the light of nature, and sinners in Christian lands reject the light of the gospel. The nature of unbelief proves that the unbelieving heart is not only void of all good, but that every form of sin is there. The whole host of the attributes of selfishness must reside in the unbeliever's heart, and only the occasion is wanting to bring forth into developement, and horrid manifestation, every form of iniquity.

6. The nature of unbelief implies that its degree depends on the degree of light enjoyed. It consists in a rejection of truth perceived. Its degree or greatness must depend upon the degree of light rejected.

7. The same must be true of the guilt of unbelief. The guilt must be in proportion to light enjoyed. But as the guilt of unbelief is to come up for distinct consideration, I waive the further discussion of it here.

8. Unbelief implies impenitence. The truly penitent soul will gladly embrace all truth when it is revealed to it. This follows from the nature of repentance. Especially will the true penitent hail with joy, and embrace with eagerness the blessed truths of the glorious gospel. This must be from the very nature of repentance. When unbelief is present in the heart, there must be impenitence also.

9. Unbelief is enmity against God. It is resistance to truth, and of course to the character and government of the God of truth.

10. It implies mortal enmity against God. Unbelief rejects the truth and authority of God, and is, of course, and of necessity, opposed to the very existence of the God of truth. It would annihilate truth and the God of truth, were it possible. We have an instance and an illustration of this in the rejection and murder of Jesus Christ. What was this but unbelief? This is the nature of unbelief in all instances. All sinners who hear and reject the gospel, reject Christ; and were Christ personally present to insist upon their reception of him, and to urge his demand, remaining unbelieving, they would of course, and of necessity, sooner murder him than receive him. So that every rejecter of the gospel is guilty of the blood and murder of Christ.

11. Unbelief implies supreme enmity to God. This follows from the nature of unbelief. Unbelief is the heart's rejection of and opposition to truth. Of course, the greater the light, unbelief remaining, the greater the opposition. Since God is the fountain of truth, opposition to him must be supreme. That is, it must be greater to him than to all other beings and things.

12. Unbelief implies a degree of wickedness as great as is possible for the time being. We have seen that it is resistance to truth; that it implies the refusal to receive for benevolent reasons any truth. Entire holiness is the reception of, and conformity to, all truth. This is, at every moment, the highest degree of virtue of which the soul for the time being is capable. It is the entire performance of duty. Sin is the rejection of the whole truth, this is sin in the form of unbelief. The rejection of all known truth, or of all truth perceived to be inconsistent with selfishness, and for that reason, must be present perfection in wickedness. That is, it must be the highest degree of wickedness of which the soul with its present light is capable. It is the rejection of the whole of duty. It is a trampling down of all moral obligation.

13. Unbelief implies the charging God with being a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed the record that God gave of his Son." Unbelief is the treatment of truth as if it were falsehood, and of falsehood as if it were truth. It is the virtual declaration of the heart, that the gospel is not true, and therefore that the Author of the gospel is a liar. It treats the record as untrue, and of course God, the author of the record, as a liar.

14. Unbelief implies lying. It is itself the greatest of lies. It is the heart's declaration, and that too in the face of light, and with the intellectual apprehension of the truth, that the gospel is a lie, and the Author of it a liar. What is lying, if this is not?

15. It implies a most reckless disregard of all rights and of all interests but those of self.

16. It implies a contempt for, and a trampling down of, the law and demands of the intelligence. Intelligence in its relations to moral truths is only a trouble to the unbeliever. His conscience and his reason he regards as enemies.

17. But before I dismiss this part of the subject, I must not omit to say that unbelief also implies the will's embracing an opposite error and a lie. It consists in the rejection of truth, or in the withholding confidence in truth and in the God of truth. But since it is naturally impossible that the will should be in a state of indifference to any known error or truth that stands connected with its duty or its destiny, it follows that a rejection of any known truth implies an embracing of an opposing error.

There are multitudes of other things implied in unbelief; but I cannot with propriety and profit notice them in this brief outline of instruction. I have pursued this subject thus far, for the purpose of showing the true and philosophical nature of unbelief; that whosoever will steadily contemplate its nature, will perceive, that being what it is, it will and must develope, as occasions occur in the providence of God, every form of iniquity of which man is capable, or in other words, that where unbelief is, there is the whole of sin.

VII. *Conditions of both faith and unbelief.*

1. The possession of reason. Reason is the intuitive faculty of the soul. It is that power of the mind that makes those *à priori* affirmations concerning God, which all moral agents do and must make, from the very nature of moral agency, and without which neither faith as a virtue, nor unbelief as a sin, were possible. For example: suppose it admitted that the Bible is a revelation from God. The question might be asked, why should we believe it? Why should we receive and believe the testimony of God? The answer must be, because veracity is an attribute of God, and his word is to be accredited because he always speaks the truth. But how do we know this? This we certainly cannot know barely upon his testimony, for the very question is, why is his testimony worthy of credit. There is no light in his works or providence that can demonstrate that veracity is an attribute of God. His claiming this attribute does not prove it, for unless his truthfulness be assumed, his claiming this attribute is no evidence of it. There is no logical process by which the truth of God can be demonstrated. The major premise from which the truthfulness of God could be deduced by a syllogistic process, must itself assume the very truth which we are seeking to prove. Now there is no way for us to know the truthfulness of God, but by the direct assumption, affirmation, or intuition of reason. The same power that intuits or seizes upon a major premise, from which the truthfulness of God follows by the laws of logic, must and does directly, irresistibly, necessarily, and universally, assume and affirm the fact, that God is truth, and that veracity must be an attribute of God.

But for this assumption the intellect could not affirm our obligation to believe him. This assumption is a first-truth of reason, everywhere, at all times, by all moral agents, necessarily assumed and known. This is evident from the fact, that it being settled, that God has declared anything whatever, there is an end of all questioning in all minds whether it be true or not. So far as the intellect is concerned, it never did, and never can question the truthfulness of God. It knows with certain and intuitive knowledge, that God is true, and therefore affirms universally and necessarily, that he is to be believed. This assumption, and the power that makes it, are indispensable conditions of faith as a virtue, or of unbelief as a vice. It were no virtue to believe or receive anything as true, without sufficient evidence that it is true. So it were no vice to reject that which is not supported by evidence. A mere animal, or an idiot or lunatic, is not capable either of faith or of unbelief, for the simple reason that they do not possess reason to discern the truth, and obligation to receive it.

2. A revelation in some way to the mind of the truth and will of God must be a condition of unbelief. Be it remembered, that neither faith nor unbelief is consistent with total ignorance. There can be unbelief no further than there is light.

3. In respect to that class of truths which are discerned only upon condition of divine illumination, such illumination must be a condition both of faith and unbelief. It should be remarked, that when a truth has been once revealed by the Holy Spirit to the soul, the continuance of the divine light is not essential to the continuance of unbelief. The truth, once known and lodged in the memory, may continue to be resisted, when the agent that revealed it is withdrawn.

4. Intellectual perception is a condition of the heart's unbelief. The intellect must have evidence of truth as the condition of a virtuous belief of it. So the intellect must have evidence of the truth, as a condition of a wicked rejection of it. Therefore, intellectual light is the condition, both of the heart's faith and unbelief. By the assertion, that intellectual light is a condition of unbelief is intended, not that the intellect should at all times admit the truth in theory; but that the evidence must be such, that by virtue of its own laws, the mind or intellect could justly admit the truth rejected by the heart. It is a very common case, that the unbeliever denies in words and endeavours to refute in theory, that which he nevertheless assumes as true, in all his practical judgments.

VIII. *The guilt and ill-desert of unbelief.*

We have seen, on a former occasion, that the guilt of sin is conditionated upon, and graduated by, the light under which it is committed. The amount of light is the measure of guilt in every case of sin. This is true of all sin. But it is peculiarly manifest in the sin of unbelief; for unbelief is the rejection of light; it is selfishness in the attitude of rejecting truth. Of course, the amount of light rejected, and the degree of guilt in rejecting it, are equal. This is everywhere assumed and taught in the Bible, and is plainly the doctrine of reason.

Light is truth; light received, is truth known or perceived. The first truths of reason are universally known by moral agents, and whenever the will refuses to act in accordance with any one of them, it is guilty of unbelief. The reason of every moral agent intuits and assumes the infinite value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, and of course the infinite obligation of every moral agent to embrace the truth as the necessary condition of promoting this end. Viewed in this light, unbelief always implies infinite guilt and blame-worthiness.

But it is a doctrine of mathematics, that infinites may differ. The meaning of the term infinite is simply the negation of finite. It is boundlessness, unlimitedness. That is, that which is infinite is unlimited or boundless, in the sense in which it is infinite. But infinites may differ in amount. For example: the area contained between two parallel lines of infinite length must be infinite in amount, however near these lines are to each other. There is no estimating the superficial amount of this area, for, in fact, there is no whole to it. But we may suppose parallel lines of infinite length to be placed at different distances from each other; but in every case, the enlargement or diminution of the distances between any two such lines would, accordingly, vary the space contained between them. The superficial contents would, in every case, be infinite, and yet they would differ in amount, according to the distances of the lines from each other.

In every case, unbelief involves infinite guilt in the sense just explained; and yet the guilt of unbelief may differ, and must differ, in different cases, indefinitely in amount.

The guilt of unbelief under the light of the gospel must be indefinitely greater, than when merely the light of nature is rejected. The guilt of unbelief, in cases where special divine illumination has been enjoyed, must be vastly and incalculably greater, than where the mere light of the gospel has been enjoyed, without a special enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

The guilt of unbelief in one who has been converted, and has known the love of God, must be greater beyond comparison, than that of an ordinary sinner. Those things that are implied in unbelief show that it must be one of the most provoking abominations to God in the universe. It is the perfection of all that is unreasonable, unjust, ruinous. It is infinitely slanderous and dishonourable to God and destructive to man, and to all the interests of the kingdom of God.

IX. *Natural and governmental consequences of both faith and unbelief.*

By natural consequences are intended consequences that flow from the constitution and laws of mind, by a natural necessity. By governmental consequences are intended those that result from the constitution, laws, and administration of moral government.

1. One of the natural consequences of faith is peace of conscience. When the will receives the truth, and yields itself up to conformity with it, the conscience is satisfied with its present attitude, and the man becomes at peace with himself. The soul is then in a state to really respect itself, and can, as it were, behold its own face without a blush. But faith in truth perceived is the unalterable condition of a man's being at peace with himself.

A governmental consequence of faith is peace with God:--

(1.) In the sense that God is satisfied with the present obedience of the soul. It is given up to be influenced by all truth, and this is comprehensive of all duty. Of course God is at peace with the soul, so far as its present obedience is concerned.

(2.) Faith governmentally results in peace with God, in the sense of being a condition of pardon and acceptance. That is, the penalty of the law for past sins is remitted upon condition of true faith in Christ. The soul not only needs present and future obedience, as a necessary condition of peace with self; but it also needs pardon and acceptance on the part of the government for past sins, as a condition of peace with God. But since the subject of justification or acceptance with God is to come up as a distinct subject for consideration, I will not enlarge upon it here.

2. Self-condemnation is one of the natural consequences of unbelief. Such are the constitution and laws of mind, that it is naturally impossible for the mind to justify the heart's rejection of truth. On the contrary, the conscience necessarily condemns such rejection, and pronounces judgment against it.

Legal condemnation is a necessary governmental consequence of unbelief. No just government can justify the rejection of known truth. But, on the contrary, all just governments must utterly abhor and condemn the rejection of truths, and especially those truths that relate to the obedience of the subject, and the highest well-being of the rulers and ruled. The government of God must condemn and utterly abhor all unbelief, as a rejection of those truths that are indispensable to the highest well-being of the universe.

3. A holy or obedient life results from faith by a natural or necessary law. Faith is an act of will which controls the life by a law of necessity. It follows of course that, when the heart receives or obeys the truth, the outward life must be conformed to it.

4. A disobedient and unholy life results from unbelief also by a law of necessity. If the heart rejects the truth, of course the life will not be conformed to it.

5. Faith will develope every form of virtue in the heart and life, as their occasions shall arise. It consists in the committing of the will to truth and to the God of truth. Of course as different occasions arise, faith will secure conformity to all truth on all subjects, and then every modification of virtue will exist in the heart, and appear in the life, as circumstances in the providence of God shall develope them.

6. Unbelief may be expected to develope resistance to all truth upon all subjects that conflict with selfishness; and hence nothing but selfishness in some form can restrain its appearing in any other and every other form possible or conceivable. It consists, be it remembered, in the heart's rejection of truth, and of course implies the cleaving to error. The natural result of this must be the developement in the heart, and the appearance in the life, of every form of selfishness that is not prevented by some other form. For example, avarice may restrain amativeness, intemperance, and many other forms of selfishness.

7. Faith, governmentally results in obtaining help of God. God may and does gratuitously help those who have no faith. But this is not a governmental result or act in God. But to the obedient he extends his governmental protection and aid.

8. Faith is a necessary condition of, and naturally results in, heart-obedience to the commandments of God. Without confidence in a governor, it is impossible honestly to give up the whole being in obedience to him. But implicit and universal faith must result in implicit and universal obedience.

9. Unbelief naturally, because necessarily, results in heart-disobedience to God.

10. Faith naturally and necessarily results in all those lovely and delightful emotions and states of feeling, of which they are conscious whose hearts have embraced Christ. I mean all those emotions that are naturally connected with the action of the will, and naturally result from believing the blessed truths of the gospel.

11. Unbelief naturally results in those emotions of remorse, regret, pain, and agony which are the frequent experience of the unbeliever.

12. Faith lets God into the soul to dwell and reign there. Faith receives, not only the atonement and mediatorial work of Christ as a Redeemer from punishment, but it also receives Christ as king to set up his throne, and reign in the heart. Faith secures to the soul communion with God.

13. Unbelief shuts God out of the soul, in the sense of refusing his reign in the heart.

It also shuts the soul out from an interest in Christ's mediatorial work. This results not from an arbitrary appointment, but is a natural consequence. Unbelief shuts the soul out from communion with God.

These are hints at some of the natural and governmental consequences of faith and unbelief. They are designed not to exhaust the subject, but merely to call attention to topics which any one who desires may pursue at his pleasure. It should be here remarked, that none of the ways, commandments, or appointments of God are arbitrary. Faith is a naturally indispensable condition of salvation, which is the reason of its being made a governmental condition. Unbelief renders salvation naturally impossible: it must, therefore, render it governmentally impossible.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LVI.

JUSTIFICATION.

CHRIST is represented in the gospel as sustaining to men three classes of relations.

1. Those which are purely governmental.

2. Those which are purely spiritual.

3. Those which unite both these.

We shall at present consider him as Christ our justification. I shall show,--

I. WHAT GOSPEL JUSTIFICATION IS NOT.

II. WHAT IT IS.

III. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS OF GOSPEL JUSTIFICATION.

IV. SHOW WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF GOSPEL JUSTIFICATION.

I. *I am to show what gospel justification is not.*

There is scarcely any question in theology that has been encumbered with more injurious and technical mysticism than that of justification.

Justification is the pronouncing of one just. It may be done in words, or, practically, by treatment. Justification must be, in some sense, a governmental act; and it is of importance to a right understanding of gospel justification, to inquire whether it be an act of the judicial, the executive, or the legislative department of government; that is, whether gospel justification consists in a strictly judicial or forensic proceeding, or whether it consists in pardon, or setting aside the execution of an incurred penalty, and is therefore properly either an executive or a legislative act. We shall see that the settling of this question is of great importance in theology; and as we view this subject, so, if consistent, we must view many important and highly practical questions in theology. This leads me to say,--

That gospel justification is not to be regarded as a forensic or judicial proceeding. Dr. Chalmers and those of his school hold that it is. But this is certainly a great mistake, as we shall see.

The term forensic is from *forum*, "a court." A forensic proceeding belongs to the judicial department of government, whose business it is to ascertain the facts and declare the sentence of the law. This department has no power over the law, but to pronounce judgment, in accordance with its true spirit and meaning. Courts never pardon, or set aside the execution of penalties. This does not belong to them, but either to the executive or to the law-making department. Oftentimes, this power in human governments is lodged in the head of the executive department, who is, generally at least, a branch of the legislative power of government. But never is the power to pardon exercised by the judicial department. The ground of a judicial or forensic justification invariably is, and must be, universal obedience to law. If but one crime or breach of law is alleged and proved, the court must inevitably condemn, and can in no such case justify, or pronounce the convicted just. Gospel justification is the justification of sinners; it is, therefore, naturally impossible, and a most palpable contradiction, to affirm that the justification of a sinner, or of one who has violated the law, is a forensic or judicial justification. That only is or can be a legal or forensic justification, that proceeds upon the ground of its appearing that the justified person is guiltless, or, in other words, that he has not violated the law, that he has done only what he had a legal right to do. Now it is certainly nonsense to affirm, that a sinner can be pronounced just in the eye of law; that he can be justified by deeds of law, or by the law at all. The law condemns him. But to be justified judicially or forensically, is to be pronounced just in the judgment of law. This certainly is an impossibility in respect to sinners. The Bible is as express as possible on this point. Rom 3:20,--"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

It is proper to say here, that Dr. Chalmers and those of his school do not intend that sinners are justified by their own obedience to law, but by the perfect and imputed obedience of Jesus Christ. They maintain that, by reason of the obedience to law which Christ rendered when on earth, being set down to the credit of elect sinners, and imputed to them, the law regards them as having rendered perfect obedience in him, or regards them as having perfectly obeyed by proxy, and therefore pronounces them just, upon condition of faith in Christ. This they insist is properly a forensic or judicial justification. But this subject will come up more appropriately under another head.

II. *What is gospel justification.*

It consists not in the law pronouncing the sinner just, but in his being ultimately governmentally treated as if he were just, that is, it consists in a governmental decree of pardon or amnesty--in arresting and setting aside the execution of the incurred penalty of law--in pardoning and restoring to favour those who have sinned, and those whom the law had pronounced guilty, and upon whom it had passed the sentence of eternal death, and rewarding them as if they had been righteous. It is an act either of the law-making or executive department of government, and is an act entirely aside from, and contrary to, the forensic or judicial power or department of government. It is an ultimate treatment of the sinner as just, a practical, not a literal, pronouncing of him just. It is treating him as if he had been wholly righteous, when in fact he has greatly sinned. In proof of this position, I remark,--

1. That this is most unequivocally taught in the Old Testament scriptures. The whole system of sacrifices taught the doctrine of pardon upon the conditions of atonement, repentance, and faith. This, under the old dispensation, is constantly represented as a merciful acceptance of the penitents, and never as a forensic or judicial acquittal or justification of them. The mercy-seat covered the law in the ark of the covenant. Paul informs us what justification was in the sense in which the Old Testament saints understood it, in Rom 4:6-8,--"Even also as David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." This quotation from David shows both what David and what Paul understood by justification, to wit, the pardon and acceptance of the penitent sinner.

2. The New Testament fully justifies and establishes this view of the subject, as we shall abundantly see under another head.

3. Sinners cannot possibly be justified in any other sense. Upon certain conditions they may be pardoned and treated as just. But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd.

III. *Conditions of justification.*

In this discussion I use the term condition in the sense of a *sine quà non*, a "not without which." This is its philosophical sense. A condition as distinct from a ground of justification, is anything without which sinners cannot be justified, which, nevertheless, is not the procuring cause or fundamental reason of their justification. As we shall see, there are many conditions, while there is but one ground, of the justification of sinners. The application and importance of this distinction we shall perceive as we proceed.

As has been already said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification, or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification. They hold to the legal maxim, that what a man does by another he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours, on the ground that he obeyed for us. To this I reply,--

1. The legal maxim just repeated does not apply, except in cases where one acts in behalf of another by his own appointment, which was not the case with the obedience of Christ; and,--

2. The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption; to wit, that Christ owed no obedience to the law in his own person, and that therefore his obedience was altogether a work of supererogation, and might be made a substitute for our own obedience; that it might be set down to our credit, because he did not need to obey for himself.

I must here remark, that justification respects the moral law; and that it must be intended that Christ owed no obedience to the moral law, and therefore his obedience to this law, being wholly a work of supererogation, is set down to our account as the ground of our justification upon condition of faith in him. But surely this is an obvious mistake. We have seen, that the spirit of the moral law requires good-will to God and the universe. Was Christ under no obligation to do this? Nay, was he not rather under infinite obligation to be perfectly benevolent? Was it possible for him to be more benevolent than the law requires God and all beings to be? Did he not owe entire consecration of heart and life to the highest good of universal being? If not, then benevolence in him were no virtue, for it would not be a compliance with moral obligation. It was naturally impossible for him, and is naturally impossible for any being, to perform a work of supererogation; that is, to be more benevolent than the moral law requires him to be. This is and must be as true of God as it is of any other being. Would not Christ have sinned had he not been perfectly benevolent? If he would, it follows that he owed obedience to the law, as really as any other being. Indeed, a being that owed no obedience to the moral law must be wholly incapable of virtue, for what is virtue but obedience to the moral law?

But if Christ owed personal obedience to the moral law, then his obedience could no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us. He was bound for himself to love God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself. He did no more than this. He could do no more. It was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey in our behalf. This doctrine of the imputation of Christ's obedience to the moral law to us, is based upon the absurd assumptions, (1.) That the moral law is founded in the arbitrary will of God, and (2.) That of course, Christ, as God, owed no obedience to it; both of which assumptions are absurd. But if these assumptions are given up, what becomes of the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, as a ground of a forensic justification? "It vanishes into thin air."

There are, however, valid grounds and valid conditions of justification.

1. The vicarious sufferings or atonement of Christ is a condition of justification, or of the pardon and acceptance of penitent sinners. It has been common either to confound the conditions with the ground of justification, or purposely to represent the atonement and work of Christ as the ground, as distinct from and opposed to a condition of justification. In treating this subject, I find it important to distinguish between the ground and conditions of justification, and to regard the atonement and work of Christ not as a ground, but only as a condition of gospel justification. By the ground I mean the moving, procuring cause; that in which the plan of redemption originated as its source, and which was the fundamental reason or ground of the whole movement. This was the benevolence and merciful disposition of the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This love made the atonement, but the atonement did not beget this love. The Godhead desired to save sinners, but could not safely do so without danger to the universe, unless something was done to satisfy public, not retributive justice. The atonement was resorted to as a means of reconciling forgiveness with the wholesome administration of justice. A merciful disposition in the Godhead was the source, ground, mainspring, of the whole movement, while the atonement was only a condition or means, or that without which the love of God could not safely manifest itself in justifying and saving sinners.

Failing to make this distinction, and representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification, has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many. Indeed, the whole questions of the nature, design, extent, and bearings of the atonement turn upon, and are involved in, this distinction. Some represent the atonement as not demanded by, nor as proceeding from the love or merciful disposition, but from the inexorable wrath of the Father, leaving the impression that Christ was more merciful, and more the friend of sinners than the Father. Many have received this impression from pulpit and written representations, as I well know.

Others, regarding the atonement as the ground as opposed to a condition of justification, have held the atonement to be the literal payment of the debt of sinners, and of the nature of a commercial transaction: a *quid pro quo*, a valuable consideration paid down by Christ, by suffering the same amount as was deserved by the whole number of the elect; thus negativing the idea of a merciful disposition in the Father, and representing him as demanding pay for discharging and saving sinners. Some of this class have held, that since Christ has died, the elect sinner has a right to demand his justification, on the ground of justice, that he may present the atonement and work of Christ, and say to the Father, "Here is the price; I demand the commodity." This class, of course, must hold to the limited nature of the atonement, or be universalists.

While others again, assuming that the atonement was the ground of justification in the sense of the literal payment of the debt of sinners, and that the scriptures represent the atonement as made for all men, have very consistently become universalists.

Others again have given up, or never held the view that the atonement was of the nature of the literal payment of a debt, and hold that it was a governmental expedient to reconcile the pardon of sin with a wholesome administration of justice: that it was sufficient for all as for a part of mankind: that it does not entitle those for whom it was made to a pardon on the score of justice, but that men are justified freely by grace through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus, and yet they inconsistently persist in representing the atonement as the ground, and not merely as a condition of justification.

Those who hold that the atonement and obedience of Christ were and are the ground of the justification of sinners, in the sense of the payment of their debt, regard all the grace in the transaction as consisting in the atonement and obedience of Christ, and exclude grace from the act of justification. Justification they regard as a forensic act. I regard the atonement of Christ as the necessary condition of safely manifesting the benevolence of God in the justification and salvation of sinners. A merciful disposition in the whole Godhead was the ground, and the atonement a condition of justification. Mercy would have saved without an atonement, had it been possible to do so. But see my lectures on Atonement.-- Lecture XXXIV, *et seq.*

That Christ's sufferings, and especially his death, were vicarious, has been abundantly shown when treating the subject of atonement. I need not repeat here what I said there. Although Christ owed perfect obedience to the moral law for himself, and could not therefore obey as our substitute, yet since he perfectly obeyed, he owed no suffering to the law or to the Divine government on his own account. He could therefore suffer for us. That is, he could, to answer governmental purposes, substitute his death for the infliction of the penalty of the law on us. He could not perform works of supererogation, but he could endure sufferings of supererogation, in the sense that he did not owe them for himself. The doctrine of substitution, in the sense just named, appears everywhere in both Testaments. It is the leading idea, the prominent thought, lying upon the face of the whole scriptures. Let the few passages that follow serve as specimens of the class that teach this doctrine:

Lev 17:11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Isa 53:5-6, Isa 53:11. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

Mat 20:28. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mat 26:28. "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Joh 3:14-15. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Joh 6:51. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world."

Act 20:28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Rom 3:24-26. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Rom 5:6-9, Rom 5:11, Rom 5:18-19. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 18. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

1Co 5:7. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

1Co 15:3. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

Gal 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Gal 3:13-14. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Eph 2:13. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Eph 5:2. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

Heb 9:12-14, Heb 9:22-28. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. 23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; 28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

Heb 10:10-14, Heb 10:19-20. "By the which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; 20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh."

1Pe 1:18. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: 19. But with the precious blood of Christ."

1Pe 2:24. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye are healed."

1Pe 3:18. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

1Jo 1:7. "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

1Jo 3:15. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins."

1Jo 4:9-10. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These and many such like passages establish the fact beyond question, that the vicarious atonement of Christ is a condition of our pardon and acceptance with God.

2. Repentance is also a condition of our justification. Observe, I here also use the term condition, in the sense of a "*not without which*," and not in the sense of a "*that for the sake of which*" the sinner is justified. It must be certain that the government of God cannot pardon sin without repentance. This is as truly a doctrine of natural as of revealed religion. It is self-evident that, until the sinner breaks off from sins by repentance or turning to God, he cannot be justified in any sense. This is everywhere assumed, implied, and taught in the Bible. No reader of the Bible can call this in question, and it were a useless occupation of time to quote more passages.

3. Faith in Christ is, in the same sense, another condition of justification. We have already examined into the nature and necessity of faith. I fear that there has been much of error in the conceptions of many upon this subject. They have talked of justification by faith, as if they supposed that, by an arbitrary appointment of God, faith was the condition, and the only condition of justification. This seems to be the antinomian view. The class of persons alluded to speak of justification by faith, as if it were by faith, and not by Christ through faith, that the penitent sinner is justified; as if faith, and not Christ, were our justification. They seem to regard faith not as a natural, but merely as a mystical condition of justification; as bringing us into a covenant and mystical relation to Christ, in consequence of which his righteousness or personal obedience is imputed to us. It should never be forgotten, that the faith that is the condition of justification, is the faith that works by love. It is the faith through and by which Christ sanctifies the soul. A sanctifying faith unites the believer to Christ as his justification; but be it always remembered, that no faith receives Christ as a justification, that does not receive him as a sanctification, to reign within the heart. We have seen that repentance, as well as faith, is a condition of justification. We shall see that perseverance in obedience to the end of life is also a condition of justification. Faith is often spoken of in scripture as if it were the sole condition of salvation, because, as we have seen, from its very nature it implies repentance and every virtue.

That faith is a naturally necessary condition of justification, we have seen. Let the following passages of scripture serve as examples of the manner in which the scriptures speak upon this subject.

Mar 16:15-16. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Joh 1:12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Joh 3:16, Joh 3:36. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Joh 6:28-29, Joh 6:40. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. 40. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Joh 8:24, Joh 8:44, Joh 8:47. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. 44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; because there is no truth in him. 47. He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

Joh 11:25-26. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

Act 10:43. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Act 16:31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Rom 4:5. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Rom 10:4. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Gal 2:16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2Th 2:10-12. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Heb 11:6. "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

1Jo 2:23. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."

1Jo 5:10-13. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

4. Present sanctification, in the sense of present full consecration to God, is another condition, not ground, of justification. Some theologians have made justification a condition of sanctification, instead of making sanctification a condition of justification. But this we shall see is an erroneous view of the subject. The mistake is founded in a misapprehension of the nature both of justification and of sanctification. They make sanctification to consist in something else than in the will's entire subjection or consecration to God; and justification they regard as a forensic transaction conditionated on the first act of faith in Christ. Whole-hearted obedience to God, or entire conformity to his law, they regard as a very rare, and many of them, as an impracticable attainment in this life. Hence they conditionate justification upon simple faith, not regarding faith as at all implying present conformity of heart to the law of God. It would seem from the use of language that they lay very little stress upon personal holiness as a condition, not ground, of acceptance with God. But on the contrary, they suppose the mystical union of the believer with Christ obtains for him access and acceptance by virtue of an imputed righteousness, not making his present obedience a condition in the sense of a *sine quà non*, of his justification. A recent American writer*(see below) says, "It is not the believer's own personal obedience to the law, which, properly speaking, forms the condition of justification before God." "Some writers," he says, "use the term 'condition' in a philosophical sense, meaning by it simply the state or position in which things stand connected with each other, as when having said that faith and holiness are conditions of salvation; and when called upon to explain themselves, affirm that they by no means intend that these are the meritorious grounds, but merely that they will be found invariably connected with, as they are the indispensable evidences of, a state of justification." Here this writer confounds the distinction between the grounds and conditions of justification. And he does more, he represents present faith and holiness as merely the evidences, and not as a *sine quà non* of justification. So this writer cannot admit that faith is "a that without which" a sinner cannot be justified! I say that faith is not the meritorious ground, but insist that it is a proper condition or *sine quà non*, and not a mere evidence of justification. It is an evidence, only because it is a condition, of justification, and must therefore exist where justification is.

If his view of the subject be correct, it follows that God justifies sinners by his grace, not upon condition of their ceasing to sin, but while they continue to sin, by virtue of their being regarded by the law as perfectly obedient in Christ, the covenant and mystical head; that is, that although they indulge in more or less sin continually, and are never at any moment in this life entirely obedient to his law, yet God accounts them righteous because Christ obeyed and died for them. Another class of theologians hold, not to an imputed righteousness, but that God pardons and accepts the sinner not upon condition of present entire obedience, which obedience is induced by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, but upon the condition that he believes in Christ. Neither of these classes make present sanctification, or entire present obedience a condition of justification; but on the contrary, both regard and represent justification as a condition of sanctification. We have seen what *justification* is; let us inquire in a few words what *sanctification* is.

To sanctify is to set apart, to consecrate to a particular use. To sanctify anything to God is to set it apart to his service, to consecrate it to him. To sanctify one's self is voluntarily to set one's self apart, to consecrate one's self to God. To be sanctified is to be set apart, to be consecrated to God. Sanctification is an act or state of being sanctified, or set apart to the service of God. It is a state of consecration to him. This is present obedience to the moral law. It is the whole of present duty, and is implied in repentance, faith, regeneration, as we have abundantly seen.

Sanctification is sometimes used to express a permanent state of obedience to God, or of consecration. In this sense it is not a condition of present justification, or of pardon and acceptance. But it is a condition of continued and permanent acceptance with God. It certainly cannot be true, that God accepts and justifies the sinner in his sins. I may safely challenge the world for either reason or scripture to support the doctrine of justification in sin, in any degree of present rebellion against God. (See argument, Lecture XV. II.) The Bible everywhere represents justified persons as sanctified, and always expressly, or impliedly, conditionates justification upon sanctification, in the sense of present obedience to God. 1Co 6:11; "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This is but a specimen of the manner in which justified persons are spoken of in the Bible. Also, Rom 8:1; "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They only are justified who walk after the Spirit. Should it be objected, as it may be, that the scriptures often speak of saints, or truly regenerate persons, as needing sanctification, and of sanctification as something that comes after regeneration, and as that which the saints are to aim at attaining, I answer, that when sanctification is thus spoken of, it is doubtless used in the higher sense already noticed; to wit, to denote a state of being settled, established in faith, rooted and grounded in love, being so confirmed in the faith and obedience of the gospel, as to hold on in the way steadfastly, unmovably, always abounding in the work of the Lord. This is doubtless a condition of permanent justification, as has been said, but not a condition of present justification.

By sanctification being a condition of justification, the following things are intended.

(1.) That present, full, and entire consecration of heart and life to God and his service, is an unalterable condition of present pardon of past sin, and of present acceptance with God.

(2.) That the penitent soul remains justified no longer than this full-hearted consecration continues. If he falls from his first love into the spirit of self-pleasing, he falls again into bondage to sin and to the law, is condemned, and must repent and do his "first work," must return to Christ, and renew his faith and love, as a condition of his salvation. This is the most express teaching of the Bible, as we shall fully see.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LVII.

SANCTIFICATION.

In discussing this subject I will--

I. GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE RECENT DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE BEEN HAD UPON THIS QUESTION.

II. REMIND YOU OF SOME POINTS THAT HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN THIS COURSE OF STUDY.

III. DEFINE THE PRINCIPAL TERMS TO BE USED IN THIS DISCUSSION.

IV. SHOW WHAT THE REAL QUESTION NOW AT ISSUE IS.

V. THAT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE.

VI. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS OF THIS ATTAINMENT.

VII. ANSWER OBJECTIONS.

VIII. CONCLUDE WITH REMARKS.

I. *I am to give some account of the recent discussions that have been had upon the subject of entire sanctification in this life.*

When lecturing and writing on polemic theology, it is important and even indispensable, that we should entertain just ideas of the views and arguments of our opponents. In entering upon the discussion of the question before us, it seems impossible to proceed without noticing the recent discussions that have been had, and without giving you the substance of the principal things that have been said of late in opposition to our views. This will prepare the way for a fuller and more intelligent examination of the question under consideration, than could be otherwise had. I shall therefore make no apology for introducing in this place a brief history of the discussions alluded to, although they have so recently appeared in print.

About the year 1832 or 1833, the sect called Antinomian Perfectionists, sprang up at about the same time, in several places in New York and New England. We have in their leading organ, "The Perfectionist," published at New Haven, Ct., their articles of belief, or their Confession of Faith, as it professes to have been carefully prepared and published by request. It is as follows:--

WHAT WE BELIEVE.

1. We believe that God is the only rightful interpreter of the Bible, and teacher of theological truth; hence--

2. We believe that no doctrine can become an article of true faith, which is not recognized by the believer as an immediate revelation to him from God; yet--

3. We believe that God, "who worketh all in all," can and does teach his own truth, through his written word, and through the testimony of his sons; therefore--

4. We believe it is proper that we should state, as witnesses for God, the fundamental articles of our own faith.

5. We believe "there is none good but one, that is God;" that all the righteousness in the universe is God's righteousness.

6. We believe that God's righteousness may be revealed in his creatures, as a man's spirit is revealed in the motions of his body.

7. We believe that "the works of the flesh [that is, human nature], are adultery, uncleanness, envyings, strife, and such like" only.

8. We believe that all attempts to produce better results from human nature, by instruction and legal discipline, only increase the evil--inasmuch as they refine and disguise without removing it.

9. We believe that the Son of God was manifested in human nature for the purpose of destroying (not reforming), the works of the flesh, and revealing the righteousness of God.

10. We believe that the righteousness of God was never revealed in human nature till the birth of Jesus Christ.

11. We believe that the object of all God's dealings with the human race, before the birth of Christ, was not to promote the righteousness of the flesh, that is, self-righteousness, that is, the perfection of sin; but to prepare the way for the manifestation of his own righteousness through Jesus Christ; hence--

12. We believe that the righteousness of the saints, under the law before Christ, was only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," bearing a relation to the true righteousness of God, like that of a type to its anti-type.

13. We believe that the servants of God under the law, by submission to the discipline of the dispensation in which they lived, were prepared for and became heirs of the righteousness of God, afterward revealed by Jesus Christ.

14. We believe that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,"--that the union of human and divine nature in him, made the righteousness of God accessible to all men.

15. We believe that Christ is properly called the second Adam, and as the human race in spirit is one body, that he became, by his incarnation, "the light that lighteth every man."

16. We believe that all who are apprized by the gospel of the fact that the Son of God has come, are thereby called to choose, whether they will hold the fallen or the risen Adam as their head.

17. We believe that faith alone receives, and unbelief rejects, the blessings given to man by the second Adam; by faith men awake to a perception of the truth as it is in Christ; unbelief is the devil's dream.

18. We believe that Christ, as he is in his resurrection and glory, is given to every member of the human race.

19. We believe that all the faith, righteousness, liberty, and glory of the risen Son of God, are given to every man.

20. We believe that Christ, in his incarnation was "made under the law," and that the Christian dispensation did not commence, in any sense, till he ascended up on high.

21. We believe that none are Christians, in any sense, till they receive Christ in his resurrection; hence--

22. We believe that the disciples of Christ, during his personal ministry in the flesh, were not Christians.

23. We believe that Christ, in the resurrection, is free from sin, from the law, from all ordinances, and from death: hence, all who are subject to any of these are not properly called Christians, as not having attained the hope of their calling.

24. We believe that the history which the Bible contains of the church after Christ's ascension, commonly called the primitive church, is a history rather of the latter-day glory of Judaism, than of the commencement of Christianity.

25. We believe that the apostles and primitive believers, so far as they were subject to sin, law, and death, were Jews, and not Christians.

26. We believe that Christ plainly and repeatedly promised to his disciples, that he would come to them a second time, and complete their salvation within the life-time of some of his immediate followers.

27. We believe that the primitive church, living in the transition period, from the first to the second coming of Christ, were more or less partakers of the resurrection, holiness, liberty, and glory of Christ, according to their faith.

28. We believe, that at the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish dispensation, Christ came to believers the second time according to his promise.

29. We believe, that, at the period of the second coming of Christ, Christianity, or the kingdom of heaven, properly began.

30. We believe, that this was the period of the full developement of the NEW COVENANT, (Heb. viii.,) which secures to believers perfect and eternal salvation from sin, full freedom from written law and human instruction.

31. We believe, that the whole body of Christ, that is, the church, attained the perfect resurrection of the spiritual body at his second coming.

32. We believe, that antichrist, at the same period, attained the perfect resurrection of damnation.

33. We believe, that this was the period of the commencement of the judgment, (CRISIS, see the Greek,) of this world.

34. We believe, that after this period, the salvation given to all men in Jesus Christ, included nothing less than a perfect and eternal salvation from sin, a perfect redemption from the law and legal instruction--a perfect resurrection of the spiritual body, and a standing on the plain of eternity beyond the judgment."

In the winter of 1836-7, I preached a course of lectures to Christians, in the church of which I was then pastor, in the city of New York, which were reported by the editor of the New York Evangelist, and published in his paper. Soon after they were published in that form, they were published in a volume, and went into extensive circulation, both in Europe and America. Among these lectures were two on the subject of Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, from Mat 5:48 --"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

In the first of these lectures I endeavoured to show,

1. What perfection the text does not, and what it does require.

2. That this perfection is a duty.

3. That this perfection is attainable in this life.

4. I proceeded to answer objections.

I regarded the perfection demanded by the text as consisting in entire obedience of heart and life to the law of God. And so I taught. I then proceeded to show, that this state of obedience is attainable in this life. The remainder of this and the following lecture were occupied in answering objections to the doctrine of the first discourse. These lectures were soon spread before thousands of readers. Whatever was thought of them, I heard not a word of objection to the doctrine from any quarter. If any was made, it did not, to my recollection, come to my knowledge.

In the year 1840, President Mahan published a small work on the subject of Christian perfection. Several pieces had previously been published by him and myself in the "Oberlin Evangelist," upon the same subject. Prof. Cowles, about the same time, published a series of articles in the "Oberlin Evangelist," upon the subject of the holiness of Christians in this life, which were, soon after their first appearance, collected and published in a small volume. Nearly at the same time I published a course of lectures in the same paper, which were soon also put into a volume by themselves. All three of us gave a definition of Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, amounting in substance to the same thing, making it to consist in entire consecration to God, and entire obedience to the law, and supported the attainability of this state in this life, by substantially the same course of argument. We agreed in stating the attainability of this state, as the thing which we proposed to prove, and to the proof of which we shaped our whole course of argument. The attainability of this state we attempted to establish by many arguments, among which are the following:--

1. We argued the possibility of attaining this state from the fact, that God expressly commands it.

2. From the fact that man, by virtue of his moral agency, is naturally able fully to obey God.

3. From the fact, that provisions are made in the gospel for the entire sanctification of believers in this life.

4. From the fact, that we are commanded to pray in faith for the entire sanctification of believers in this life.

5. From the fact, that Christ and the apostles prayed for this.

6. From the fact, that the entire sanctification of believers in this life is expressly promised in scripture.

Pres. Mahan and myself, especially, urged the attainability of this state, not only from the foregoing and many other considerations, but also from the fact, that this state has been attained, and instanced Paul the apostle, as an example of this attainment.

Immediately upon the publication of the above-named works, the public journals opened a battery upon us, strangely, and I must say, unaccountably confounding our views with those of the antinomian perfectionists. What analogy was discernible between our views, as set forth in our writings, and those of the antinomian perfectionists, as expressed in their own formula of doctrine, as above given, I am utterly at a loss to understand. But it was insisted, that we were of that school and denomination, notwithstanding the greatest pains-taking on our part to make the public acquainted with our views. Many honest ministers and laymen, in this country and in Europe, were doubtless misled by the course pursued by the public press. Some of the leading religious journals refused to publish our articles, and kept their readers in ignorance of our real views. They gave to the public, oftentimes, the grossest misrepresentations of our views, and refused to allow our replies a place in their columns. The result for sometime was a good deal of misapprehension and alarm, on the part of many Christians who had been among our warmest friends. Soon after the publication of President Mahan's work, above alluded to, it was reviewed by Dr. Leonard Woods, of Andover Theological Seminary. Dr. Woods committed in his review four capital errors, which laid his review open to a blow of annihilation, which was in due time levelled against it by President Mahan. The president had defined what he intended by Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, and had also stated what he did not understand it as implying. He defined it to consist in a state of entire conformity of heart and life to the law of God, or in consecration of the whole being to God. He very expressly took issue upon the question of the attainability of this state in this life, and was at special pains to guard against the true point at issue being mistaken, and protested against any one's making a false issue. Dr. Woods noticed this, and his first error consisted in assuming, that the real point at issue between him and President Mahan was just what he, Dr. Woods, chose to make it. Hence, secondly, Dr. Woods proceeded to take issue with the author he was reviewing, not upon the possibility of attaining the state in question in this life, which was the proposition stated and defended by his author, but upon the fact of this state having been attained in this life. This was the doctor's second error. His third error consisted in the fact, that having made a false issue, he replied to the arguments of his opponent, as if they had been designed to establish, not the attainability, but the actual attainment of this state in this life.

He certainly had a right to controvert, if he chose, the fact of actual attainment, or to deny any other argument President Mahan used to prove the attainability of this state. But he had no right, and it was utterly absurd and unjust, to make a false issue, to take issue upon the fact of attainment, and represent the president's argument, as adduced to sustain that position, when in fact it was framed in support of a totally different position; and this Dr. Woods knew full well.

But the doctor fell into a fourth error as fatal to his object as either of the preceding. He did not at all define his views of what constitutes Christian perfection or entire sanctification, nor did he notice his opponent's definition. We are therefore left to the necessity of inferring what he understands by entire sanctification or Christian perfection from his course of argument.

From this we learn, that he founded his argument against the fact of attainment, which was the point that he aimed to overthrow, upon a grossly false assumption, in respect to the nature of Christian perfection. The following are specimens of his course of reasoning: He denied that any Christian had ever attained to a state of entire sanctification in this life, because the Bible requires Christians in all their earthly course to grow in grace. Now it will be seen at once, that this argument is good for nothing, unless it be assumed, as a major premise, that Christian perfection or entire sanctification implies the impossibility of further progress in holiness. The argument in syllogistic form would stand thus:--

"Christian perfection or entire sanctification implies the impossibility of further progress in holiness. The Bible requires all Christians in all time to progress in holiness, which implies the possibility of their doing so. Therefore, no Christian is in this life entirely sanctified."

The assumption of a grossly false major premise alone gives his argument the colour of relevancy or plausibility. But suppose any one should pursue the same course of argument, in respect to total depravity, and insist that no sinner is ever totally depraved in this life, because the Bible represents wicked men and seducers as waxing worse and worse; would Dr. Woods, or those who agree with him, acknowledge the conclusiveness of such an argument? But if total depravity does not imply, as every one knows that it does not, the impossibility of further progress in sin, so neither for the same reason does entire or total sanctification imply the impossibility of further progress in holiness.

But President Mahan had expressly excluded from his definition of Christian perfection the idea of its implying a state in which no higher attainments in holiness were possible. He had insisted that the saints may not only always in this life grow in holiness, but that they must for ever grow in grace or holiness as they grow in knowledge. How strange, then, that Dr. Woods should not only make a false issue, but also proceed to sustain his position, by assuming as true what his author had expressly denied! There was not even the shadow of disagreement between him and his opponent, assuming as he did, that Christian perfection implied the impossibility of further progress in holiness. President Mahan as much abhorred the idea of the actual or possible attainment of such a state in this or any other life, as the doctor did himself. The doctor had no right to represent him as holding to Christian perfection, in any such sense as that he was controverting. In the face of President Mahan's disavowal of such a sentiment, the doctor shaped his argument to overthrow a position which the president never maintained. Having created his own issue, and supported it by his own assumption, he was pronounced by multitudes to have gained a complete victory.

Again: Dr. Woods denied that Christian perfection ever was or ever will be attained in this life, because the Bible represents Christians in all time as engaged in the Christian warfare. Here again we get at the doctor's view of Christian perfection; to wit, that it implies the cessation of the Christian warfare. But what is the Christian warfare?

The doctor plainly assumes, that it consists in warring with present sin. Yet he holds all sin to be voluntary. His assumption then that the Christian warfare consists in a warfare with present sin, represents the will as opposing its present choice. Choice warring with choice. But the Christian warfare implies no such thing. It is a warfare or contest with temptation. No other warfare is possible in the nature of the case. Christ was a subject of it. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. While our circumstances remain what they will always be in this world, we shall be subject to temptation, of course, from the world, the flesh, and Satan. But Christian perfection is not at all incompatible with the existence of this strife with temptation. This argument of the doctor was based wholly, like the preceding, upon the begging or assumption of a totally false major premise. He made an issue between himself and President Mahan, when there was none. The president no more held than he did, that such a state ever was or will be attained in this life, as implies the cessation of the Christian warfare, properly so called. Thus Dr. Woods set out without giving his readers any definition of Christian perfection, and stumbled and blundered through his whole argument, totally misrepresenting the argument of the author whom he reviewed, and sustaining several of his own positions by sheer assumptions.

The applause with which this review was received by the great mass of ministers and by many laymen, shows the deep darkness in which this whole question was and had been for a long time enveloped. We shall see, in its proper place, that the erroneous view of nearly the whole church upon this subject, was the legitimate result of a totally false philosophy of moral depravity. The review of Dr. Woods was looked upon very extensively as a complete using up of President Mahan's book. It was soon published, by request, in a separate volume. But the president's answer appeared in due time, and, so far as I know, was universally regarded by those who candidly read it, as a complete refutation of Dr. Woods's review.

The doctor admitted in his review, that entire sanctification was attainable in this life, both on the ground of natural ability, and also because the gospel has made sufficient provision for this attainment. But with his assumed definition of entire sanctification, he should not have admitted the possibility of such attainment. For surely it is not possible, on the ground of natural ability, to attain such a state, either in this life or in any other, that no further advances can be made. Nor has the gospel made provision to render such attainment possible in this life. Nor is it possible, either on the ground of natural ability, or through the provisions of grace, to attain a state in this life, in which the warfare with temptation will cease. It is difficult to conceive how Dr. Woods, with his ideal of entire sanctification, could admit the possibility of attaining this state in this life. Certainly there was no consistency in making both the assumption and the admission. If he assumed the one, he should have denied the other. That is, if, in his view, entire sanctification implied a state in which there could be no further advances in holiness, or in which there could be no further war with temptation, he should have denied the possibility of the attainment in this life, at least.

Nearly at the same time with the review of Dr. Woods, just named, the presbytery of Troy, New York, by a committee appointed for that purpose, issued a review of our opinions, and, as I suppose, intended especially as a reply to my work already alluded to.

The letter or review of the presbytery was published in the "New York Evangelist," and, I believe, in most of the leading public journals of the day. I replied, but my reply was not admitted into the columns of the journals that published the review. This fact seems to demand, that both the letter of the presbytery and my reply should have a place in this account of the discussion. I therefore here give them entire.

"ACTION OF THE TROY PRESBYTERY.

"Statement of Doctrine.

"In the progress of human investigation, it not unfrequently happens, that truth and error are so connected, that the work of distinction becomes as indispensable as that of refutation. In this form, error is always the most dangerous, not only because it is the least likely to be perceived, but because from its relation, it is liable to share in that confidence which the mind is accustomed to assign to admitted truth. In this form, also, it is often, relatively to our perceptions, the same as truth; but the moment this unnatural union of repellent elements is sundered, both assume their distinctive and peculiar marks.

"These prefatory thoughts find an ample illustration in the present state of opinion, in some sections of the church, relative to the doctrine of 'Christian Perfection.' That all the sentiments of this system are false, it would be difficult to show; and as difficult to show their entire truth. The system is a subtle combination of truth and error. Any partial prevalence that it may have had, is easily explained on this principle. Where the truth is made most prominent, the whole assumes an imposing aspect; but an inversion of this error will as signally mark its defects. The work, therefore, of exposing the one, without injury to the other, becomes a duty with every devout and honest inquirer. This is what your committee purpose to undertake; and for this purpose it will be sufficient to answer the two following questions:--

"1. What is the controverted point in this system?

"2. What is truth in relation to that point?

"Let us take up these questions in the above order.

"1. In the first place, What is the controverted point--what is the real issue?

"That there is some issue, admits of no doubt. What is it? It is not, whether by the requirement of the moral law, or the injunction of the gospel, men are commanded to be perfectly holy; not whether men are under obligations to be thus holy; not whether, as moral agents, such a state is to them a possible state; not whether the gospel system is competent to secure actual perfection in holiness, if its entire resources be applied; not whether it is the duty and privilege of the church, to rise much higher in holy living, than it has ever yet done in our world. To join issue on any or all of these points, is to make a false issue; it is to have the appearance of a question without its reality. Some or all of these points form a part of the scheme of 'Christian Perfection,' but certainly they do not invest it with any peculiar character; for they involve no new sentiment differing from the ground taken by the great body of orthodox Christians in every age. It cannot be supposed that their advocacy has led to the various and fearful solicitudes of learned and pious men in regard to the truth and tendency of this system. It must therefore be fraught with some other element. What is that element? The assertion, that Christian men do attain in some cases during the present life, to a state of perfect holiness, excluding sin in every form, and that for an indefinite period they remain in this state. This position requires a moment's analysis, that it may neither suffer nor gain by an ambiguous use of terms.

"(1.) A state of perfect holiness is the general thing affirmed under several relations--such holiness, as leaves not a solitary point of the divine requirements, either in kind or degree, that is not absolutely and completely met by the subject of this predicate--such holiness as involves entire conformity to God's law, and excludes all sin. Anything short of this, is not perfect holiness, even at the time when its possession is alleged; such a state would be one of imperfect or incomplete sanctification. In establishing the reality of this assumed attainment, it is not allowable to abate or decrease the purity and rigour of the divine law--this would at once change the nature of both categories involved in this question, that is, sin and holiness. We must take the law as it is, and use it as the infallible standard of measurement.

"(2.) This affirmation of a fact is made under several relations. The first is one of speciality, that is, that some Christians have reached this state. It is not contended that it is the state of all Christians, and by consequence, that none are Christians but those who are perfectly sanctified. The second involves two relations of time, that is, that this attainment has been made in the present life, and that it has remained the permanent state for a period more or less indefinite--a day, a week, a month, a year, or years. It is not denied that it is a state in which defection is possible; hence a Christian in this state may relapse into one of imperfect sanctification. Such a phenomenon would be apostacy from perfect to imperfect holiness, and might be succeeded by a return to the former state. These relapses and restorations may be of an indefinite number, for they admit of no necessary limitation but the life of the individuals. They are not however to be confounded with that theory of moral actions, which regards each as wholly good or wholly bad, for they contemplate a longer period of time than is assigned to the production of any given moral act.

"Such is the real question at issue--such is the import of 'Christian perfection,' so far as it has any peculiarity. This is the question to be decided; to argue any other, is to lose sight of the real one--it is to meet an opponent where there is no debate, but entire agreement.

"2. In the second place it is proposed to inquire--What is truth in relation to this point?

"It is obvious that the burden of proof lies with him who affirms the truth of this sentiment. He must moreover direct his proof to the very thing affirmed, and not to something else. It is easy to carry a question by stating one proposition and proving another. If the proposition in debate be established, the discussion is at an end, the doctrine of Christian perfection must be acknowledged.

"(1.) It may be well, therefore, in the first place, to insist on our logical rights, and inquire, 'has the proposition yet been proved?' This question involves a variety of subordinate ones, a brief allusion to which is all that can be made.

"(i.) It has sometimes been urged, that because perfection in holiness is attainable in this life, therefore it is actually attained. How much validity this argument possesses, we shall be able to judge, if we state it in a syllogistic form. It would be thus: whatever is attainable in this life, is actually attained in this life; a state of perfect holiness is attainable in this life; therefore it is actually attained in this life. It must be confessed that this syllogism has the attribute of logical conclusiveness, but ere we grant the truth of the inference, it may be well to decide the truth of the premises. Is the first or major premise true? If so, then every sinner who hears the gospel, must attain to actual salvation; then not some, but all believers must be perfectly sanctified in the present life: then every man actually reaches, in the present life, the highest possible intellectual and moral good of his being. It must be palpable to every discriminating mind, that this reason takes for granted a false premise; and although conformable to the rules of logic, it is liable to prove an untruth; it confounds the broad distinction between what is merely possible and what is actual.

"(ii.) Again, it is urged in defence of this system, that the gospel contains adequate provisions for the perfect sanctification of believers in this life, and therefore some believers are thus sanctified. The logical formula will place this reasoning in its true light. It will stand thus: Whatever is possible by the provisions of the gospel in this life, will take place in this life; the perfect sanctification of some believers in this life is possible by these provisions; therefore it will take place in this life. This is a most extraordinary method of reasoning. With some slight changes, it will prove what even the advocate of perfection will be slow to admit. In the second or minor proposition, substitute the word 'all' for 'some,' and then it proves that all believers are perfectly sanctified in this life. Again, in place of 'some' or 'all believers,' insert the words 'all men,' then it proves that all are perfectly sanctified in this life. There must therefore be some radical difficulty in the first or major proposition. What is that difficulty? It lies in a limitation which is not expressed, but which, the moment it is seen, overturns the whole argument. The provisions of the gospel are sufficient for perfect sanctification at any time and place, if they be fully applied, and not otherwise. Their partial or full application contemplates the action of a rational and voluntary agent. Hence, while competent, they may fail of this effect, owing to the non-application, and not to any fault in the provisions themselves. Before therefore this argument is entitled to the least weight, it must be proved that some believers, or all, fully appropriate these provisions in the present life. This being done, then all is clear. This has never yet been done; but it has been lately assumed, as if it were an undisputed truth. The main argument of President Mahan on Perfection is embarrassed with this very fallacy.

"(iii.) Again, in support of this scheme, much use has been made of the commands, promises, and prayers, recorded in the Bible.

"In relation to the commands, it will be sufficient to say, that although the Bible does command a state of perfect holiness in this life, it does not follow that the command is in any instance fully obeyed on earth. Before we can arrive at this conclusion, we must adopt the following principle; that is, that whatever is commanded in the Bible is actually performed by the subjects of that command. This would exclude the existence of all sin from the world; it would prove all men to be holy, without a single exception; it would establish the perfect sanctification, not of some, but of all believers. It is certainly a most formidable engine of demonstration, too potent for an ordinary hand to wield.

"So also the argument based on the promises of God involves fallacies of reasoning not less apparent. It is a glorious truth, that God has promised to all believers a final victory over sin, which undoubtedly will be accomplished at some period of their history. But does it follow then, because believers are to be perfectly sanctified at some time and somewhere, the present life will be the time and place of this perfect sanctification? Let a promise be adduced, if it can be, that fixes the period of this event to the present life. The divine promises, like the provisions of the gospel, are conditioned as to the degree of their results, by appropriative acts on the part of the believer. Hence the fallacy of the argument is apparent, in that it takes for granted that some believers in the present life do fully comply with all the conditions contemplated in the promises themselves. Without this assumption it proves nothing. Besides, it is not to be forgotten that the promises are general, addressed alike to all believers; and hence the rules of reasoning by which they are made to prove the perfect sanctification of some Christians in the present life, equally prove that of all in every period of time, past, present, and future. The argument from promises has no relation to, or limitation by, any specific time. But two alternatives seem to be possible; either the reasoning must be abandoned as not valid, or we must admit that every regenerated man is sinless, and that too from the moment of his conversion.

"Similar defects characterize the arguments drawn from the prayers which the Bible records, as well as those which it authorizes Christians to make. It is true that Christ prayed for his disciples in language the most elevated,--'Sanctify them through thy truth.' The same may be said of the great apostle when he prayed,--'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' We are directed to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven; and in general authorized to pray for a perfect victory over all sin at every time. These are the facts; now what is the inference? The advocate of perfection responds, that some believers are perfectly sanctified in the present life. These and kindred facts we offer, to prove this conclusion. Is there, then, between the two a certain connexion? If we admit the one, must we logically admit the other? Facts speak a very different language. Were those included in the prayer of Christ thus sanctified, and that from the moment of its utterance? Was the same true of all the Christians of Thessalonica? Has the will of God yet been done on earth, as perfectly as in heaven? Has every believer who has hungered and thirsted after righteousness, attained to sinless perfection in this life? Did not Paul most fervently pray for the salvation of Israel, and have not thousands of Jews died since, in their sins? Did he not pray that the thorn in his flesh might be removed? and was it removed? The grand mistake in this reasoning is, that it fixes what the nature and terms of prayer do not fix; that is, the time when, and the place where, the sought blessing shall be obtained. Applied as evidence to any believer who claims to be wholly sanctified, it would prove his sanctification an hour, a week, month, or year, before he was thus sanctified, as really as at the moment in which he professed to have made this high attainment. Contemplated in its most general form, it would prove that everything which is a proper object of prayer, and which will be obtained in some state of being, will actually be obtained in the present life. There is a vast abyss between the facts and conclusion, which the utmost ingenuity is unable to remove.

"(iv.) Finally, on this branch of the argument, a variety of proof-texts has been summoned to the service of this system. A critical examination of all these is inconsistent with the limits of the present statement. It will be sufficient to advert to the false principles of interpretation to which they have been subjected. These are three in number:--

"(*a*.) The first consists in a misapplication of passages; as when Paul says, 'I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men'--or when Zacharias and Elisabeth are spoken of as 'walking in all the commandments and ordinances blameless.'

"(*b*.) The second consists in regarding certain terms as proofs of perfection in holiness, which are merely distinctive of Christian character, as contrasted with the state of the unregenerate. These are such words as 'holy, saints, sanctified, blameless, just, righteous, perfect, entire,' &c. That these and kindred terms are designed to be characteristic, and not descriptive of the degrees of holiness, is proved by the fact that they are indiscriminately appropriated to all Christians, and that in many cases they are applied, when the context absolutely charges sin upon their subjects.

"(*c*.) The third false principle consists in interpreting certain passages in an absolute and unrestricted sense, where evidently they are designed to have a qualified sense. This error may perhaps be illustrated by a single passage. Take that remarkable saying of the apostle John: 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' Stronger language or a better proof-text cannot well be conceived. In an unrestricted sense, it affirms not only that every regenerated man is sinless, but an impossibility that it should be otherwise; it dislodges all sin and moral agency from a converted mind at a single blow. What will the advocate of perfection do with this passage? Will he acknowledge either or both of these consequences? This can hardly be supposed. How then will he escape them? There is but one way for him; this lies in placing a restricted and qualified sense upon the passage, and in a moment all is plain and harmonious. But why subject so plain a passage to this law of interpretation, and deny it to others less harmonious and decisive? No reason can be perceived but the one which grows out of the necessities of a favourite theory. Indeed, there is logically no stopping place to this system short of the bold affirmation, that all believers are perfectly sinless from the moment of conversion. Every argument in its last analysis must terminate in this extraordinary result. To arrest the inference at any other point is to betray a logical inconsistency. Are the advocates of perfection prepared for this bold and unbiblical doctrine? If not, it is time they had reviewed their arguments, and abandoned principles fraught with such a conclusion. Their weapons of defence are not less destructive than constructional in their character.

"(2.) Having tried the merits of the positive testimony on this subject, we remark in the second place, that in the present state of the question, the position is absolutely incapable of proof. When a man affirms his own sinless perfection for any given period, as a day, a week, or a year, he affirms his own infallible knowledge on two points; that is, that at the present moment he can recall every moral exercise during that period, every thought, feeling, desire, purpose, and that he does infallibly judge of the moral character of each exercise. Will any pretend to this knowledge? To do so, manifests the last degree of presumption, as well as ignorance, both of facts and the truths of mental science. Every effort to recall the whole of our mental exercises for a single day, must always be a failure; it can only be partially successful. This shows how little weight is due to the testimony of a man who asserts his own perfection; he may be honest, but this is no proof of the truth of his statement. If a case of 'perfection' were admitted to be real, still it is impossible, in the present state of our faculties, to find and predicate certain knowledge of it. The evidences of 'Christian perfection,' are then not only inconclusive, but its main proposition is absolutely unknowable to us.

"(3.) In the third place we remark, that this proposition is disproven by an amount of evidence that ought to be conclusive. To secure the greatest brevity of statement, this evidence may be condensed into the following series of propositions:--The Bible records defects in the characters of the most eminent saints, whose history it gives; it speaks in moderate terms of the attainments of the pious, when put in contrast with those of Christ, who hence is an exception to our race; it points the believer to the heavenly world as the consummation of his hopes, and exemption from all sin and sorrow; it describes the work of grace as going forward by successive and progressive stages, and fixes no limit to these stages, antecedent to the period of death; it speaks of those as being self-deceived who deny their own sinfulness--'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;' it represents Christians here as in an imperfect state--'For in many things we offend all' [the word 'all' in the original qualifies 'we' and not 'things;'] it exhorts Christians to lowly and humble views of their own attainments; it declares Christians in the present life to be under a process of providential discipline, the object of which is to make them more fully partakers of God's holiness; the most eminent saints that have ever lived since the days of the apostles, have uniformly expressed a painful consciousness of remaining sin, and spoken of their attainments in language far different from that of self-confidence; the higher Christians have risen in holiness, the more deeply have they been humbled with their own sinful imperfections, owing to a clearer discernment both of God and themselves. These propositions might each of them be amplified into as many arguments. Taken together, they seem conclusively to set aside the pretensions of any class of men who claim for themselves sinless perfection in the present life. We cannot but think, that however sincere such persons may be, they labour under a most dangerous delusion. With them we have no controversy; our controversy is with their system. It appears to us in no other light than that of a system, totally disconnected with its proposed evidence, demonstrably unknowable by the present state of our faculties, and in direct contravention to an amount of proof, biblical and experimental, that must for ever discredit its claims.

"RESOLUTIONS.

"1. Resolved, That in the judgment of this Presbytery, the doctrine of 'Christian perfection' in this life, is not only false, but calculated in its tendencies, to engender self-righteousness, disorder, deception, censoriousness and fanaticism.

"2. Resolved, That it is contrary to the Confession of Faith adopted by the Presbyterian church in the United States. See chap. 12, sec. 2.

"3. Resolved, That it is the duty of all orthodox ministers to acquaint themselves with this error, and at such times and in such measures as may seem to them most expedient, to instruct the people on this point.

"4. Resolved, That we view with regret and sorrow, the ground taken on this subject by the theological professors at Oberlin.

"5. Resolved, That we hail with joy every improvement in human opinion that conforms to the Bible, and promises, in its practical tendency, to decrease the sins, or increase the moral purity, of the church.

"6. Resolved, That the above statement and resolutions be signed by the Moderator and Stated Clerk, and published in the New York Evangelist, New York Observer, the Christian Observer, and the Presbyterian.

"Fayette Shipherd requested that his dissent from the above report of the Committee be appended to it, entered on the records of the Presbytery, and published with it. All the other members present voted in the affirmative.

"Troy, June 29, 1841.

"THOMAS J. HASWELL, Moderator.

"N. S. S. BEMAN, Stated Clerk.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LVIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

II. *I am to remind you of some points that have been settled in this course of study.*

1. The true intent and meaning of the law of God has been, as I trust, ascertained in the lectures on moral government. Let this point, if need be, be examined by reference to those lectures.

2. We have also seen, in those lectures, what is not, and what is implied in entire obedience to the moral law.

3. In those lectures, and also in the lectures on justification and repentance, it has been shown that nothing is acceptable to God, as a condition of justification, and of consequent salvation, but a repentance that implies a return to full obedience to the moral law.

4. It has also been shown, that nothing is holiness short of full obedience, for the time being, to the moral law.

5. It has also been shown, that regeneration and repentance consist in the heart's return to full obedience, for the time being, to this law.

6. We have also examined the doctrine of depravity, and seen, that moral depravity, or sin, consists in selfishness, and not at all in the constitution of men; that selfishness does not consist in the involuntary appetites, passions, and propensities, but that it consists alone in the committal of the will to the gratification of the propensities.

7. We have seen that holiness consists, not at all in the constitution of body or mind; but that it belongs, strictly, only to the will or heart, and consists in obedience of will to the law of God, as it lies revealed in the intellect; that it is expressed in one word, love; that this love is identical with the entire consecration of the whole being to the glory of God, and to the highest well-being of the universe; or in other words, that it consists in disinterested benevolence.

8. We have seen that all true saints, while in a state of acceptance with God, do actually render, for the time being, full obedience to all the known requirements of God; that is, that they do for the time being their whole duty--all that God, at this time, requires of them.

9. We have seen that this obedience is not rendered independent of the grace of God, but is induced by the indwelling spirit of Christ received by faith, and reigning in the heart. This fact will be more fully elucidated in this discussion than it has been in former lectures. A former lecture was devoted to it; but a fuller consideration of it remains to be entered upon hereafter.

III. *Define the principal terms to be used in this discussion.*

Here let me remark, that a definition of terms in all discussions is of prime importance. Especially is this true of this subject. I have observed that, almost without an exception, those who have written on this subject dissenting from the views entertained here, do so upon the ground that they understand and define the terms sanctification and Christian perfection differently from what we do. Every one gives his own definition, varying materially from others, and from what we understand by the terms; and then he goes on professedly opposing the doctrine as inculcated here. Now this is not only utterly unfair, but palpably absurd. If I oppose a doctrine inculcated by another man, I am bound to oppose what he really holds. If I misrepresent his sentiments, "I fight as one that beateth the air." I have been amazed at the diversity of definitions that have been given to the terms Christian perfection, sanctification, &c.; and to witness the diversity of opinion as to what is, and what is not, implied in these terms. One objects wholly to the use of the term Christian perfection, because, in his estimation, it implies this, and that, and the other thing, which I do not suppose are at all implied in it. Another objects to our using the term sanctification, because that implies, according to his understanding of it, certain things that render its use improper. Now it is no part of my design to dispute about the use of words. I must however use some terms; and I ought to be allowed to use Bible language in its scriptural sense, as I understand it. And if I should sufficiently explain my meaning, and define the sense in which I use the terms, and the sense in which the Bible manifestly uses them, this ought to suffice. And I beg, that nothing more or less may be understood by the language I use, than I profess to mean by it. Others may, if they please, use the same terms, and give a different definition of them. But I have a right to hope and expect, if they feel called upon to oppose what I say, that they will bear in mind my definition of the terms, and not pretend, as some have done, to oppose my views, while they have only differed from me in their definition of the terms used, giving their own definition varying materially and, I might say, infinitely from the sense in which I use the same terms, and then arraying their arguments to prove, that according to their definition of it, sanctification is not really attainable in this life, when no one here or anywhere else, that I ever heard of, pretended that, in their sense of the term, it ever was or ever will be, attainable in this life, and I might add, or in that which is to come.

Sanctification is a term of frequent use in the Bible. Its simple and primary meaning is a state of consecration to God. To sanctify is to set apart to a holy use--to consecrate a thing to the service of God. This is plainly both the Old and the New Testament use of the term. The Greek word *hagiazo* means to sanctify, to consecrate, or devote a person or thing to a particular, especially to a sacred, use. This word is synonymous with the Hebrew *kaudash*. This last word is used in the Old Testament to express the same thing that is intended by the Greek *hagiazo*, namely, to consecrate, devote, set apart, sanctify, purify, make clean or pure. *Hagiasmos*, a substantive from *hagiazo*, means sanctification, devotion, consecration, purity, holiness.

From the Bible use of these terms it is most manifest,--

1. That sanctification does not imply any constitutional change, either of soul or body. It consists in the consecration or devotion of the constitutional powers of body and soul to God, and not in any change wrought in the constitution itself.

2. It is also evident from the scriptural use of the term, that sanctification is not a phenomenon, or state of the intellect. It belongs neither to the reason, conscience, nor understanding. In short, it cannot consist in any state of the intellect whatever. All the states of this faculty are purely passive states of mind; and of course, as we have abundantly seen, holiness is not properly predicable of them.

3. It is just as evident that sanctification, in the scriptural and proper sense of the term, is not a mere feeling of any kind. It is not a desire, an appetite, a passion, a propensity, an emotion, nor indeed any kind or degree of feeling. It is not a state or phenomenon of the sensibility. The states of the sensibility are, like those of the intellect, purely passive states of mind, as has been repeatedly shown. They of course can have no moral character in themselves.

4. The Bible use of the term, when applied to persons, forbids the understanding of it, as consisting in any involuntary state or attitude of mind whatever.

5. The inspired writers evidently used the terms which are translated by the English word sanctify, to designate a phenomenon of the will, or a voluntary state of mind. They used the term *hagiazo* in Greek, and *kaudash* in Hebrew, to represent the act of consecrating one's self, or anything else to the service of God, and to the highest well-being of the universe. The term manifestly not only represents an act of the will, but an ultimate act or choice, as distinguished from a mere volition, or executive act of the will. Thus the terms rendered *sanctified* are used as synonymous with loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. The Greek *hagiasmos*, translated by the word sanctification, is evidently intended to express a state or attitude of voluntary consecration to God, a continued act of consecration; or a state of choice as distinct from a mere act of choice, an abiding act or state of choice, a standing and controlling preference of mind, a continuous committal of the will to the highest well-being of God and of the universe. Sanctification, as a state differing from a holy act, is a standing, ultimate intention, and exactly synonymous or identical with a state of obedience, or conformity to the law of God. We have repeatedly seen, that the will is the executive or controlling faculty of the mind. Sanctification consists in the will's devoting or consecrating itself and the whole being, all we are and have, so far as powers, susceptibilities, possessions are under the control of the will, to the service of God, or, which is the same thing, to the highest interests of God and of being. Sanctification, then, is nothing more nor less than entire obedience, for the time being, to the moral law.

Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God.

In this discussion, then, I shall use the term entire sanctification to designate a state of confirmed, and entire consecration of body, soul, and spirit, or of the whole being to God--confirmed, not in the sense, (1.) That a soul entirely sanctified cannot sin, but that as a matter of fact, he does not, and will not sin. (2.) Nor do I use the term entire sanctification as implying that the entirely sanctified soul is in no such danger of sinning as to need the thorough use and application of all the means of grace to prevent him from sinning, and to secure his continued sanctification. (3.) Nor, do I mean by entire sanctification, a state in which there will be no further struggle or warfare with temptation, or in which the Christian warfare will cease. This certainly did not cease in Christ to the end of life, nor will it with any being in the flesh. (4.) Nor do I use the term as implying a state in which no further progress in holiness is possible. No such state is, or ever will be, possible to any creature, for the plain reason, that all creatures must increase in knowledge; and increase of knowledge implies increase of holiness in a holy being. The saints will doubtless grow in grace or holiness to all eternity. (5.) Nor do I mean by the term entire sanctification, that the entirely sanctified soul will no longer need the continual grace and indwelling Spirit of Christ to preserve it from sin, and to secure its continuance in a state of consecration to God. It is amazing that such men as Dr. Beecher and others should suppose, that a state of entire consecration implies that the entirely sanctified soul no longer needs the grace of Christ to preserve it. Entire sanctification, instead of implying no further dependence on the grace of Christ, implies the constant appropriation of Christ by faith as the sanctification of the soul.

But since entire sanctification, as I understand the term, is identical with entire and continued obedience to the law of God, and since I have in lectures on moral government fully shown what is not, and what is, implied in full obedience to the law of God, to avoid much repetition in this place, I must refer you to what I have there said upon the topics just named.

IV. *Show what the real question now at issue is.*

1. It is not whether a state of present full obedience to the divine law is attainable in this life. For this has, I trust, been clearly established in former lectures.

2. It is not whether a state of permanent, full obedience has been attained by all, or by any of the saints on earth.

3. But the true question at issue is: Is a state of entire, in the sense of permanent sanctification, attainable in this life?

If in this discussion I shall insist upon the fact, that this state has been attained, let it be distinctly understood, that the fact that the attainment has been made, is only adduced in proof of the attainability of this state; that it is only one of the arguments by which the attainability of this state is proved. Let it also be distinctly borne in mind, that if there should be in the estimation of any one a defect in the proof, that this state has been attained, still the integrity and conclusiveness of the other arguments in support of the attainability will not thereby be shaken. It is no doubt true, that the attainability of this state in this life may be abundantly established, entirely irrespective of the question whether this state has ever been attained.

Let me, therefore, be distinctly understood as maintaining the attainability of this state, as the true question at issue; and that I regard the fact, that this state has been attained, only as one method of proving, or as a fact that demonstrates its attainability. Dr. Woods admitted the attainability of a state of entire sanctification in this life, and contested only the fact of its actual attainment. But he should not have admitted the attainability, with his idea of what is implied in it, as has been shown. For example, if, as he supposed, entire sanctification is a state in which no further progress in grace or holiness is possible, or in which there is and can be no Christian warfare or struggle with temptation, he had no right to admit that any such state as this is attainable in this life. I do not admit, but utterly deny, that any such state is at all attainable in this life, even if it is in any state of existence whatever.

But again: While Dr. Woods admitted, that entire sanctification is attainable in this life, he denied that it is attainable in any practical sense, in such a sense, that it is rational to expect or hope to make the attainment. He says we may attain it, but holds it to be dangerous error to expect to attain it. We may or might attain it, but we must not hope to attain it in this life. But how does he know? Does the Bible reveal the fact that we never shall? We shall see.

The true question is, Is a state of entire, established, abiding consecration to God attainable in this life, in such a sense, that we may rationally expect or hope to become thus established in this life? Are the conditions of attaining this established state in the grace and love of God, such that we may rationally expect or hope to fulfil them, and thus become established, or entirely sanctified in this life? This is undoubtedly the true and the greatly important question to be settled.

Let no one throw fog and embarrassment over our inquiries, by doing as Dr. W. has done; that is, by admitting and denying the attainability of this state at the same breath; admitting it, to save his orthodoxy with the new school, who maintain the doctrine of natural ability, and denying it as a practical or practicable thing, to save himself from the charge of perfectionism. It is certainly a grave and most important question, whether we may rationally hope or expect, ever in this life, to attain to such an established state of grace, and faith, and love, or which is the same thing, to such an established state of entire consecration, as to have done with slipping, and falling, and sinning against the blessed God. Certainly, the bleeding, yearning, agonized spirit of the saint recently recovered from a fall, ought not to be tantalized with metaphysical or theological quibbles, when it asks with agonizing interest, "How long, Lord? Is there no hope that I can or shall arrive, in this life, at a state in which, through mighty reigning grace, I shall have done with abusing thee?" It appears to me monstrous and barbarous to answer such a soul, as some have done, by saying to him, You may attain such a state, but it is dangerous error to expect ever to cease abusing God, while you live in this world.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LIX.

SANCTIFICATION.

V. *That entire sanctification is attainable in this life.*

I will here introduce some things which I have said under this head in former lectures on this subject.

1. It is self-evident, that entire obedience to God's law is possible on the ground of natural ability. To deny this, is to deny that a man is able to do as well as he can. The very language of the law is such as to level its claims to the capacity of the subject, however great or small that capacity may be. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Here then it is plain, that all the law demands, is the exercise of whatever strength we have, in the service of God. Now, as entire sanctification consists in perfect obedience to the law of God, and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have, it is, of course, for ever settled, that a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, on the ground of natural ability.

This is generally admitted by those who are called moderate Calvinists. Or, perhaps I should say, it generally has been admitted by them, though at present some of them seem inclined to give up the doctrine of natural ability, and to take refuge in constitutional depravity, rather than admit the attainableness of a state of entire sanctification in this life. But let men take refuge where they will, they can never escape from the plain letter, and spirit, and meaning of the law of God. Mark with what solemn emphasis it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is its solemn injunction, whether it be given to an angel, a man, or a child. An angel is bound to exercise an angel's strength; a man, the strength of a man; and a child, the strength of a child. It comes to every moral being in the universe, just as he is, and where he is, and requires, not that he should create new powers, or possess other powers than he has, but that such as his powers are, they should all be used with the utmost perfection and constancy for God. And to use again the language of a respected brother: "If we could conceive of a moral pigmy, the law levels its claims to his capacities, and says to him, 'Love the Lord thy God with all THY heart, and with all THY strength.'" And should a man by his own fault render himself unable to use one of his hands, one eye, one foot, or any power of body or mind, the law does not say to him, in such a case, use all the powers and all the strength you might have had, but only use what powers and what strength remain. It holds him guilty, and condemns him for that act or neglect which diminished his ability; but it no longer, in any instance, requires the use of that power of body or mind which has been destroyed by that act.

For a fuller developement of this truth see Lectures on Ability, in this course. Also Lectures on Moral Government.

2. The provisions of grace are such as to render its actual attainment in this life, the object of reasonable pursuit. It is admitted, that the entire sanctification of the church is to be accomplished. It is also admitted, that this work is to be accomplished, "through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." It is also universally agreed, that this work must be begun here; and also that it must be completed before the soul can enter heaven. This then is the inquiry,--Is this state attainable as a matter of fact before death?

It is easy to see, that this question can be settled only by a reference to the word of God. And here it is of fundamental importance, that we understand the rules by which scripture declarations and promises are to be interpreted. I have already given several rules, in the light of which we have endeavoured to interpret the meaning of the law.*(see below) I will now state several plain common-sense rules, by which the promises are to be interpreted. The question, in regard to the rules of biblical interpretation, is fundamental to all religious inquiries. Until the church are agreed to interpret the scriptures in accordance with certain fixed and undeniable principles, they can never be agreed in regard to what the Bible teaches. I have often been amazed at the total disregard of all sober rules of biblical interpretation. On the one hand, the threatenings, and on the other the promises, are either thrown away, or made to mean something entirely different from that which was intended by the Spirit of God. At present I will only mention a few plain, common-sense, and self-evident rules for the interpretation of the promises. In the light of these, we may be able to settle the inquiry before us, viz., whether the provisions of grace are such as to render entire and permanent sanctification in this life an object of reasonable pursuit.

(1.) The language of a promise is to be interpreted by a reference to the known character of him who promises, where this character is known in other ways than by the promise itself; for example,--

(i.) If the promisor is known to be of a very bountiful disposition, or the opposite of this, these considerations should be taken into the account in interpreting the language of his promise. If he is of a very bountiful disposition, he may be expected to mean all that he seems to mean, in the language of his promise, and a very liberal construction should be put upon his language. But if his character is known to be the opposite of bountiful and generous, and it is known that whatever he promised would be given with great reluctance, his language should be construed strictly.

(ii.) His character for hyperbole and extravagance in the use of language should be taken into the account in interpreting his promises. If it be well understood that the promisor is in the habit of using extravagant language--of saying much more than he means, this circumstance should, in all justice, be taken into the account in the interpretation of the language of his promises. But on the other hand, if he be known to be an individual of great accuracy, and to use language with great circumspection and propriety, we may freely understand him to mean what he says. His promise may be in figurative language, and not to be understood literally, but in this case even, he must be understood to mean what the figure naturally and fully implies.

(iii.) The question should be considered, whether the promise was made deliberately, or in circumstances of great, though temporary excitement. If the promise was made deliberately, it should be interpreted to mean what it says. But if it was made under great but temporary excitement, much allowance is to be made for the state of mind which led to the use of such strong language.

(2.) The relation of the parties to each other should be duly considered, in the interpretation of the language of a promise; for example, the promise of a father to a son admits of a more liberal and full construction, than if the promise were made to a stranger; as the father may be supposed to cherish a more liberal and bountiful disposition to a son, than towards a person in whom he has no particular interest.

(3.) The design of the promisor, in relation to the necessities of the promisee or person to whom the promise is made, should be taken into the account. If it be manifest, that the design of the promisor was to meet the necessities of the promisee, then the promise must be so understood as to meet these necessities.

(4.) If it be manifest, that the design of the promisor was to meet the necessities of the promisee, then the extent of these necessities should be taken into the account, in the interpretation of the promise.

(5.) The interest of the promisor in the accomplishment of his design, or in fully meeting and relieving the necessities of the promisee, should be taken into the account. If there is the most satisfactory proof, aside from that which is contained in the promise itself, that the promisor feels the highest interest in the promisee, and in fully meeting and relieving his necessities, then his promise must be understood accordingly.

(6.) If it is known that the promisor has exercised the greatest self-denial, and made the greatest sacrifice for the promisee, in order to render it proper or possible for him to make and fulfil his promises, in relation to relieving his necessities, the state of mind implied in this conduct should be fully recognized in interpreting the language of the promise. It would be utterly unreasonable and absurd, in such a case, to restrict and pare down the language of his promise, so as to make it fall entirely short of what might reasonably be expected of the promisor, from those developements of his character, feelings, and designs, which were made by the great self-denial he has exercised, and the sacrifices he has made.

(7.) The bearing of the promise upon the interests of the promisor should also be taken into the account. It is a general and correct rule of interpretation, that when the thing promised has an injurious bearing upon the interests of the promisor, and is something which he cannot well afford to do, and might therefore be supposed to promise with reluctance, the language in such a case is to be strictly construed. No more is to be understood by it than the strictest construction will demand.

(8.) But if on the other hand the thing promised will not impoverish, or in any way be inimical to the interests of the promisor, no such construction is to be resorted to.

(9.) Whenever the thing promised is that which the promisor has the greatest delight in doing or bestowing; and when he accounts it "more blessed to give than to receive;" and where it is well known, by other revelations of his character, and by his own express and often-repeated declarations, that he has the highest satisfaction, and finds his own happiness, in bestowing favours upon the promisee, in this case, the most liberal construction should be put upon the promise, and he is to be understood to mean all that he says.

(10.) The resources and ability of the promisor to meet the necessities of the promisee, without injury to himself, are to be considered. If a physician should promise to restore a patient to perfect health, it might be unfair to understand him as meaning all that he says. If he so far restored the patient, as that he recovered in a great measure from his disease, it might be reasonable to suppose, that this was all he really intended, as the known inability of a physician to restore an individual to perfect health, might reasonably modify our understanding of the language of his promise. But when there can be no doubt as to the ability, resources, and willingness of the physician to restore his patient to perfect health, then we are, in all reason and justice, required to believe he means all that he says. If God should promise to restore a man to perfect health who was diseased, there can be no doubt that his promise should be understood to mean what his language would import.

(11.) When commands and promises are given by one person to another in the same language, in both cases it is to be understood alike, unless there be some manifest reason to the contrary.

(12.) If neither the language, connexion, nor circumstances, demand a diverse interpretation, we are bound to understand the same language alike in both cases.

(13.) I have said, we are to interpret the language of law so as to consist with natural justice. I now say, that we are to interpret the language of the promises so as to consist with the known greatness, resources, goodness, bountifulness, relations, design, happiness, and glory of the promisor.

(14.) If his bountifulness is equal to his justice, his promises of grace must be understood to mean as much as the requirements of his justice.

(15.) If he delights in giving as much as in receiving, his promises must mean as much as the language of his requirements.

(16.) If he is as merciful as he is just, his promises of mercy must be as liberally construed as the requirements of his justice.

(17.) If "he delighteth in mercy," if himself says "judgment is his strange work," and mercy is that in which he has peculiar satisfaction, his promises of grace and mercy are to be construed, even more liberally than the commands and threatenings of his justice. The language, in this case, is to be understood as meaning quite as much, as the same language would in any supposable circumstances.

(18.) Another rule of interpreting and applying the promises, which has been extensively overlooked, is this, that the promises are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." They are all founded upon great and immutable principles of God's government, and expressive of them. God is no respecter of persons. He knows nothing of favouritism. But when he makes a promise, he reveals a principle of universal application to all persons in like circumstances. Therefore, the promises are not restricted, in their application, to the individual or individuals to whom they were first given, but may be claimed by all persons in similar circumstances. And what God is at one time, he always is. What he has promised at one time or to one person, he promises at all times, to all persons, under similar circumstances. That this is a correct view of the subject, is manifest from the manner in which the New Testament writers understood and applied the promises of the Old Testament. Let any person, with a reference Bible, read the New Testament with a design to understand how its writers applied the promises of the Old Testament, and he will see this principle brought out in all its fulness. The promises made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, the patriarchs, and to the inspired men of every age, together with the promises made to the church, and indeed all the promises of spiritual blessings--it is true of them all that what God has said and promised once, he always says and promises, to all persons, and at all times, and in all places, where the circumstances are similar.

Having stated these rules, in the light of which we are to interpret the language of the promises, I will say a few words in regard to the question, when a promise becomes due, and on what conditions we may realize its fulfilment. I have said some of the same things in the first volume of the "Oberlin Evangelist." But I wish to repeat them in this connexion, and add something more.

(1.) All the promises of sanctification in the Bible, from their very nature, necessarily imply the exercise of our own agency in receiving the thing promised. As sanctification consists in the right exercise of our own agency, or in obedience to the law of God, a promise of sanctification must necessarily be conditioned upon the exercise of faith in the promise. And its fulfilment implies the exercise of our own powers in receiving it.

(2.) It consequently follows, that a promise of sanctification, to be of any avail to us, must be due at some certain time, expressed or implied in the promise; that is, the time must be so fixed, either expressly or impliedly, as to put us into the attitude of waiting for its fulfilment; for if the fulfilment of the promise implies the exercise of our agency, the promise is a mere nullity to us, unless we are able to understand when it becomes due, in such a sense, that we may wait for and expect its fulfilment. The promise of Christ to the apostles, concerning the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, may illustrate my meaning. He had promised, that they should receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit not many days hence. This was sufficiently definite to bring them into an attitude of continual waiting upon the Lord, with the expectation of receiving the fulfilment. And as the baptism of the Holy Spirit involved the exercise of their own agency, it is easy to see that this expectation was indispensable to their receiving the blessing. But had they understood Christ to promise this blessing at a time so indefinitely future, as to leave them without the daily expectation of receiving it, they might, and doubtless would, have gone about their business until some further intimation on his part, that he was about to bestow it, had brought them into an attitude of waiting for its fulfilment.

(3.) A promise in the present tense is on demand. In other words, it is always due, and its fulfilment may be pleaded and claimed by the promisee at any time.

(4.) A promise due at a future specified time, is after that time on demand, and may at any time thereafter be pleaded as a promise in the present tense.

(5.) A great many of the Old Testament promises became due at the advent of Christ. Since that time, they are to be considered and used as promises in the present tense. The Old Testament saints could not plead their fulfilment to them; because they were either expressly or impliedly informed, that they were not to be fulfilled until the coming of Christ. All that class of promises, therefore, that became due "in the last days," are to be regarded as now due, or as promises in the present tense.

6. Notwithstanding these promises are now due, yet they are expressly or impliedly conditioned upon the exercise of faith, and the right use of the appropriate means, by us, to receive their fulfilment.

7. When a promise is due, we may expect the fulfilment of it at once or gradually, according to the nature of the blessing. The promise that the world shall be converted in the latter day, does not imply that we are to expect the world to be converted at any one moment of time; but that the Lord will hasten it in its time, according to the faith and efforts of the church. On the other hand, when the thing promised may in its nature be fulfilled at once, and when the nature of the case makes it necessary that it should be, then its fulfilment may be expected whenever we exercise faith.

8. There is a plain distinction between promises of grace and of glory. Promises of glory are of course not to be fulfilled until we arrive in heaven. Promises of grace, unless there be some express or implied reason to the contrary, are to be understood as applicable to this life.

9. A promise also may be unconditional in one sense, and conditional in another; for example, promises made to the church as a body may be absolute, and their fulfilment be secure and certain, sooner or later, while their fulfilment to any generation of the church, may be and must be, conditioned upon faith, and the appropriate use of means. Thus the promise of God, that the church should possess the land of Canaan, was absolute and unconditional, in such a sense as, that the church, at some period, would, and certainly must, take possession of that land. But the promise was conditional, in the sense that the entering into possession, by any generation, depended entirely upon their own faith and the appropriate use of means. So the promise of the world's conversion, and the sanctification of the church under the reign of Christ, is unconditional in the sense, that it is certain that those events will at some time occur, but when they will occur, what generation of individuals shall receive this blessing, is necessarily conditioned upon their faith. This principle is plainly recognized by Paul in Heb 4:6, Heb 4:11. "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief; let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

* See Lecture XVI. I.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LX.

SANCTIFICATION.

BIBLE ARGUMENT.

I COME NOW to consider the question directly, and wholly as a Bible question, whether entire sanctification is in such a sense attainable in this life, as to make its attainment an object of rational pursuit.

1. It is evident from the fact, expressly stated, that abundant means are provided for the accomplishment of this end. Eph 4:10-16. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Upon this passage I remark:--

(1.) That what is here spoken of is plainly applicable only to this life. It is in this life that the apostles, evangelists, prophets, and teachers, exercise their ministry. These means therefore are applicable, and so far as we know, only applicable to this life.

(2.) The apostle here manifestly teaches, that these means are designed and adequate to perfecting the whole church as the body of Christ, "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now observe,--

(3.) These means are for the perfecting of the saints, till the whole church, as a perfect man, "has come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." If this is not entire sanctification, what is? That this is to take place in this world is evident from what follows. For the apostle adds: "that we henceforth be no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

(4.) It should be observed, that this is a very strong passage in support of the doctrine, inasmuch as it asserts that abundant means are provided for the sanctification of the church in this life. And as the whole includes all its parts, there must be sufficient provision for the sanctification of each individual.

(5.) If the work is ever to be effected, it is by these means. But these means are used only in this life. Entire sanctification then must take place in this life.

(6.) If this passage does not teach a state of entire sanctification, such a state is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. And if believers are not here said to be wholly sanctified by these means, and of course in this life, I know not that it is anywhere taught that they shall be sanctified at all.

(7.) But suppose this passage to be put into the language of a command, how should we understand it? Suppose the saints commanded to be perfect, and to "grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," could anything less than entire sanctification be understood by such requisitions? Then by what rule of sober criticism, I would inquire, can this language, used in this connexion, mean anything less than I have supposed it to mean?

2. But let us look into some of the promises. It is not my design to examine a great number of scripture promises, but rather to show, that those which I do examine, fully sustain the positions I have taken. One is sufficient, if it be full and its application just, to settle this question for ever. I might occupy many pages in the examination of the promises, for they are exceedingly numerous, and full, and in point. But my design is at present to examine somewhat critically a few only out of the many. This will enable you to apply the same principles to the examination of the scripture promises generally.

(1.) I begin by referring you to the law of God, as given in Deu 10:12, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" Upon this passage I remark:--

(i.) It professedly sums up the whole duty of man to God--to fear and love him with all the heart and all the soul.

(ii.) Although this is said of Israel, yet it is equally true of all men. It is equally binding upon all, and is all that God requires of any man in regard to himself.

(iii.) Continued obedience to this requirement is entire sanctification, in the sense in which I use those terms.

See Deu 30:6. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Here we have a promise couched in the same language as the command just quoted. Upon this passage I remark--

(*a.*) It promises just what the law requires. It promises all that the first and great commandment anywhere demands.

(*b.*) Obedience to the first commandment always implies obedience to the second. It is plainly impossible that we should "love God, whom we have not seen," and "not love our neighbour, whom we have seen."

(*c.*) This promise, on its very face, appears to mean just what the law means--to promise just what the law requires.

(*d.*) If the law requires a state of entire sanctification, or if that which the law requires is a state of entire sanctification, then this is a promise of entire sanctification.

(*e.*) As the command is universally binding upon all and applicable to all, so this promise is universally applicable to all who will lay hold upon it.

(*f.*) Faith is an indispensable condition of the fulfilment of this promise. It is entirely impossible that we should love God with all the heart, without confidence in him. God begets love in man in no other way than by so revealing himself as to inspire confidence, that confidence which works by love. In Rules 10 and 11, for the interpretation of the promises, it is said, that "where a command and a promise are given in the same language, we are bound to interpret the language alike in both cases, unless there be some manifest reason for a different interpretation." Now here there is no perceivable reason why we should not understand the language of the promise as meaning as much as the language of the command. This promise appears to have been designed to cover the whole ground of the requirement.

(*g.*) Suppose the language in this promise to be used in a command, or suppose that the form of this promise were changed into that of a command;--suppose God should say as he does elsewhere, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul: "who would doubt that God designed to require a state of entire sanctification or consecration to himself. How then are we to understand it when used in the form of a promise? See Rules 14 and 15: "If his bountifulness equal his justice, his promises of grace must be understood to mean as much as the requirements of his justice." "If he delights in giving as much as in receiving, his promises must mean as much as the language of his requirements."

(*h.*) This promise is designed to be fulfilled in this life. The language and connexion imply this: "I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." This in some sense takes place in regeneration, but more than simple regeneration seems here to be promised. It is plain, I think, that this promise relates to a state of mind, and not merely to an exercise.

(*i.*) This promise as it respects the church, at some day, must be absolute and certain. So that God will undoubtedly, at some period, beget this state of mind in the church. But to what particular individuals and generation this promise will be fulfilled, must depend upon their faith in the promise.

(*j.*) Since the promise is as full as the command, and since the law requires perpetual obedience, we are to understand the promise as pledging a state of permanent obedience. This also is implied in the language of the promise. To circumcise the heart, implies establishing the soul in love.

(2.) See Jer 31:31-34 : "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Upon this passage, I remark:--

(i.) It was to become due, or the time when its fulfilment might be claimed and expected, was at the advent of Christ. This is unequivocally settled in Heb 8:8-12, where this passage is quoted at length, as being applicable to the gospel day.

(ii.) This is undeniably a promise of entire sanctification. It is a promise that the "law shall be written in the heart." It means that the very temper and spirit required by the law shall be begotten in the soul. Now, if the law requires entire sanctification or perfect holiness, this is certainly a promise of it; for it is a promise of all that the law requires. To say that this is not a promise of entire sanctification, is the same absurdity as to say, that perfect obedience to the law is not entire sanctification; and this last is the same absurdity as to say, that something more is our duty than what the law requires; and this again is to say, that the law is imperfect and unjust.

(iii.) A permanent state or entire sanctification is plainly implied in this promise.

(*a.*) The reason for setting aside the first covenant was, that it was broken: "Which my covenant they brake." One grand design of the new covenant is, that it shall not be broken, for then it would be no better than the first.

(*b.*) Permanency is implied in the fact, that it is to be engraven in the heart.

(*c.*) Permanency is plainly implied in the assertion, that God will remember their sin no more. In Jer 32:39-40, where the same promise is in substance repeated, you will find it expressly stated, that the covenant is to be "everlasting," and that he will so "put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him." Here permanency is as expressly promised as it can be.

(*d.*) Suppose the language of this promise to be thrown into the form of a command. Suppose God to say, "Let my law be within your hearts, and let it be in your inward parts, and let my fear be so within your hearts, that you shall not depart from me. Let your covenant with me be everlasting." If this language were found in a command, would any man in his senses doubt that it meant to require perfect and permanent sanctification? If not, by what rule of sober interpretation does he make it mean anything else, when found in a promise? It appears to be profane trifling, when such language is found in a promise, to make it mean less than it does when found in a command. See Rule 17.

(*e.*) This promise as it respects the church, at some period of its history, is unconditional, and its fulfilment certain. But in respect to any particular individuals or generation of the church, its fulfilment is necessarily conditioned upon their faith.

(*f.*) The church, as a body, have certainly never received this new covenant. Yet, doubtless, multitudes in every age of the Christian dispensation have received it. And God will hasten the time when it shall be so fully accomplished, that there shall be no need for one man to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

(*g.*) It should be understood, that this promise was made to the Christian church, and not at all to the Jewish church. The saints under the old dispensation had no reason to expect the fulfilment of this and kindred promises to themselves because their fulfilment was expressly deferred until the commencement of the Christian dispensation.

(*h.*) It has been said, that nothing more is here promised than regeneration. But were not the Old Testament saints regenerated? Yet it is expressly said, that they received not the promises. Heb 11:13, Heb 11:39-40 : "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Here we see that these promises were not received by the Old Testament saints. Yet they were regenerated.

(*i.*) It has also been said, that the promise implies no more than the final perseverance of the saints. But I would inquire, did not the Old Testament saints persevere? And yet we have just seen, that the Old Testament saints did not receive these promises in their fulfilment.

(3.) I will next examine the promise in Eze 36:25-27 : "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Upon this I remark:--

(i.) It was written within nineteen years after that which we have just examined in Jeremiah. It plainly refers to the same time, and is a promise of the same blessing.

(ii.) It seems to be admitted, nor can it be denied, that this is a promise of entire sanctification. The language is very definite and full. "Then," referring to some future time, when it should become due, "will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Mark, the first promise is, "ye shall be clean." If to be "clean" does not mean entire sanctification, what does it mean?

The second promise is, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." If to be cleansed "from all filthiness and all idols," be not a state of entire sanctification, what is?

The third promise is, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh." If to have a "clean heart," a "new heart," a "heart of flesh," in opposition to a "heart of stone," be not entire sanctification, what is?

The fourth promise is, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

(iii.) Let us turn the language of these promises into that of command, and understand God as saying, "Make you a clean heart, a new heart, and a new spirit; put away all your iniquities, all your filthiness, and all your idols; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them." Now what man, in the sober exercise of his reason, would doubt whether God meant to require a state of entire sanctification in such commands as these? The rules of legitimate interpretation would demand, that we should so understand him. Rule 5, concerning the interpretation of promises, says, "The interest of the promisor in the accomplishment of his design, or in fully meeting and relieving the necessities of the promisee, should also be taken into the account. If there is the most satisfactory proof, aside from that which is contained in the promise itself, that the promisor feels the highest interest in the promisee, and in fully meeting and relieving his necessities, then his promise must be understood accordingly."

If this is so, what is the fair and proper construction of this language, when found in a promise? I do not hesitate to say, that to me it is amazing, that any doubt should be left on the mind of any man whether, in these promises, God means as much as in his commands, couched in the same language; for example, see Eze 18:30-31 : "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Now, that the language in the promise under consideration, should mean as much as the language of this command, is demanded by every sober rule of interpretation. And who ever dreamed, that when God required his people to put away all their iniquities, he only meant that they should put away a part of them.

(iv.) This promise respects the church, and it cannot be pretended, that it has ever been fulfilled, according to its proper import, in any past age of the church.

(v.) As it regards the church, at a future period of its history, this promise is absolute, in the sense that it certainly will be fulfilled.

(vi.) It was manifestly designed to apply to Christians under the new dispensation, rather than to the Jews under the old dispensation. The sprinkling of clean water, and the outpouring of the Spirit, seem plainly to indicate, that the promise belonged more particularly to the Christian dispensation. It undeniably belongs to the same class of promises with that in Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Joel ii. 28, and many others, that manifestly look forward to the gospel-day as the time when they shall become due. As these promises have never been fulfilled, in their extent and meaning, their complete fulfilment remains to be realized by the church as a body. And those individuals, and that generation, will take possession of the blessing, who understand, and believe, and appropriate them to their own case.

(4.) I will next examine the promise in 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Upon this I remark:--

(i.) It is admitted, that this is a prayer for, and a promise of, entire sanctification.

(ii.) The very language shows, that both the prayer and the promise refer to this life, as it is a prayer for the sanctification of the body as well as the soul; also that they might be preserved, not after, but unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(iii.) This is a prayer of inspiration, to which is annexed an express promise that God will do it.

(iv.) Its fulfilment is, from the nature of the case, conditioned upon our faith, as sanctification without faith is naturally impossible.

(v.) Now, if this promise, with those that have already been examined, does not, honestly interpreted, fully settle the question of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life, it is difficult to understand how any thing can be settled by an appeal to scripture.

There are great multitudes of promises of the same import, to which I might refer you, and which, if examined in the light of the foregoing rules of interpretation, would be seen to heap up demonstration upon demonstration, that this is a doctrine of the Bible. Only examine them in the light of these plain, self-evident principles, and it seems to me, that they cannot fail to produce conviction.

Having examined a few of the promises in proof of the position, that a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, I will now proceed to mention other considerations, in support of this doctrine.

3. Christ prayed for the entire sanctification of saints in this life. "I pray not," he says, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He did not pray that they should be kept from persecution or from natural death, but he manifestly prayed, that they should be kept from sin. Suppose Christ had commanded them to keep themselves from the evil of the world; what should we understand him to mean by such a command?

4. Christ has taught us to pray for entire sanctification in this life: "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Now, if there is entire sanctification in heaven, Christ requires us to pray for its existence on earth. And is it probable that he has taught us to pray for that which he knows never can be, or will be granted?

5. The apostles evidently expected Christians to attain this state in this life. See Col 4:12. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Upon this passage I remark,--

(1.) It was the object of the efforts of Epaphras, and a thing which he expected to effect, to be instrumental in causing those Christians to be "perfect and complete in all the will of God."

(2.) If this language does not describe a state of entire, in the sense of permanent, sanctification, I know of none that would. If "to be perfect and complete in all the will of God," be not Christian perfection, what is?

(3.) Paul knew that Epaphras was labouring to this end, and with this expectation; and he informed the church of it, in a manner that evidently showed his approbation of the views and conduct of Epaphras.

6. That the apostles expected Christians to attain this state is further manifest, from 2Co 7:1 : "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Now, does not the apostle speak in this passage, as if he really expected those to whom he wrote, "to perfect holiness in the fear of God?" Observe how strong and full the language is: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." If "to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and all filthiness of the spirit, and to perfect holiness," be not entire sanctification, what is? That he expected this to take place in this life, is evident from the fact, that he requires them to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh as well as of the spirit. This passage plainly contemplates a state as distinguished from an act of consecration or sanctification, that is, it evidently expresses the idea of entire, in this sense of continued, sanctification.

7. All the intermediate steps can be taken; therefore the end can be reached. There is certainly no point in our progress towards entire sanctification, where it can be said we can go no further. To this it has been objected, that though all the intermediate steps can be taken, yet the goal can never be reached in this life, just as five may be divided by three, *ad infinitum*, without exhausting the fraction. Now this illustration deceives the mind that uses it, as it may the minds of those who listen to it. It is true, that you can never exhaust the fraction in dividing five by three, for the plain reason, that the division may be carried on *ad infinitum*. There is no end. You cannot, in this case, take all the intermediate steps, because they are infinite. But in the case of entire sanctification, all the intermediate steps can be taken; for there is an end, or state of entire sanctification, and that too at a point infinitely short of infinite.

8. That this state may be attained in this life, I argue from the fact, that provision is made against all the occasions of sin. Men sin only when they are tempted, either by the world, the flesh, or the devil. And it is expressly asserted, that, in every temptation, provision is made for our escape. Certainly, if it is possible for us to escape without sin, under every temptation, then a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable.

9. Full provision is made for overcoming the three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

(1.) The world--"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ."

(2.) The flesh--"If ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

(3.) Satan--"The shield of faith shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Now, all sober rules of biblical criticism require us to understand the passages I have quoted in the sense in which I have used them.

10. God is able to perform this work in and for us. Eph 3:14-19 : "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Upon this passage I remark,--

(1.) Paul evidently prays here for the entire sanctification of believers in this life. It is implied in our being "rooted and grounded in love," and being "filled with all the fulness of God," that we be as perfect in our measure and according to our capacity, as he is. If to be filled with the fulness of God, does not imply a state of entire sanctification, what does?

(2.) That Paul did not see any difficulty in the way of God's accomplishing this work, is manifest from what he says in the twentieth verse--"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," &c.

11. The Bible nowhere represents death as the termination of sin in the saints, which it could not fail to do, were it true, that they cease not to sin until death. It has been the custom of the church for a long time, to console individuals, in view of death, by the consideration, that it would be the termination of all their sin. And how almost universal has been the custom in consoling the friends of deceased saints, to mention this as a most important fact, that now they had ceased from sin! Now, if death is the termination of sin in the saints, and if they never cease to sin until they pass into eternity, too much stress never has been or can be laid upon that circumstance; and it seems utterly incredible, that no inspired writer should ever have noticed the fact. The representations of scripture are all directly opposed to this idea. It is said, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Here it is not intimated that they rest from their sins, but from their good works in this life; such works as shall follow, not to curse, but to bless them. The representations of scripture are, that death is the termination of the saint's sufferings and labours of love in this world, for the good of men and the glory of God. But nowhere in the Bible is it intimated, that the death of a saint is the termination of his serving the devil.

But if it be true that Christians continue to sin till they die, and death is the termination, and the only termination of their sin, it seems to me impossible that the scripture representations on the subject should be what they are.

12. The Bible representations of death are utterly inconsistent with its being an indispensable means of sanctification. Death is represented in the Bible as an enemy. But if death is the only condition upon which men are brought into a state of entire sanctification, its agency is as important and as indispensable as the influence of the Holy Ghost. When death is represented in the Bible as any thing else than an enemy, it is because it cuts short the sufferings of the saints, and introduces them into a state of eternal glory--not because it breaks them off from communion with the devil! How striking is the contrast between the language of the church and that of inspiration on this subject! The church is consoling the Christian in view of death, that it will be the termination of his sins--that he will then cease to serve the devil and his own lusts. The language of inspiration, on the other hand, is, that he will cease, not from wicked, but from good works, and labours and sufferings for God in this world. The language of the church is, that then he will enter upon a life of unalterable holiness--that he shall then, and not till then, be entirely sanctified. The language of inspiration is, that because he is sanctified, death shall be an entrance into a state of eternal glory.

13. Ministers are certainly bound to set up some definite standard, to which, as the ministers of God, they are to insist upon complete conformity. And now I would ask, what other standard can they and dare they set up than this? To insist upon any thing less than this, is to turn pope and grant an indulgence to sin. But to set up this standard, and then inculcate that conformity to it is not, as a matter of fact, attainable in this life, is as absolutely to take the part of sin against God, as it would be to insist upon repentance in theory, and then avow that in practice it is not attainable.

And here let me ask Christians what they expect ministers to preach? Do you think they have a right to connive at any sin in you, or to insist upon any thing else as a practicable fact, than that you should abandon every iniquity? It is sometimes said, that with us entire sanctification is a hobby. But I would humbly ask what else can we preach? Is not every minister bound to insist in every sermon that men shall wholly obey God? And because they will not make a compromise with any degree or form of sin, are they to be reproached for making the subject of entire obedience a hobby? I ask, by what authority can a minister preach any thing less? And how shall any minister dare to inculcate the duty as a theory, and yet not insist upon it as a practical matter, as something to be expected of every subject of God's kingdom.

14. A denial of this doctrine has the natural tendency to beget the very apathy witnessed in the church. Professors of religion go on in sin, with out much conviction of its wickedness. Sin unblushingly stalks abroad even in the church of God, and does not fill Christians with horror, because they expect its existence as a thing of course. Tell a young convert that he must expect to backslide, and he will do so of course, and with comparatively little remorse, because he looks upon it as a kind of necessity. And being led to expect it, you find him, in a few months after his conversion, away from God, and not at all horrified with his state. Just so, inculcate the idea among Christians, that they are not expected to abandon all sin, and they will of course go on in sin with comparative indifference. Reprove them for their sin, and they will say, "O, we are imperfect creatures; we do not pretend to be perfect, nor do we expect we ever shall be in this world." Many such answers as these will show you at once the God-dishonouring and soul-ruining tendency of a denial of this doctrine.

15. A denial of this doctrine prepares the minds of ministers to temporize, and wink at great iniquity in their churches. Feeling, as they certainly must, if they disbelieve this doctrine, that a great amount of sin in all believers is to be expected as a thing of course, their whole preaching, and spirit, and demeanour, will be such as to beget a great degree of apathy among Christians, in regard to their abominable sins.

16. If this doctrine is not true, how profane and blasphemous is the covenant of every church of every evangelical denomination. Every church requires its members to make a solemn covenant with God and with the church, in the presence of God and angels, and with their hands upon the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the blessed Jesus, "to abstain from all ungodliness and every worldly lust, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Now, if the doctrine of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life is not true, what profane mockery is this covenant! It is a covenant to live in a state of entire sanctification, made under the most solemn circumstances, enforced by the most awful sanctions, and insisted upon by the minister of God distributing the bread and wine. Now what right has any minister on earth to require less than this?

And again: what right has any minister on earth to require this, unless it is a practicable thing, and unless it is expected of him who makes the vow?

Suppose, when this covenant was proposed to a convert about to unite with the church, he should take it to his closet, and spread it before the Lord, and inquire whether it would be right for him to make such a covenant, and whether the grace of the gospel can enable him to fulfil it? Do you suppose the Lord Jesus would reply, that if he made that covenant, he certainly would, and must, as a matter of course, live in the habitual violation of it as long as he lives, and that his grace was not sufficient to enable him to keep it? Would he, in such a case, have any right to take upon himself this covenant? No, no more than he would have a right to lie to the Holy Ghost.

17. It has long been maintained by orthodox divines, that a person is not a Christian who does not aim at living without sin--that unless he aims at perfection, he manifestly consents to live in sin; and is therefore impenitent. It has been said, and I think truly, that if a man does not, in the fixed purpose of his heart, aim at total abstinence from sin, and at being wholly conformed to the will of God, he is not yet regenerated, and does not so much as mean to cease from abusing God. In Barnes' Notes upon 2 Cor. viii. 1, we have the following:--

"The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection--perfection in all things--in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with men; perfection in his prayers, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it, and who does not constantly aim at it. No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin, and who is satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. And any man who has no desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion."

Now if this so, I would ask how a person can aim at, and intend to do, what he knows to be impossible. Is it not a contradiction to say that a man can intend to do what he knows he cannot do? To this it has been objected, that if true, it proves too much--that it would prove that no man ever was a Christian who did not believe in this doctrine. To this I reply:--

A man may believe in what is really a state of entire sanctification, and aim at attaining it, although he may not call it by that name. This I believe to be the real fact with Christians; and they would much more frequently attain what they aim at, did they know how to appropriate the grace of Christ to their own circumstances. Mrs. President Edwards, for example, firmly believed that she could attain a state of entire consecration. She aimed at, and manifestly attained it, and yet, such were her views of constitutional depravity, that she did not call her state one of entire sanctification. It has been common for Christians to suppose, that a state of entire consecration is attainable; but while they believe in the sinfulness of their natures, they would not of course call even entire consecration, entire sanctification. Mrs. Edwards believed in, aimed at, and attained, entire consecration. She aimed at what she believed to be attainable, and she could aim at nothing more. She called it by the same name with her husband, who was opposed to the doctrine of Christian perfection, as held by the Wesleyan Methodists, manifestly on the ground of his notions of physical depravity. I care not what this state is called, if the thing be fully explained and insisted upon, together with the conditions of attaining it. Call it what you please, Christian perfection, heavenly mindedness, the full assurance of faith or hope, or a state of entire consecration; by all these I understand the same thing. And it is certain, that by whatever name it is called, the thing must be aimed at to be attained. The practicability of its attainment must be admitted, or it cannot be aimed at.

And now I would humbly inquire, whether to preach any thing short of this is not to give countenance to sin?

18. Another argument in favour of this doctrine is, that the gospel, as a matter of fact, has often, not only temporarily, but permanently and perfectly overcome every form of sin, in different individuals. Who has not seen the most beastly lusts, drunkenness, lasciviousness, and every kind of abomination, long indulged and fully ripe, entirely and for ever slain by the power of the grace of God? Now how was this done? Only by bringing this sin fully into the light of the gospel, and showing the individual the relation which the death of Christ sustained to that sin.

Nothing is wanting to slay any and every form of sin, but for the mind to be fully baptized into the death of Christ, and to see the bearings of one's own sins upon the sufferings, and agonies, and death of the blessed Jesus. Let me state a fact to illustrate my meaning. An habitual and most inveterate smoker of tobacco, of my acquaintance, after having been plied with almost every argument to induce him to break the power of the habit and relinquish its use in vain, on a certain occasion lighted his pipe, and was about to put it to his mouth, when the inquiry was started, Did Christ die to purchase this vile indulgence for me? The perceived relation of the death of Christ to this sin instantly broke the power of the habit, and from that day he has been free. I could relate many other facts more striking than this, where a similar view of the relation of a particular sin to the atonement of Christ, has, in a moment, not only broken the power of the habit, but destroyed entirely and for ever, the appetite for similar indulgences. And in multitudes of cases when the appetite has not been entirely slain, the will has been endowed with abundant and abiding efficiency effectually to control it. If the most inveterate habits of sin, and even those that involve physical consequences, and have deeply debased the physical constitution, and rendered it a source of overpowering temptation to the mind, can be, and often have been, utterly broken up, and for ever slain by the grace of God, why should it be doubted, that by the same grace a man can triumph over all sin, and that for ever?

19. If this doctrine is not true, what is true upon the subject? It is certainly of great importance that ministers should be definite in their instructions; and if Christians are not expected to be wholly conformed to the will of God in this life, how much is expected of them? Who can say, Hitherto canst thou, must thou come, but no farther? It is certainly absurd, not to say ridiculous, for ministers to be for ever pressing Christians up to higher and higher attainments, saying at every step, you can and must go higher, and yet all along informing them, that they are expected to fall short of their whole duty, that they can as a matter of fact, be better than they are, far better, indefinitely better; but still it is not expected that they will do their whole duty. I have often been pained to hear men preach, who were afraid to commit themselves in favour of the whole truth; and who were yet evidently afraid of falling short in their instructions, of insisting that men should stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." To be consistent they are evidently perplexed, and well they may be; for in truth there is no consistency in their views and teachings. If they do not inculcate, as a matter of fact, that men ought to do, and are expected to do, their whole duty, they are sadly at a loss to know what to inculcate. They have evidently many misgivings about insisting upon less than this, and still they fear to go to the full extent of apostolic teaching on this subject. And in their attempts to throw in qualifying terms and caveats, to avoid the impression, that they believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification, they place themselves in a truly awkward position. Cases have occurred in which ministers have been asked, how far we may go, must go, and are expected to go, in dependence upon the grace of Christ, and how holy men may be, and are expected to be, and must be, in this life. They could give no other answer to this, than that they can be a great deal better than they are. Now this indefiniteness is a great stumbling-block to the church. It cannot be according to the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

20. The tendency of a denial of this doctrine is, to my mind, conclusive proof that the doctrine itself must be true. Many developements in the recent history of the church throw light upon this subject. Who does not see that the facts developed in the temperance reformation have a direct and powerful bearing upon this question? It has been ascertained, that there is no possibility of completing the temperance reformation, except by adopting the principle of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. Let a temperance lecturer go forth as an evangelist, to promote revivals on the subject of temperance--let him inveigh against drunkenness, while he admits and defends the moderate use of alcohol, or insinuates, at least, that total abstinence is not expected or practicable. In this stage of the temperance reformation, every one can see that such a man could make no progress; that he would be employed like a child in building dams of sand to obstruct the rushing of mighty waters. It is as certain as that causes produce their effects, that no permanent reformation could be effected, without adopting and insisting on the total abstinence principle.

And now, if this is true, as it respects the temperance reformation, how much more so when applied to the subjects of holiness and sin. A man might, by some possibility, even in his own strength, overcome his habits of drunkenness, and retain what might be called the temperate use of alcohol. But no such thing is possible in a reformation from sin. There is no temperate indulgence in sin. Sin, as a matter of fact, is never overcome by any man in his own strength. If he admits into his creed the necessity of any degree of sin, or if he allows in practice any degree of sin, he becomes impenitent, consents to live in sin, and of course grieves the Holy Spirit, the certain result of which is a relapsing into a state of legal bondage to sin. And this is probably a true history of many professed Christians in the church. It is just what might be expected from the views and practice of the church upon this subject.

The secret of backsliding is, that reformations are not carried deep enough. Christians are not set with all their hearts to aim at a speedy deliverance from all sin, but on the contrary are left, and in many instances taught, to indulge the expectation that they shall sin as long as they live. I probably never shall forget the effect produced on my mind by reading, when a young convert, in the diary of David Brainerd, that he never expected to make any considerable attainments in holiness in this life. I can now easily see that this was a natural inference from the theory of physical sinfulness which he held. But not perceiving this at the time, I doubt not that this expression of his views had a very injurious effect upon me for many years. It led me to reason thus: if such a man as David Brainerd did not expect to make much advancement in holiness in this life, it is vain for me to expect such a thing.

The fact is, if there be anything that is important to high attainments in holiness, and to the progress of the work of sanctification in this life, it is the adoption of the principle of total abstinence from sin. Total abstinence from sin must be every man's motto, or sin will certainly sweep him away as with a flood. That cannot possibly be a true principle in temperance, that leaves the causes which produce drunkenness to operate in their full strength. Nor can that be true in regard to holiness which leaves the root unextracted, and the certain causes of spiritual decline and backsliding at work in the very heart of the church. And I am fully convinced that until evangelists and pastors adopt, and carry out in practice, the principle of total abstinence from all sin, they will as certainly find themselves, every few months, called to do their work over again, as a temperance lecturer would who should admit the moderate use of alcohol.

21. Again, the tendency of the opposite view of this subject shows that that cannot be true. Who does not know that to call upon sinners to repent, and at the same time to inform them that they will not, and cannot, and are not expected to repent, would for ever prevent their repentance? Suppose you say to a sinner, "You are naturally able to repent; but it is certain that you never will repent in this life, either with or without the Holy Spirit." Who does not see that such teaching would prevent his repentance as surely as he believed it? To say to a professor of religion, "You are naturally able to be wholly conformed to the will of God; but it is certain that you never will be, in this life, either in your own strength, or by the grace of God:" if this teaching be believed, it will just as certainly prevent his sanctification, as the other teaching would the repentance of the sinner. I can speak from experience on this subject. While I inculcated the common views, I was often instrumental in bringing Christians under great conviction, and into a state of temporary repentance and faith. But falling short of urging them up to a point, where they would become so acquainted with Christ as to abide in him, they would of course soon relapse again into their former state. I seldom saw, and can now understand that I had no reason to expect to see, under the instructions which I then gave, such a state of religious principle, such steady and confirmed walking with God among Christians, as I have seen since the change in my views and instructions.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXI.

SANCTIFICATION.

PAUL ENTIRELY SANCTIFIED.

I MIGHT urge a great many other considerations, and as I have said, fill a book with scriptures, and arguments, and demonstrations, of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life.

But I forbear, and will present only one more consideration--a consideration which has great weight in some minds. It is a question of great importance, whether any actually ever did attain this state. Some who believe it attainable, do not consider it of much importance to show that it has actually been attained. Now I freely admit, that it may be attainable, even if it never has been attained. Yet it appears to me that as a source of encouragement to the church, it is of great importance whether, as a matter of fact, a state of entire and continued holiness has been attained in this life. This question covers much ground. But for the sake of brevity, I design to examine but one case, and see whether there is not reason to believe that, in one instance at least, it has been attained. The case to which I allude is that of the apostle Paul. And I propose to take up and examine the passages that speak of him, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there is evidence that he ever attained to this state in this life.

And here let me say that, to my own mind, it seems plain, that Paul and John, to say nothing of the other apostles, designed and expected the church to understand them as speaking from experience, and as having received of that fulness which they taught to be in Christ and in his gospel.

And I wish to say again and more expressly, that I do not rest the practicability of attaining a state of entire and continued holiness at all upon the question, whether any ever have attained it, any more than I would rest the question, whether the world ever will be converted, upon the fact whether it ever has been converted. I have been surprised, when the fact that a state of entire holiness has been attained, is urged as one argument among a great many to prove its attainability, and that too, merely as an encouragement to Christians to lay hold upon this blessing--that objectors and reviewers fasten upon this, as the doctrine of sanctification, as if by calling this particular question into doubt, they could overthrow all the other proof of its attainability. Now this is utterly absurd. When, then, I examine the character of Paul with this object in view, if it should not appear clear to you that he did attain this state, you are not to overlook the fact, that its attainability is settled by other arguments, on grounds entirely independent of the question, whether it has been attained or not; and that I merely use this as an argument, simply because to me it appears forcible, and fitted to afford great encouragement to Christians to press after this state.

I will first make some remarks in regard to the manner in which the language of Paul, when speaking of himself, should be understood; and then proceed to an examination of the passages which speak of his Christian character.

1. His character, as revealed in his life, demands that we should understand him to mean all that he says, when speaking in his own favour.

2. The spirit of inspiration would guard him against speaking too highly of himself.

3. No man ever seemed to possess greater modesty, and to feel more unwilling to exalt his own attainments.

4. If he considered himself as not having attained a state of entire sanctification, and as often, if not in all things, falling short of his duty, we may expect to find him acknowledging this, in the deepest self-abasement.

5. If he is charged with living in sin, and with being wicked in anything, we may expect him, when speaking under inspiration, not to justify, but unequivocally to condemn himself in those things, if he was really guilty.

Now, in view of these facts, let us examine those scriptures in which he speaks of himself, and is spoken of by others.

(1.) 1Th 2:10 : "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe." Upon this text I remark:

(i.) Here he unqualifiedly asserts his own holiness. This language is very strong, "How holily, justly, and unblameably." If to be holy, just, and unblameable, be not entire sanctification, what is?

(ii.) He appeals to the heart-searching God for the truth of what he says, and to their own observation; calling on God and on them also to bear witness, that he had been holy and without blame.

(iii.) Here we have the testimony of an inspired apostle, in the most unqualified language, asserting his own entire sanctification. Was he deceived?

Can it be that he knew himself all the time to have been living in sin? If such language as this does not amount to an unqualified assertion, that he had lived among them without sin, what can be known by the use of human language?

(2.) 2Co 6:3-7 : "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessity, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." Upon these verses I remark: Paul asserts that he gave no offence in anything, but in all things approved himself as a minister of God. Among other things, he did this, "by pureness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned," and "by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." How could so modest a man as Paul speak of himself in this manner, unless he knew himself to be in a state of entire sanctification, and thought it of great importance that the church should know it?

(3.) 2Co 1:12 : "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward." This passage plainly implies the same thing, and was manifestly said for the same purpose--to declare the greatness of the grace of God as manifested in himself.

(4.) Act 24:16 : "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Paul doubtless at this time had an enlightened conscience. If an inspired apostle could affirm, that he "exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men," must he not have been in a state of entire sanctification?

(5.) 2Ti 1:3 : "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." Here again he affirms that he serves God with a pure conscience. Could this be, if he was often, and perhaps every day, as some suppose, violating his conscience?

(6.) Gal 2:20 : "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." This does not assert, but strongly implies, that he lived without sin, and also that he regarded himself as dead to sin in the sense of being permanently sanctified.

(7.) Gal 6:14 : "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This text also affords the same inference as above.

(8.) Phi 1:21 : "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Here the apostle affirms that for him to live was as if Christ lived in the church, that is, by his doctrine illustrated by his life, it was as if Christ lived again and preached his own gospel to sinners and to the church; or for him to live was to make Christ known as if Christ lived to make himself known. How could he say this, unless his example, and doctrine, and spirit, were those of Christ?

(9.) Act 20:26 : "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Upon this I remark--

(i.) This passage, taken in its connexion, shows clearly the impression that Paul desired to make upon the minds of those to whom he spake.

(ii.) It is certain that he could in no proper sense be "pure from the blood of all men," unless he had done his whole duty. If he had been sinfully lacking in any grace, or virtue, or labour, could he have said this? Certainly not.

(10.) 1Co 4:16-17 : "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." I remark--

(i.) Here Paul manifestly sets himself up as an example to the church. How could he do this if he were living in sin?

(ii.) He sent Timotheus to them to refresh their memories in regard to his doctrine and practice; implying that what he taught in every church he himself practised.

(11.) 1Co 11:1 : "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Here Paul commands them to follow him "as he followed Christ;" not so far as he followed Christ, as some seem to understand it, but to follow him because he followed Christ. How could he, in this unqualified manner, command the church to copy his example, unless he knew himself to be blameless?

(12.) Phi 3:17, Phi 3:20 : "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Here again, Paul calls upon the church to follow him, and particularly to notice those that copied his example, and assigns as the reason, "for our conversation is in heaven."

(13.) Phi 4:9 : "Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." The Philippians were commanded to "do those things which they had learned, and received, and *seen* in him." And then he adds, that if they "do those things, the God of peace shall be with them." Now can it be, that he meant that they should understand anything less, than that he lived without sin among them?

I will next examine those passages which are supposed by some to imply that Paul was not in a state of entire sanctification.

(14.) Act 15:36-40 : "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Upon this passage I remark--

(i.) This contention between Paul and Barnabas arose out of the fact, that John, who was a nephew of Barnabas, had once abruptly left them in their travels, it would seem, without any justifiable reason, and had returned home.

(ii.) It appears that the confidence of Barnabas in his nephew was restored.

(iii.) That Paul was not as yet satisfied of the stability of his character, and thought it dangerous to trust him as a travelling companion and fellow labourer. It is not intimated, nor can it fairly be inferred, that either of them sinned in this contention.

(iv.) Being men of principle, neither of them felt it to be his duty to yield to the opinion of the other.

(v.) If either was to be blamed, it seems that Barnabas was in fault, rather than Paul, inasmuch as he determined to take John with him, without having consulted Paul. And he persisted in this determination until he met with such firm resistance on the part of Paul, that he took John and sailed abruptly for Cyprus; while Paul choosing Silas as his companion, was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, and departed. Now certainly there is nothing that we can discover in this transaction, that Paul, or any good man, or an angel, under the circumstances, needs to have been ashamed of. It does not appear, that Paul ever acted more from a regard to the glory of God and the good of religion, than in this transaction. And I would humbly inquire, what spirit is that which finds sufficient evidence in this case to charge an inspired apostle with rebellion against God? But even admitting that he did sin in this case, where is the evidence that he was not afterwards sanctified, when he wrote the epistle? for this was before the writing of any of his epistles.

(15.) Act 23:1-5 : "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." In this case sinful anger has been imputed to Paul; but, so far as I can see, without any just reason. To my mind it seems plain, that the contrary is to be inferred. It appears, that Paul was not personally acquainted with the then officiating high priest. And he manifested the utmost regard to the authority of God in quoting from the Old Testament, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people;" implying, that notwithstanding the abuse he had received, he should not have made the reply, had he known him to be the high priest.

(16.) Rom. vii. from the fourteenth to the twenty-fifth verse, has by many been supposed to be an epitome of Paul's experience at the time he wrote the epistle. Upon this I remark:--

(i.) The connexion and drift of Paul's reasoning show, that the case of which he was speaking, whether his own or the case of some one else, was adduced by him to illustrate the influence of the law upon the carnal mind.

(ii.) This is a case in which sin had the entire dominion, and overcame all his resolutions of obedience.

(iii.) That his use of the singular pronoun, and in the first person, proves nothing in regard to the point, whether or not he was speaking of himself, for this is common with him, and with other writers, when using illustrations.

(iv.) He keeps up the personal pronoun, and passes into the eighth chapter; at the beginning of which, he represents himself, or the person of whom he is speaking, as being not only in a different, but in an exactly opposite state of mind. Now, if the seventh chapter contains Paul's experience, whose experience is this in the eighth chapter? Are we to understand them both as the experience of Paul? If so, we must understand him as first speaking of his experience before, and then after he was sanctified. He begins the eighth chapter by saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" and assigns as a reason, that "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin and death was that law in his members, or the influence of the flesh, of which he had so bitterly complained in the seventh chapter. But now, it appears, that he has passed into a state in which he is made free from this influence of the flesh,--is emancipated and dead to the world and to the flesh, and in a state in which "there is no condemnation." Now, if there was no condemnation in the state in which he then was, it must have been, either because he did not sin, or, if he did sin, because the law did not condemn him; or because the law of God was repealed or abrogated. Now, if the penalty of the law was so set aside in his case, that he could sin without condemnation, this is a real abrogation of the law. For a law without a penalty is no law, and if the law is set aside, there is no longer any standard, and he was neither sinful nor holy. But as the law was not, and could not be set aside, its penalty was not and could not be so abrogated, as not to condemn every sin. If Paul lived without condemnation, it must be because he lived without sin.

To me it does not appear as if Paul speaks of his own experience in the seventh chapter of Romans, but that he merely supposes a case by way of illustration, and speaks in the first person, and in the present tense, simply because it was convenient and suitable to his purpose. His object manifestly was, in this and in the beginning of the eighth chapter, to contrast the influence of the law and of the gospel--to describe in the seventh chapter the state of a man who was living in sin, and every day condemned by the law, convicted and constantly struggling with his own corruptions, but continually overcome,--and in the eighth chapter to exhibit a person in the enjoyment of gospel liberty, where the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in the heart by the grace of Christ. The seventh chapter may well apply either to a person in a backslidden state, or to a convicted person who had never been converted. The eighth chapter can clearly be applicable to none but to those who are in a state of entire sanctification.

I have already said, that the seventh chapter contains the history of one over whom sin has dominion. Now, to suppose that this was the experience of Paul when he wrote the epistle, or of any one who was in the liberty of the gospel, is absurd, and contrary to the experience of every person who ever enjoyed gospel liberty. And further, this is as expressly contradicted in the sixth chapter as it can be. As I said, the seventh chapter exhibits one over whom sin has dominion; but God says, in the sixth chapter and fourteenth verse, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." I remark finally upon this passage, that if Paul was speaking of himself in the seventh chapter of Romans, and really giving a history of his own experience, it proves nothing at all in regard to his subsequent sanctification; for--

(i.) If this was his experience at the time he wrote the epistle, it would prove nothing in regard to what afterwards occurred in his own experience.

(ii.) The eighth chapter shows conclusively, that it was not his experience at the time he wrote the epistle. The fact that the seventh and eighth chapters have been separated since the translation was made, as I have before said, has led to much error in the understanding of this passage. Nothing is more certain, than that the two chapters were designed to describe not only different experiences, but experiences opposite to each other. And that both these experiences should belong to the same person at the same time, is manifestly impossible. If therefore Paul is speaking in this connexion of his own experience, we are bound to understand the eighth chapter as describing his experience at the time he wrote the epistle; and the seventh chapter as descriptive of a former experience.

Now, therefore, if any one understands the seventh chapter as describing a Christian experience, he must understand it as giving the exercises of one in a very imperfect state; and the eighth chapter as descriptive of a soul in a state of entire sanctification. So that this epistle, instead of militating against the idea of Paul's entire sanctification, upon the supposition that he was speaking of himself, fully establishes the fact that he was in that state. What do those brethren mean who take the latter part of the seventh chapter as entirely disconnected from that which precedes and follows it, and make it tell a sad story on the subject of the legal and sinful bondage of an inspired apostle? What cannot be proved from the Bible in this way? Is it not a sound and indispensable rule of biblical interpretation, that a passage is to be taken in its connexion, and that the scope and leading intention of the writer is to be continually borne in mind, in deciding upon the meaning of any passage? Why then, I pray, are the verses that precede, and those that immediately follow in the eighth chapter, entirely overlooked in the examination of this important passage?

(17.) Phi 3:10-15. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Upon this passage I remark:--

(i.) Here is a plain allusion to the Olympic games, in which men ran for a prize, and were not crowned until the end of the race, however well they might run.

(ii.) Paul speaks of two kinds of perfection here, one of which he claims to have attained, and the other he had not. The perfection which he had not attained, was that which he did not expect to attain until the end of his race, nor indeed until he had attained the resurrection from the dead. Until then he was not, and did not expect to be perfect, in the sense that he should "apprehend all that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus." But all this does not imply that he was not living without sin, any more than it implies that Christ was living in sin when he said, "I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Here Christ speaks of a perfection which he had not attained.

Now it is manifest, that it was the glorified state to which Paul had not attained, and which perfection he was pressing after. But in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of another kind of perfection, which he professed to have attained. "Let us therefore," he says, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded;" that is, let us be pressing after this high state of perfection in glory, "if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." The figure of the games should be kept continually in mind, in the interpretation of this passage. The prize in those races was the crown. This was given only at the end of the race. And besides, a man was "not crowned except he ran lawfully," that is, according to rule. Paul was running for the prize, that is, the crown, not, as some suppose, for entire sanctification, but for a crown of glory. This he did not expect until he had completed his race. He exhorts those who were perfect, that is, those who were running lawfully or according to rule, to forget the things that were behind, and press to the mark, that is, the goal, for the prize, or the crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous judge, who was witnessing his race to award the crown to the victor, would give him at that day.

Now it is manifest to my mind, that Paul does not in this passage, teach expressly nor impliedly, that he was living in sin, but the direct opposite--that he meant to say, as he had said in many other places, that he was unblameable in respect to sin, but that he was aspiring after higher attainments, and meant to be satisfied with nothing short of eternal glory.

Again, Phi 4:11-13 : "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Here Paul undoubtedly meant to affirm, not merely his abstract ability to do all his duty, but that he had learned by experience, that as a matter of fact and reality, he found himself able to do all things required of him.

In relation to the character of Paul, let me say:--

(*a.*) If Paul was not sinless, he was an extravagant boaster, and such language used by any minister in these days would be considered as the language of an extravagant boaster.

(*b.*) This setting himself up as an example so frequently and fully, without any caution or qualification, was highly dangerous to the interests of the church, if he was not in a state of entire sanctification.

(*c.*) It was as wicked as it was dangerous.

(*d.*) His language in appealing to God, that in life and heart he was blameless, was blasphemous, unless he was really what he professed to be; and if he was what he professed to be, he was in a state of entire sanctification.

(*e.*) There is no reason for doubting his having attained this state.

(*f.*) It is doing dishonour to God, to maintain, under these circumstances, that Paul had not attained the blessing of entire sanctification.

(*g.*) He nowhere confesses sin after he became an apostle, but invariably justifies himself, appealing to man and to God, for his entire integrity and blamelessness of heart and life.

(*h.*) To accuse him of sin in these circumstances, without evidence, is not only highly injurious to him, but disgraceful to the cause of religion.

(*i.*) To charge him with sin, when he claims to have been blameless, is either to accuse him of falsehood or delusion.

(*j.*) To maintain the sinfulness of this apostle, is to deny the grace of the gospel, and charge God foolishly. And I cannot but inquire, why is this great effort in the church to maintain that Paul lived in sin, and was never wholly sanctified till death?

Two things have appeared wonderful to me--

1. That so many professed Christians should seem to think themselves highly honouring God in extending the claims of the law, and yet denying that the grace of the gospel is equal to the demands of the law.

2. That so many persons seem to have an entirely self-righteous view of the subject of sanctification. With respect to the first of these opinions, much pains has been taken to extend to the utmost the claims of the law of God. Much has been said of its exceeding and infinite strictness, and the great length, and breadth, and height, and depth of its claims. Multitudes are engaged in defending the claims of the law, as if they greatly feared that the purity of the law would be defiled, its strictness and spirituality overlooked, and its high and holy claims set aside, or frittered down somehow to the level of human passion and selfishness. But while engaged in their zeal to defend the law, they talk, and preach, and write, as if they supposed it indispensable, in order to sustain the high claims of the law, to deny the grace and power of the gospel, and its sufficiency to enable human beings to comply with the requisitions of the law. Thus they seem to me, unwittingly, to enter the lists against the grace of Christ, and with the utmost earnestness and even vehemence, to deny that the grace of Christ is sufficient to overcome sin, and to fulfil in us the righteousness of the law. Yes, in their zeal for the law they appear to me either to overlook, or flatly to deny, the grace of the gospel.

Now let the law be exalted. Let it be magnified and made honourable. Let it be shown to be strict, and pure, and perfect, as its Author; spread its claims over the whole field of human and angelic accountability; carry it like a blaze of fire to the deepest recess of every human heart; exalt it as high as heaven; and thunder its authority and claims to the depths of hell; stretch out its line upon the universe of mind; and let it, as it well may, and as it ought, thunder death and terrible damnation against every kind and degree of iniquity. Yet let it be remembered for ever, that the grace of the gospel is co-extensive with the claims of the law. Let no man, therefore, in his strife to maintain the authority of the law, insult the Saviour, exercise unbelief himself, or fritter away and drown the faith of the church, by holding out the profane idea, that the glorious gospel of the blessed God, sent home and rendered powerful by the efficacious application of the Holy Spirit, is not sufficient to fulfil in us "the righteousness of the law," and cause us "to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

With respect to the second thing which appears wonderful to me, namely, that so many seem to have an entirely self-righteous view of the doctrine of sanctification, let me say, that they seem afraid to admit, that any are entirely and perfectly sanctified in this life, lest they should flatter human pride, seeming to take it for granted, that, if any are entirely sanctified, they have whereof to glory, as if they had done something, and were in themselves better than others. Whereas, the doctrine of entire sanctification utterly abhors the idea of human merit, disclaims and repudiates it as altogether an abomination to God, and to the sanctified soul. This doctrine, as taught in the Bible, and as I understand it, is as far as possible from conniving in the least degree at the idea of anything naturally good in saints or sinners. It ascribes the whole of salvation and sanctification from first to last, not only till the soul is sanctified, but at every moment while it remains in that state, to the indwelling Spirit, and influence, and grace of Christ.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXII.

SANCTIFICATION.

VI. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS OF THIS ATTAINMENT.

1. A state of entire sanctification can never be attained by an indifferent waiting of God's time.

2. Nor by any works of law, or works of any kind, performed in your own strength, irrespective of the grace of God. By this I do not mean, that, were you disposed to exert your natural powers aright, you could not at once obey the law in the exercise of your natural strength, and continue to do so. But I do mean, that as you are wholly indisposed to use your natural powers aright, without the grace of God, no efforts that you will actually make in your own strength, or independent of his grace, will ever result in your entire sanctification.

3. Not by any direct efforts to feel right. Many spend their time in vain efforts to force themselves into a right state of feeling. Now, it should be for ever understood, that religion does not consist in a mere feeling, emotion, or involuntary affection of any kind. Feelings do not result from a direct effort to feel. But, on the contrary, they are the spontaneous actings of the mind, when it has under its direct and deep consideration the objects, truths, facts, or realities, that are correlated to these involuntary emotions. They are the most easy and natural state of mind possible under such circumstances. So far from its requiring an effort to put them forth, it would rather require an effort to prevent them, when the mind is intensely considering those objects and considerations which have a natural tendency to produce them. This is so true, that when persons are in the exercise of such affections, they feel no difficulty at all in their exercise, but wonder how any one can help feeling as they do. It seems to them so natural, so easy, and, I may say, so almost unavoidable, that they often feel and express astonishment, that any one should find it difficult to exercise the feelings of which they are conscious. The course that many persons take on the subject of religion, has often appeared wonderful to me. They make themselves, their own state and interests, the central point, around which their own minds are continually revolving. Their selfishness is so great, that their own interests, happiness, and salvation, fill their whole field of vision. And with their thoughts and anxieties, and whole souls, clustering around their own salvation, they complain of a hard heart, that they cannot love God, that they do not repent, and cannot believe. They manifestly regard love to God, repentance, faith, and all religion, as consisting in mere feelings. Being conscious that they do not feel right, as they express it, they are the more concerned about themselves, which concern but increases their embarrassment, and the difficulty of exercising what they call right affections. The less they feel, the more they try to feel--the greater efforts they make to feel right without success, the more are they confirmed in their selfishness, and the more are their thoughts glued to their own interests; and they are, of course, at a greater and greater distance from any right state of mind. And thus their selfish anxieties beget ineffectual efforts, and these efforts but deepen their anxieties. And if, in this state, death should appear in a visible form before them, or the last trumpet sound, and they should be summoned to the solemn judgment, it would but increase their distraction, confirm, and almost give omnipotence to their selfishness, and render their sanctification morally impossible. It should never be forgotten, that all true religion consists in voluntary states of mind, and that the true and only way to attain to true religion, is to look at and understand the exact thing to be done, and then to put forth at once the voluntary exercise required.

4. Not by any efforts to obtain grace by works of law. In my lecture on faith, in the first volume of the Evangelist, I said the following things:--

(1.) Should the question be proposed to a Jew, "What shall I do that I may work the work of God?" he would answer, Keep the law, both moral and ceremonial, that is, keep the commandments.

(2.) To the same inquiry an Arminian would answer, Improve common grace, and you will obtain converting grace, that is, use the means of grace according to the best light you have, and you will obtain the grace of salvation. In this answer it is not supposed, that the inquirer already has faith; but that he is in a state of unbelief, and is inquiring after converting grace. The answer, therefore, amounts to this; you must get converting grace by your impenitent works; you must become holy by your hypocrisy; you must work out sanctification by sin.

(3.) To this question, most professed Calvinists would make in substance the same reply. They would reject the language, while they retained the idea. Their direction would imply, either that the inquirer already has faith, or that he must perform some works to obtain it, that is, that he must obtain grace by works of law.

A late Calvinistic writer admits that entire and permanent sanctification is attainable, although he rejects the idea of the actual attainment of such a state in this life. He supposes the condition of attaining this state or the way to attain it, is by a diligent use of the means of grace, and that the saints are sanctified just so far as they make a diligent use of the means of sanctification. But as he denies, that any saints ever did or will use all the means with suitable diligence, he denies also, of course, that entire sanctification ever is attained in this life. The way of attaining it, according to his teaching, is by the diligent use of means. If then this writer were asked, "what shall I do that I may work the works of God?"--or, in other words, what shall I do to obtain entire and permanent sanctification? his answer, it seems, would be: "Use diligently all the means of grace," that is, you must get grace by works, or, with the Arminian, improve common grace, and you will secure sanctifying grace. Neither an Arminian, nor a Calvinist, would formally direct the inquirer to the law, as the ground of justification. But nearly the whole church would give directions that would amount to the same thing. Their answer would be a legal, and not a gospel answer. For whatever answer is given to this question, that does not distinctly recognize faith as the condition of abiding holiness in Christians, is legal. Unless the inquirer is made to understand, that this is the first, grand, fundamental duty, without the performance of which all virtue, all giving up of sin, all acceptable obedience, is impossible, he is misdirected. He is led to believe, that it is possible to please God without faith, and to obtain grace by works of law. There are but two kinds of works--works of law, and works of faith. Now, if the inquirer has not the "faith that works by love," to set him upon any course of works to get it, is certainly to set him to get faith by works of law. Whatever is said to him that does not clearly convey the truth, that both justification and sanctification are by faith, without works of law, is law, and not gospel. Nothing before or without faith, can possibly be done by any one, but works of law. His first duty, therefore, is faith; and every attempt to obtain faith by unbelieving works, is to lay works at the foundation, and make grace a result. It is the direct opposite of gospel truth.

Take facts as they arise in every day's experience, to show that what I have stated is true of almost all professors and non-professors. Whenever a sinner begins in good earnest to agitate the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" he resolves as a first duty, to break off from his sins, that is, in unbelief. Of course, his reformation is only outward. He determines to do better--to reform in this, that, and the other thing, and thus prepare himself to be converted. He does not expect to be saved without grace and faith, but he attempts to get grace by works of law. The same is true of multitudes of anxious Christians, who are inquiring what they shall do to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. They overlook the fact, that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," that it is with "the shield of faith" they are "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." They ask, Why am I overcome by sin? Why can I not get above its power? Why am I thus the slave of my appetites and passions, and the sport of the devil? They cast about for the cause of all this spiritual wretchedness and death. At one time, they think they have discovered it in the neglect of one duty; and at another time in the neglect of another. Sometimes they imagine they have found the cause to lie in yielding to one temptation, and sometimes yielding to another. They put forth efforts in this direction, and in that direction, and patch up their righteousness on one side, while they make a rent in the other side. Thus they spend years in running round in a circle, and making dams of sand across the current of their own habitudes and tendencies. Instead of at once purifying their hearts by faith, they are engaged in trying to arrest the overflowing of the bitter waters of their own propensities. Why do I sin? they inquire; and casting about for the cause, they come to the sage conclusion, It is because I neglect such a duty, that is, because I do sin. But how shall I get rid of sin? Answer: By doing my duty, that is, by ceasing from sin. Now the real inquiry is, Why do they neglect their duty? Why do they commit sin at all? Where is the foundation of all this mischief? Will it be replied, the foundation of all this wickedness is in the force of temptation--in the weakness of our hearts--in the strength of our evil propensities and habits? But all this only brings us back to the real inquiry again, How are these things to be overcome? I answer, by faith alone. No works of law have the least tendency to overcome our sins; but rather to confirm the soul in self-righteousness and unbelief.

The great and fundamental sin, which is at the foundation of all other sin, is unbelief. The first thing is, to give up that--to believe the word of God. There is no breaking off from one sin without this. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Thus we see, that the backslider and convicted sinner, when agonizing to overcome sin, will almost always betake themselves to works of law to obtain faith. They will fast, and pray, and read, and struggle, and outwardly reform, and thus endeavour to obtain grace. Now all this is in vain and wrong. Do you ask, shall we not fast, and pray, and read, and struggle? Shall we do nothing but sit down in antinomian security and inaction? I answer, you must do all that God commands you to do: but begin where he tells you to begin, and do it in the manner in which he commands you to do it; that is, in the exercise of that faith that works by love. Purify your hearts by faith. Believe in the Son of God. And say not in your heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach." Now these facts show, that even under the gospel, almost all professors of religion, while they reject the Jewish notion of justification by works of law, have after all adopted a ruinous substitute for it, and suppose, that in some way they are to obtain grace by their works.

5. A state of entire sanctification cannot be attained by attempting to copy the experience of others. It is very common for convicted sinners, or for Christians inquiring after entire sanctification, in their blindness, to ask others to relate their experience, to mark minutely the detail of all their exercises, and then set themselves to pray for, and make direct efforts to attain the same class of exercises, not seeming to understand, that they can no more exercise feelings in the detail like others, than they can look like others. Human experiences differ as human countenances differ. The whole history of a man's former state of mind, comes in of course to modify his present and future experience; so that the precise train of feelings which may be requisite in your case, and which will actually occur, if you are ever sanctified, will not in all its details coincide with the exercises of any other human being. It is of vast importance for you to understand, that you can be no copyist in any true religious experience; and that you are in great danger of being deceived by Satan, whenever you attempt to copy the experience of others. I beseech you therefore to cease from praying for, or trying to obtain, the precise experience of any person whatever. All truly Christian experiences are, like human countenances, in their outline so much alike as to be readily known as the lineaments of the religion of Jesus Christ. But no further than this are they alike, any more than human countenances are alike.

But here let it be remembered, that sanctification does not consist in the various affections or emotions of which Christians speak, and which are often mistaken for, or confounded with, true religion; but that sanctification consists in entire consecration, and consequently it is all out of place for any one to attempt to copy the feelings of another, inasmuch as feelings do not constitute religion. The feelings of which Christians speak do not constitute true religion, but often result from a right state of heart. These feelings may properly enough be spoken of as Christian experience, for although involuntary states of mind, they are experienced by true Christians. The only way to secure them is to set the will right, and the emotions will be a natural result.

6. Not by waiting to make preparations before you come into this state. Observe, that the thing about which you are inquiring, is a state of entire consecration to God. Now do not imagine that this state of mind must be prefaced by a long introduction of preparatory exercises. It is common for persons, when inquiring upon this subject with earnestness, to think themselves hindered in their progress by a want of this, or that, or the other exercise or state of mind. They look everywhere else but at the real difficulty. They assign any other, and every other but the true reason, for their not being already in a state of sanctification. The true difficulty is voluntary selfishness, or voluntary consecration to self-interest and self-gratification. This is the difficulty, and the only difficulty, to be overcome.

7. Not by attending meetings, asking the prayers of other Christians, or depending in any way upon the means of getting into this state. By this I do not intend to say, that means are unnecessary, or that it is not through the instrumentality of truth, that this state of mind is induced. But I do mean, that while you are depending upon any instrumentality whatever, your mind is diverted from the real point before you, and you are never likely to make this attainment.

8. Not by waiting for any particular views of Christ. When persons, in the state of mind of which I have been speaking, hear those who live in faith describe their views of Christ, they say, Oh, if I had such views, I could believe: I must have these before I can believe. Now you should understand, that these views are the result and effect of faith in the promise of the Spirit, to take of the things of Christ and show them to you. Lay hold of this class of promises, and the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ to you, in the relations in which you need him from time to time. Take hold, then, on the simple promise of God. Take God at his word. Believe that he means just what he says; and this will at once bring you into the state of mind after which you inquire.

9. Not in any way which you may mark out for yourself. Persons in an inquiring state are very apt, without seeming to be aware of it, to send imagination on before them, to stake out the way, and set up a flag where they intend to come out. They expect to be thus and thus exercised--to have such and such peculiar views and feelings when they have attained their object. Now, there probably never was a person who did not find himself disappointed in these respects. God says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." This suffering your imagination to mark out your path is a great hindrance to you, as it sets you upon making many fruitless, and worse than fruitless attempts to attain this imaginary state of mind, wastes much of your time, and greatly wearies the patience and grieves the Spirit of God. While he is trying to lead you right to the point, you are hauling off from the course, and insisting, that this which your imagination has marked out is the way, instead of that in which he is trying to lead you. And thus in your pride and ignorance you are causing much delay, and abusing the long-suffering of God. He says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." But you say, no--this is the way. And thus you stand and parley and banter, while you are every moment in danger of grieving the Spirit of God away from you, and of losing your soul.

10. Not in any manner, or at any time or place, upon which you may in your own mind lay any stress. If there is anything in your imagination that has fixed definitely upon any particular manner, time, or place, or circumstance, you will, in all probability, either be deceived by the devil, or be entirely disappointed in the result. You will find, in all these particular items on which you had laid any stress, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God--that your ways are not his ways, nor your thoughts his thoughts. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways, and his thoughts higher than your thoughts." But,--

11. This state is to be attained by faith alone. Let it be for ever remembered, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," and "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Both justification and sanctification are by faith alone. Rom 3:30 : "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith;" and Rom 5:1 : "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Also, Rom 9:30-31 : "What shall we say then? that the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law."

12. But let me by no means be understood as teaching sanctification by faith, as distinct from and opposed to sanctification by the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, or which is the same thing, by Christ our sanctification, living and reigning in the heart. Faith is rather the instrument or condition, than the efficient agent that induces a state of present and permanent sanctification. Faith simply receives Christ, as king, to live and reign in the soul. It is Christ, in the exercise of his different offices, and appropriated in his different relations to the wants of the soul, by faith, who secures our sanctification. This he does by Divine discoveries to the soul of his Divine perfections and fulness. The condition of these discoveries is faith and obedience. He says, Joh 14:21-23 : "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." But I must call your attention to Christ as our sanctification more at large hereafter.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

CONDITIONS OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.--*Continued.*

To ascertain the conditions of entire sanctification in this life, we must consider what the temptations are that overcome us. When first converted, we have seen, that the heart or will consecrates itself and the whole being to God. We have also seen, that this is a state of disinterested benevolence, or a committal of the whole being to the promotion of the highest good of being. We have also seen, that all sin is selfishness, or that all sin consists in the will's seeking the indulgence or gratification of self; that it consists in the will's yielding obedience to the propensities, instead of obeying God, as his law is revealed in the reason. Now, who cannot see what needs to be done to break the power of temptation, and let the soul go free? The fact is, that the department of our sensibility that is related to objects of time and sense, has received an enormous developement, and is tremblingly alive to all its correlated objects, while, by reason of the blindness of the mind to spiritual objects, it is scarcely developed at all in its relations to them. Those objects are seldom thought of by the carnal mind, and when they are, they are only thought of. They are not clearly seen, and of course they are not felt.

The thought of God, of Christ, of sin, of holiness, of heaven, and hell, excites little or no emotion in the carnal mind. The carnal mind is alive and awake to earthly and sensible objects, but dead to spiritual realities. The spiritual world needs to be revealed to the soul. The soul needs to see and clearly apprehend its own spiritual condition, relations, wants. It needs to become acquainted with God and Christ, to have spiritual and eternal realities made plain, and present, and all-absorbing realities to the soul. It needs such discoveries of the eternal world, of the nature and guilt of sin, and of Christ, the remedy of the soul, as to kill or greatly mortify lust, or the appetites and passions in their relations to objects of time and sense, and thoroughly to develope the sensibility, in its relations to sin and to God, and to the whole circle of spiritual realities. This will greatly abate the frequency and power of temptation to self-gratification, and break up the voluntary slavery of the will. The developements of the sensibility need to be thoroughly corrected. This can only be done by the revelation to the inward man, by the Holy Spirit, of those great, and solemn, and overpowering realities of the "spirit land," that lie concealed from the eye of flesh.

We often see those around us whose sensibility is so developed, in some one direction, that they are led captive by appetite and passion in that direction, in spite of reason and of God. The inebriate is an example of this. The glutton, the licentious, the avaricious man, &c., are examples of this kind. We sometimes, on the other hand, see, by some striking providence, such a counter developement of the sensibility produced, as to slay and put down those particular tendencies, and the whole direction of the man's life seems to be changed; and outwardly, at least, it is so. From being a perfect slave to his appetite for strong drink, he cannot, without the utmost loathing and disgust, so much as hear the name of his once loved beverage mentioned. From being a most avaricious man he becomes deeply disgusted with wealth, and spurns and despises it. Now, this has been effected by a counter developement of the sensibility; for, in the case supposed, religion has nothing to do with it. Religion does not consist in the states of the sensibility, nor in the will's being influenced by the sensibility; but sin consists in the will's being thus influenced. One great thing that needs to be done, to confirm and settle the will in the attitude of entire consecration to God, is to bring about a counter developement of the sensibility, so that it will not draw the will away from God. It needs to be mortified or crucified to the world, to objects of time and sense, by so deep, and clear, and powerful a revelation of self to self, and of Christ to the soul, as to awaken and develope all its susceptibilities in their relations to him, and to spiritual and divine realities. This can easily be done through and by the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. He so reveals Christ, that the soul receives him to the throne of the heart, and to reign throughout the whole being. When the will, the intellect, and the sensibility are yielded to him, he developes the intelligence and the sensibility by clear revelations of himself, in all his offices and relations to the soul, confirms the will, mellows and chastens the sensibility, by these divine revelations to the intelligence.

It is plain, that men are naturally able to be entirely sanctified, in the sense of rendering entire and continual obedience to God; for the ability is the condition of the obligation to do so. But what is implied in ability to be as holy as God requires us to be?

The ready and plain answer to this question is--

1. The possession of the powers and susceptibilities of moral agents.

2. Sufficient knowledge or light to reveal to us the whole of duty.

3. And also to reveal to us clearly the way and means of overcoming any and every difficulty or temptation that lies in our way.

The first we all possess. The second we also possess, for nothing strictly is or can be duty, that is not revealed or made known to us. The third is proffered to us upon condition that we receive the Holy Spirit, who offers himself as an indwelling light and guide, and who is received by simple faith.

The light and grace which we need, and which it is the office of the Holy Spirit to supply, respects mainly the following things:--

(1.) Knowledge of ourselves, our past sins, their nature, aggravation, guilt, and desert of dire damnation.

(2.) Knowledge of our spiritual helplessness or weakness, in consequence of--

(i.) The physical depravity or morbid developement of our natures.*(see below)

(ii.) Of the strength of selfish habit.

(iii.) Because of the power of temptation from the world, the flesh, and Satan.

(3.) We need the light of the Holy Spirit to teach us the character of God, the nature of his government, the purity of his law, the necessity and fact of atonement.

(4.) To teach us our need of Christ in all his offices and relations, governmental, spiritual, and mixed.

(5.) We need the revelation of Christ to our souls in all these relations, and in such power as to induce in us that appropriating faith, without which Christ is not, and cannot be, our salvation.

(6.) We need to know Christ, for example, in such relations as the following:--

(i.) As King, to set up his government and write his law in our hearts; to establish his kingdom within us; to sway his sceptre over our whole being. As King he must be spiritually revealed and received.

(ii.) As our Mediator, to stand between the offended justice of God and our guilty souls, to bring about a reconciliation between our souls and God. As Mediator he must be known and received.

(iii.) As our Advocate or *Paracletos*, our next or best friend, to plead our cause with the Father, our righteous and all-prevailing advocate to secure the triumph of our cause at the bar of God. In this relation he must be apprehended and embraced.

(iv.) As our Redeemer, to redeem us from the curse of the law, and from the power and dominion of sin; to pay the price demanded by public justice for our release, and to overcome and break up for ever our spiritual bondage. In this relation also we must know and appreciate him by faith.

(v.) As our Justification, to procure our pardon and acceptance with God. To know him and embrace him in this relation is indispensable to peace of mind and to release from the condemnation of the law.

(vi.) As our Judge, to pronounce sentence of acceptance, and to award to us the victor's crown.

(vii.) As the Repairer of the breach, or as the one who makes good to the government of God our default, or in other words, who, by his obedience unto death, rendered to the public justice of God a full governmental equivalent for the infliction of the penalty of the law upon us.

(viii.) As the Propitiation for our sins, to offer himself as a propitiatory or offering for our sins. The apprehension of Christ as making an atonement for our sins seems to be indispensable to the entertaining of a healthy hope of eternal life. It certainly is not healthy for the soul to apprehend the mercy of God, without regarding the conditions of its exercise. It does not sufficiently impress the soul with a sense of the justice and holiness of God, with the guilt and desert of sin. It does not sufficiently awe the soul and humble it in the deepest dust, to regard God as extending pardon, without regard to the sternness of his justice, as evinced in requiring that sin should be recognized in the universe, as worthy of the wrath and curse of God, as a condition of its forgiveness. It is remarkable, and well worthy of all consideration, that those who deny the atonement make sin a comparative trifle, and seem to regard God's benevolence or love as good nature, rather than, as it is, "a consuming fire" to all the workers of iniquity. Nothing does or can produce that awe of God, that fear and holy dread of sin, that self-abasing, God-justifying spirit, that a thorough apprehension of the atonement of Christ will do. Nothing like this can beget that spirit of self-renunciation, of cleaving to Christ, of taking refuge in his blood. In these relations Christ must be revealed to us, and apprehended and embraced by us, as the condition of our entire sanctification.

(ix.) As the Surety of a better than the first covenant, that is, as surety of a gracious covenant founded on better promises; as an underwriter or endorser of our obligation: as one who undertakes for us, and pledges himself as our security, to fulfil for and in us all the conditions of our salvation. To apprehend and appropriate Christ by faith in this relation, is no doubt, a condition of our entire sanctification. I should greatly delight to enlarge, and write a whole course of lectures on the offices and relations of Christ, the necessity of knowing and appropriating him in these relations, as the condition of our entire, in the sense of continued sanctification. This would require a large volume. All that I can do is merely to suggest a skeleton outline of this subject in this place.

(x.) We need to apprehend and appropriate Christ as dying for our sins. It is the work of the Holy Spirit thus to reveal his death in its relations to our individual sins, and as related to our sins as individuals. The soul needs to apprehend Christ as crucified for us. It is one thing for the soul to regard the death of Christ merely as the death of a martyr, and an infinitely different thing, as every one knows, who has had the experience, to apprehend his death as a real and veritable vicarious sacrifice for our sins, as being truly a substitute for our death. The soul needs to apprehend Christ as suffering on the cross for it, or as its substitute; so that it can say, That sacrifice is for me, that suffering and that death are for my sins; that blessed Lamb is slain for my sins. If thus fully to apprehend and to appropriate Christ cannot kill sin in us, what can?

(xi.) We also need to know Christ as risen for our justification. He arose and lives to procure our certain acquittal, or our complete pardon and acceptance with God. That he lives, and is our justification we need to know, to break the bondage of legal motives, and to slay all selfish fear; to break and destroy the power of temptation from this source. The clearly convinced soul is often tempted to despondency and unbelief, to despair of its own acceptance with God, and it would surely fall into the bondage of fear, were it not for the faith of Christ as a risen, living, justifying Saviour. In this relation, the soul needs clearly to apprehend and fully to appropriate Christ in his completeness, as a condition of abiding in a state of disinterested consecration to God.

(xii.) We need also to have Christ revealed to us as bearing our griefs and as carrying our sorrows. The clear apprehension of Christ, as being made sorrowful for us, and as bending under sorrows and griefs which in justice belonged to us, tends at once to render sin unspeakably odious, and Christ infinitely precious to our souls. The idea of Christ our substitute, needs to be thoroughly developed in our minds. And this relation of Christ needs to be so clearly revealed to us, as to become an everywhere present reality to us. We need to have Christ so revealed as to so completely ravish and engross our affections, that we would sooner die at once than sin against him. Is such a thing impossible? Indeed it is not. Is not the Holy Spirit able, and willing, and ready thus to reveal him, upon condition of our asking it in faith? Surely he is.

(xiii.) We also need to apprehend Christ as the one by whose stripes we are healed. We need to know him as relieving our pains and sufferings by his own, as preventing our death by his own, as sorrowing that we might eternally rejoice, as grieving that we might be unspeakably and eternally glad, as dying in unspeakable agony that we might die in deep peace and in unspeakable triumph.

(xiv.) "As being made sin for us." We need to apprehend him as being treated as a sinner, and even as the chief of sinners on our account, or for us. This is the representation of scripture, that Christ on our account was treated as if he were a sinner. He was made sin for us, that is, he was treated as a sinner, or rather as being the representative, or as it were the embodiment of sin for us. O! this the soul needs to apprehend--the holy Jesus treated as a sinner, and as if all sin were concentrated in him, on our account! We procured this treatment of him. He consented to take our place in such a sense as to endure the cross, and the curse of the law for us. When the soul apprehends this, it is ready to die with grief and love. O how infinitely it loathes self under such an apprehension as this! In this relation he must not only be apprehended, but appropriated by faith.

(xv.) We also need to apprehend the fact that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" that Christ was treated as a sinner, that we might be treated as righteous; that we might also be made personally righteous by faith in him; that we might be made the "righteousness of God in him;" that we might inherit and be made partakers of God's righteousness, as that righteousness exists and is revealed in Christ; that we might in and by him be made righteous as God is righteous. The soul needs to see, that his being made sin for us, was in order that we might be "made the righteousness of God in him." It needs to embrace and lay hold by faith upon that righteousness of God, which is brought home to saints in Christ, through the atonement and indwelling Spirit.

(xvi.) We also need him revealed to the soul, as one upon whose shoulders is the government of the world; who administers the government, moral and providential, of this world, for the protection, discipline, and benefit of believers. This revelation has a most sin-subduing tendency. That all events are directly or indirectly controlled by him who has so loved us as to die for us; that all things absolutely are designed for, and will surely result in our good. These and such like considerations, when revealed to the soul and made living realities by the Holy Spirit, tend to kill selfishness and confirm the love of God in the soul.

(xvii.) We also need Christ revealed to the inward being, as "head over all things to the church." All these relations are of no avail to our sanctification, only in so far forth as they are directly, and inwardly, and personally revealed to the soul by the Holy Spirit. It is one thing to have thoughts, and ideas, and opinions concerning Christ, and an entirely different thing to know Christ, as he is revealed by the Holy Spirit. All the relations of Christ imply corresponding necessities in us. When the Holy Spirit has revealed to us the necessity, and Christ as exactly suited to fully meet that necessity, and urged his acceptance in that relation, until we have appropriated him by faith, a great work is done. But until we are thus revealed to ourselves, and Christ is thus revealed to us and accepted by us, nothing is done more than to store our heads with notions or opinions and theories, while our hearts are becoming more and more, at every moment, like an adamant stone.

I have often feared, that many professed Christians knew Christ only after the flesh, that is, they have no other knowledge of Christ than what they obtain by reading and hearing about him, without any special revelation of him to the inward being by the Holy Spirit. I do not wonder, that such professors and ministers should be totally in the dark, upon the subject of entire sanctification in this life. They regard sanctification as brought about by the formation of holy habits, instead of resulting from the revelation of Christ to the soul in all his fulness and relations, and the soul's renunciation of self and appropriation of Christ in these relations. Christ is represented in the Bible as the head of the church. The church is represented as his body. He is to the church what the head is to the body. The head is the seat of the intellect, the will, and in short, of the living soul. Consider what the body would be without the head, and you may understand what the church would be without Christ. But as the church would be without Christ, so each believer would be without Christ. But we need to have our necessities in this respect clearly revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, and this relation of Christ made plain to our apprehension. The utter darkness of the human mind in regard to its own spiritual state and wants, and in regard to the relations and fulness of Christ, is truly wonderful. His relations, as mentioned in the Bible, are overlooked almost entirely until our wants are discovered. When these are made known, and the soul begins in earnest to inquire after a remedy, it needs not inquire in vain. "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend up to heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

(xviii.) Christ, as having all power or authority in heaven and earth, needs also to be revealed to the soul, and received by faith, to dwell in and rule over it. The corresponding want must of necessity be first known to the mind, before it can apprehend and appropriate Christ by faith, in this or any other relation. The soul needs to see and feel its weakness, its need of protection, of being defended, and watched over, and controlled. It needs to see this, and also the power of its spiritual enemies, its besetments, its dangers, and its certain ruin, unless the Almighty One interpose in its behalf. It needs thus truly and deeply to know itself; and then, to inspire it with confidence, it needs a revelation of Christ as God, as the Almighty God, to the soul, as one who possesses absolute and infinite power, and as presented to the soul to be accepted as its strength, and as all it needs of power.

O how infinitely blind he is to the fulness and glory of Christ, who does not know himself and Christ as both are revealed by the Holy Spirit. When we are led by the Holy Spirit to look down into the abyss of our own emptiness--to behold the horrible pit and miry clay of our own habits, and fleshly, and worldly, and infernal entanglements; when we see in the light of God, that our emptiness and necessities are infinite; then, and not till then, are we prepared wholly to cast off self, and to put on Christ. The glory and fulness of Christ are not discovered to the soul, until it discovers its need of him. But when self, in all its loathsomeness and helplessness, is fully revealed, until hope is utterly extinct, as it respects every kind and degree of help in ourselves; and when Christ, the all and in all, is revealed to the soul as its all-sufficient portion and salvation, then, and not until then, does the soul know its salvation. This knowledge is the indispensable condition of appropriating faith, or of that act of receiving Christ, or that committal of all to him, that takes Christ home to dwell in the heart by faith, and to preside over all its states and actions. O, such a knowledge and such a reception and putting on of Christ is blessed. Happy is he who knows it by his own experience.

It is indispensable to a steady and implicit faith, that the soul should have a spiritual apprehension of what is implied in the saying of Christ, that all power was delivered unto him. The ability of Christ to do all, and even exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, is what the soul needs clearly to apprehend in a spiritual sense, that is, to apprehend it, not merely as a theory or as a proposition, but to see the true spiritual import of this saying. This is also equally true of all that is said in the Bible about Christ, of all his offices and relations. It is one thing to theorize, and speculate, and opine, about Christ, and an infinitely different thing to know him as he is revealed by the Holy Spirit. When Christ is fully revealed to the soul by the Comforter, it will never again doubt the attainability and reality of entire sanctification in this life.

(xix.) Another necessity of the soul is to know Christ spiritually, as the Prince of Peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," said Christ. What is this peace? And who is Christ, in the relation of the Prince of Peace? What is it to possess the peace of Christ--to have the peace of God rule in our hearts? Without the revelation of Christ to the soul by the Holy Spirit, it has no spiritual apprehension of the meaning of this language. Nor can it lay hold on and appropriate Christ as its peace, as the Prince of Peace. Whoever knows and has embraced Christ as his peace, and as the Prince of Peace, knows what it is to have the peace of God rule in his heart. But none else at all understand the true spiritual import of this language, nor can it be so explained to them as that they will apprehend it, unless it be explained by the Holy Spirit.

(xx.) The soul needs also to know Christ as the Captain of salvation, as the skilful conductor, guide, and captain of the soul in all its conflicts with its spiritual enemies, as one who is ever at hand to lead the soul on to victory, and make it more than a conqueror in all its conflicts with the world, the flesh, and Satan. How indispensable to a living and efficient faith it is and must be, for the soul clearly to apprehend by the Holy Spirit this relation of Captain of Salvation, and Captain of the Lord's Host. Without confidence in the Leader and Captain, how shall the soul put itself under his guidance and protection in the hour of conflict? It cannot.

The fact is, that when the soul is ignorant of Christ as a Captain or Leader, it will surely fall in battle. If the church, as a body, but knew Christ as the Captain of the Lord's Host; if he were but truly and spiritually known to them in that relation, no more confusion would be seen in the ranks of God's elect. All would be order, and strength, and conquest. They would soon go up and take possession of the whole territory that has been promised to Christ. The heathen would soon be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the world for a possession. Joshua knew Christ as the Captain of the Lord's host. Consequently he had more courage, and efficiency, and prowess, than all Israel besides. Even so it is now. When a soul can be found who thoroughly knows, and has embraced, and appropriated Christ, he is a host of himself. That is, he has appropriated the attributes of Christ to himself; and his influence is felt in heaven, and earth, and hell.

(xxi.) Another affecting and important relation in which the soul needs to know Christ, is that of our Passover. It needs to understand, that the only reason why it has not been, or will not assuredly be, slain for sin is, that Christ has sprinkled, as our Paschal Lamb, the lintel and door-posts of our souls with his own blood, and that therefore the destroying angel passes us by. There is a most deep and sin-subduing, or rather temptation-subduing spirituality in this relation of Christ to the soul, when revealed by the Holy Spirit. We must apprehend our sins as slaying the Lamb, and apply his blood to our souls by faith--his blood as being our protection and our only trust. We need to know the security there is in this being sprinkled with his blood, and the certain and speedy destruction of all who have not taken refuge under it. We need to know also, that it will not do for a moment to venture out into the streets, and from under its protection, lest we be slain there.

(xxii.) To know Christ as our Wisdom, in the true spiritual sense, is doubtless indispensable to our entire, in the sense of continued, sanctification. He is our wisdom, in the sense of being the whole of our religion. That is, when separated from him, we have no spiritual life whatever. He is at the bottom of, or the inducing cause of all our obedience. This we need clearly to apprehend. Until the soul clearly understands this, it has learned nothing to the purpose of its helplessness, and of Christ's spiritual relations to it.

(xxiii.) Very nearly allied to this is Christ's relation to the soul as its Sanctification. I have been amazed at the ignorance of the church and of the ministry, respecting Christ as its Sanctification. He is not its Sanctifier in the sense that he does something to the soul that enables it to stand and persevere in holiness in its own strength. He does not change the structure of the soul, but he watches over, and works in it to will and to do continually, and thus becomes its Sanctification. His influence is not exerted once for all, but constantly. When he is apprehended and embraced as the soul's Sanctification, he rules in, and reigns over the soul in so high a sense, that he, as it were, developes his own holiness in us. He, as it were, swallows us up, so enfolds, if I may so say, our wills and our souls in his, that we are willingly led captive by him. We will and do as he wills within us. He charms the will into a universal bending to his will. He so establishes his throne in, and his authority over us, that he subdues us to himself. He becomes our sanctification only in so far forth as we are revealed to ourselves, and he revealed to us, and as we receive him and put him on. What! has it come to this, that the church doubts and rejects the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life? Then, it must be that it has lost sight of Christ as its sanctification. Is not Christ perfect in all his relations? Is there not a completeness and fulness in him? When embraced by us, are we not complete in him? The secret of all this doubting about, and opposition to, the doctrine of entire sanctification, is to be found in the fact, that Christ is not apprehended and embraced as our sanctification. The Holy Spirit sanctifies only by revealing Christ to us as our sanctification. He does not speak of himself, but takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. Two among the most prominent ministers in the presbyterian church have said to me within a few years, that they had never heard of Christ as the sanctification of the soul. O, how many of the ministry of the present day overlook the true spiritual gospel of Christ!

(xxiv.) Another of Christ's spiritual relations is that of the Redemption of the soul; not merely as the Redeemer considered in his governmental relation, but as a present Redemption. To apprehend and receive Christ in this relation, the soul needs to apprehend itself as sold under sin; as being the voluntary but real slave of lust and appetite, except as Christ continually delivers us from its power, by strengthening and confirming our wills in resisting and overcoming the flesh.

(xxv.) Christ our Prophet is another important spiritual relation in which we need to apprehend Christ by the Holy Spirit, as a condition of entire sanctification. He must be received as the great teacher of our souls, so that every word of his will be received as God speaking to us. This will render the Bible precious, and all the words of life efficient to the sanctification of our souls.

(xxvi.) As our High Priest, we need also to know Christ. I say we need to know him in this relation, as really ever living and ever sustaining this relation to us, offering up, as it were, by a continual offering, his own blood, and himself as a propitiation for our sins; as being entered within the veil, and as ever living to make intercession for us. Much precious instruction is to be gathered from this relation of Christ. We need, perishingly need, to know Christ in this relation, as a condition of a right dependence upon him. I all the while feel embarrassed with the consideration that I am not able, in this course of instruction, to give a fuller account of Christ in these relations. We need a distinct revelation of him in each of these relations, in order to a thorough understanding and clear apprehension of that which is implied in each and all of the relations of Christ.

When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ. That is, whenever temptation overcomes us, it is because we do not know and avail ourselves of the relation of Christ that would meet our necessities. One great thing that needs to be done is, to correct the developements of our sensibility. The appetites and passions are enormously developed in their relations to earthly objects. In relation to things of time and sense, our propensities are greatly developed and are alive; but in relation to spiritual truths and objects, and eternal realities, we are naturally as dead as stones. When first converted, if we knew enough of ourselves and of Christ thoroughly to develope and correct the action of the sensibility, and confirm our wills in a state of entire consecration, we should not fall. In proportion as the law-work preceding conversion has been thorough, and the revelation of Christ at, or immediately subsequent to, conversion, full and clear, just in that proportion do we witness stability in converts. In most, if not in all instances, however, the convert is too ignorant of himself, and of course knows too little about Christ, to be established in permanent obedience. He needs renewed conviction of sin, to be revealed to himself, and to have Christ revealed to him, and be formed in him the hope of glory, before he will be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Before I close this lecture, I must remark, and shall have occasion to repeat the remark, that from what has been said, it must not be inferred, that the knowledge of Christ in all these relations is a condition of our coming into a state of entire consecration to God, or of present sanctification. The thing insisted on is, that the soul will abide in this state in the hour of temptation only so far forth as it betakes itself to Christ in such circumstances of trial, and apprehends and appropriates him by faith from time to time in those relations that meet the present and pressing necessities of the soul. The temptation is the occasion of revealing the necessity, and the Holy Spirit is always ready to reveal Christ in the particular relation suited to the newly-developed necessity. The perception and appropriation of him in this relation, under these circumstances of trial, is the *sine quà non* of our remaining in the state of entire consecration.

* (See the distinction between moral and physical depravity, Lecture XXXVIII, II.)

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXIV.

SANCTIFICATION.

CONDITIONS OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.--CONTINUED.

(xxvii.) We need also to know ourselves as starving souls, and Christ as the "bread of life," as "the bread that came down from heaven." We need to know spiritually and experimentally what it is to "eat of his flesh, and to drink of his blood," to receive him as the bread of life, to appropriate him to the nourishment of our souls as really as we appropriate bread, by digestion, to the nourishment of our bodies. This I know is mysticism to the carnal professor. But to the truly spiritually-minded, "this is the bread of God that came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never die." To hear Christ talk of eating his flesh, and of drinking his blood, was a great stumbling-block to the carnal Jews, as it now is to carnal professors. Nevertheless, this is a glorious truth, that Christ is the constant sustenance of the spiritual life, as truly and as literally as food is the sustenance of the body. But the soul will never eat this bread until it has ceased to attempt to fill itself with the husks of its own doings, or with any provision this world can furnish. Do you know, Christian, what it is to eat of this bread? If so, then you shall never die.

(xxviii.) Christ also needs to be revealed to the soul as the fountain of the water of life. "If any man thirst," says he, "let him come unto me and drink." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To him that is athirst, I will give unto him of the fountain of the water of life freely." The soul needs to have such discoveries made to it, as to beget a thirst after God that cannot be allayed, except by a copious draught at the fountain of the water of life. It is indispensable to the establishing of the soul in perfect love, that its hungering after the bread, and its thirsting for the water of life, should be duly excited, and that the spirit should pant and struggle after God, and "cry out for the living God," that it should be able to say with truth: "My soul panteth for God as the hart panteth for the water-brooks; My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God;" "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath after thee at all times." When this state of mind is induced by the Holy Spirit, so that the longing of the soul after perpetual holiness is irrepressible, it is prepared for a revelation of Christ, in all those offices and relations that are necessary to secure its establishment in love. Especially is it then prepared to apprehend, appreciate, and appropriate Christ, as the bread and water of life, to understand what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. It is then in a state to understand what Christ meant when he said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." They not only understand what it is to hunger and thirst, but also what it is to be filled; to have the hunger and thirst allayed, and the largest desire fully satisfied. The soul then realizes in its own experience the truthfulness of the apostle's saying, that Christ "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Many stop short even of anything like intense hunger and thirst; others hunger and thirst, but have not the idea of the perfect fulness and adaptedness of Christ to meet and satisfy the longing of their souls. They therefore do not plead and look for the soul-satisfying revelation of Christ. They expect no such divine fulness and satisfaction of soul. They are ignorant of the fulness and perfection of the provisions of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God;" and consequently they are not encouraged to hope from the fact, that they hunger and thirst after righteousness, that they shall be filled; but they remain unfed, unfilled, unsatisfied, and after a season, through unbelief, fall into indifference, and remain in bondage to sin.

(xxix.) The soul needs also to know Christ as the true God, and the eternal life. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, save by the Holy Spirit." The proper divinity of Christ is never, and never can be, held otherwise than as a mere opinion, a tenet, a speculation, an article of creed, until he is revealed to the inner man by the Holy Spirit. But nothing short of an apprehension of Christ, as the supreme and living God to the soul, can inspire that confidence in him that is essential to its established sanctification. The soul can have no apprehension of what is intended by his being the "eternal life," until it spiritually knows him as the true God. When he is spiritually revealed as the true and living God, the way is prepared for the spiritual apprehension of him as the eternal life. "As the living Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "I give unto them eternal life." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the resurrection and the life." These and similar passages the soul needs spiritually to apprehend, to have a spiritual and personal revelation of them within. Most professors seem to me to have no right idea of the condition upon which the Bible can be made of spiritual use to them. They seem not to understand, that in its letter it is only a history of things formerly revealed to men; that it is, in fact, a revelation to no man, except upon the condition of its being personally revealed, or revealed to us in particular by the Holy Spirit. The mere fact, that we have in the gospel the history of the birth, the life, the death of Christ, is no such revelation of Christ to any man as meets his necessities; and as will secure his salvation. Christ and his doctrine, his life, and death, and resurrection, need to be revealed personally by the Holy Spirit, to each and every soul of man, to effect his salvation. So it is with every spiritual truth; without an inward revelation of it to the soul, it is only a savour of death unto death. It is in vain to hold to the proper divinity of Christ, as a speculation, a doctrine, a theory, an opinion, without the revelation of his divine nature and character to the soul, by the Holy Spirit. But let the soul know him, and walk with him as the true God, and then it will no longer question whether, as our sanctification, he is all-sufficient and complete. Let no one object to this, that if this is true, men are under no obligation to believe in Christ, and to obey the gospel, without or until they are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. To such an objection, should it be made, I would answer,--

(*a.*) Men are under an obligation to believe every truth so far as they can understand or apprehend it, but no further. So far as they can apprehend the spiritual truths of the gospel without the Holy Spirit, so far, without his aid, they are bound to believe it. But Christ has himself taught us, that no man can come to him except the Father draw him. That this drawing means teaching is evident, from what Christ proceeds to say. "For it is written," said he, "they shall all be taught of God. Every one therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." That this learning of the Father is something different from the mere oral or written instructions of Christ and the apostles, is evident from the fact, that Christ assured those to whom he preached, with all the plainness with which he was able, that they still could not come to him except drawn, that is taught, of the Father. As the Father teaches by the Holy Spirit, Christ's plain teaching, in the passage under consideration is, that no man can come to him except he be specially enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Paul unequivocally teaches the same thing. "No man," says he, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Notwithstanding all the teaching of the apostles, no man by merely listening to their instruction could so apprehend the true divinity of Christ, as honestly and with spiritual understanding to say, that Jesus is the Lord. But what spiritual or true Christian does not know the radical difference between being taught of man and of God, between the opinions that we form from reading, hearing, and study, and the clear apprehensions of truths that are communicated by the direct and inward illuminations of the Holy Spirit.

(*b.*) I answer, that men under the gospel are entirely without excuse for not enjoying all the light they need from the Holy Spirit, since he is in the world, has been sent for the very purpose of giving to men all the knowledge of themselves and of Christ which they need. His aid is freely proffered to all, and Christ has assured us, that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than parents are to give good gifts to their children. All men under the gospel know this, and all men have light enough to ask in faith for the Holy Spirit, and of course all men may know of themselves and of Christ all that they need to know. They are therefore able to know and to embrace Christ as fully and as fast as it is their duty to embrace him. They are able to know Christ in his governmental and spiritual relations, just as fast as they come into circumstances to need to know him in these various relations. The Holy Spirit, if he is not quenched and resisted, will surely reveal Christ in all his relations in due time, so that, in every temptation a way of escape will be open, so that we shall be able to bear it. This is expressly promised, 1Co 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Men are able to know what God offers to teach them, upon a condition within the compass of their ability. The Holy Spirit offers, upon condition of faith in the express promise of God, to lead every man into all truth. Every man is, therefore, under obligation to know and do the whole truth, so far and so fast as it is possible for him to do so, with the light of the Holy Spirit.

(xxx.) But be it remembered, that it is not enough for us to apprehend Christ as the true God and the eternal life, but we need also to lay hold upon him as our life. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that a particular and personal appropriation of Christ, in such relations, is indispensable to our being rooted and grounded, established and perfected in love. When our utter deficiency and emptiness in any one respect or direction, is deeply revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, with the corresponding remedy and perfect fulness in Christ, it then remains for the soul, in this respect and direction, to cast off self, and put on Christ. When this is done, when self in that respect and direction is dead, and Christ is risen, and lives and reigns in the heart in that relation, all is strong, and whole, and complete, in that department of our life and experience. For example, suppose we find ourselves constitutionally, or by reason of our relations and circumstances, exposed to certain besetments and temptations that overcome us. Our weakness in this respect we observe in our experience. But upon observing our exposedness, and experiencing something of our weakness, we begin with piling resolution upon resolution. We bind ourselves with oaths and promises, and covenants, but all in vain. When we purpose to stand, we invariably, in the presence of the temptation, fall. This process of resolving and falling brings the soul into great discouragement and perplexity, until at last the Holy Spirit reveals to us fully, that we are attempting to stand and to build upon nothing. The utter emptiness and worse than uselessness of our resolutions and self-originated efforts, is so clearly seen by us, as to annihilate for ever self-dependence in this respect. Now the soul is prepared for the revelation of Christ to meet this particular want. Christ is revealed and apprehended as the soul's substitute, surety, life, and salvation, in respect to the particular besetment and weakness of which it has had so full and so humiliating a revelation. Now, if the soul utterly and for ever casts off and renounces self, and puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is seen to be needed to meet his necessity, then all is complete in him. Thus far Christ is reigning within us. Thus far we know what is the power of his resurrection, and are made conformable to his death.

But I said, that we need to know and to lay hold upon Christ as our life. Too much stress cannot be laid upon our personal responsibility to Christ, our individual relation to him, our personal interest in him, and obligation to him. To sanctify our own souls, we need to make every department of religion a personal matter between us and God, to regard every precept of the Bible, and every promise, saying, exhortation, threatening, and in short, we need to regard the whole Bible as given to us, and earnestly seek the personal revelation of every truth it contains to our own souls. No one can too fully understand, or too deeply feel, the necessity of taking home the Bible with all it contains, as a message sent from Heaven to him; nor can too earnestly desire or seek the promised Spirit to teach him the true spiritual import of all its contents. He must have the Bible made a personal revelation of God to his own soul. It must become his own book. He must know Christ for himself. He must know him in his different relations. He must know him in his blessed and infinite fulness, or he cannot abide in him, and unless he abide in Christ, he can bring forth none of the fruits of holiness. "Except a man abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."

Apprehending and embracing Christ as our life implies the apprehension of the fact, that we of ourselves are dead in trespasses and in sins, that we have no life in ourselves, that death has reigned, and will eternally reign in and over us, unless Christ become our life. Until man knows himself to be dead, and that he is wholly destitute of spiritual life in himself, he will never know Christ as his life. It is not enough to hold the opinion, that all men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. It is not enough to hold the opinion, that we are, in common with all men, in this condition in and of ourselves. We must see it. We must know what such language means. It must be made a matter of personal revelation to us. We must be made fully to apprehend our own death, and Christ as our life; and we must fully recognize our death and him as our life, by personally renouncing self, in this respect, and laying hold on him as our own spiritual and eternal life. Many persons, and, strange to say, some eminent ministers, are so blinded as to suppose, that a soul entirely sanctified does not any longer need Christ, assuming that such a soul has spiritual life in and of himself; that there is in him some foundation or efficient occasion of continued holiness, as if the Holy Spirit had changed his nature, or infused physical holiness or an independent holy principle into him, in such a sense that they have an independent well-spring of holiness within, as a part of themselves. Oh, when will such men cease to darken counsel by words without knowledge, upon the infinitely important subject of sanctification! When will such men--when will the church, understand that Christ is our sanctification; that we have no life, no holiness, no sanctification, except as we abide in Christ, and he in us; that, separate from Christ, there never is any moral excellence in any man; that Christ does not change the constitution of man in sanctification, but that he only, by our own consent, gains and keeps the heart; that he enthrones himself, with our consent, in the heart, and through the heart extends his influence and his life to all our spiritual being; that he lives in us as really and truly as we live in our own bodies; that he as really reigns in our will, and consequently in our emotions, by our own free consent, as our wills reign in our bodies? Cannot our brethren understand, that this is sanctification, and that nothing else is? that there is no degree of sanctification that is not to be thus ascribed to Christ? and that entire sanctification is nothing else than the reign of Jesus in the soul? nothing more nor less than Christ, the resurrection and the life, raising the soul from spiritual death, and reigning in it through righteousness unto eternal life? I must know and embrace Christ as my life; I must abide in him as a branch abides in the vine; I must not only hold this as an opinion; I must know and act on it in practice. Oh, when the ministry of reconciliation all know and embrace a whole Christ for themselves; when they preach Jesus in all his fulness and present vital power to the church; when they testify what they have seen, and their hands have handled of the word of life--then, and not till then, will there be a general resurrection of the dry bones of the house of Israel. Amen. Lord, hasten the day!

(xxxi.) We need especially to know Christ as the "All in all." Col 3:11 : "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Before the soul will cease to be overcome by temptation, it must renounce self-dependence in all things. It must be as it were self-annihilated. It must cease to think of self, as having in it any ground of dependence in the hour of trial. It must wholly and in all things renounce self, and put on Christ. It must know self as nothing in the matter of spiritual life, and Christ as all. The Psalmist could say, "All my springs are in thee." He is the fountain of life. Whatever of life is in us flows directly from him, as the sap flows from the vine to the branch; or as a rivulet flows from its fountain. The spiritual life that is in us is really Christ's life flowing through us. Our activity, though properly our own, is nevertheless stimulated and directed by his presence and agency within us. So that we can and must say with Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal 2:20. It is a great thing for a self-conceited sinner to suffer even in his own view, self-annihilation, as it respects the origination of any spiritual obedience to God, or any spiritual good whatever. But this must be before he will learn, on all occasions and in all things, to stand in Christ, to abide in him as his "ALL." O, the infinite folly and madness of the carnal mind! It would seem, that it will always make trial of its own strength before it will depend on Christ. It will look first for resources and help within itself, before it will renounce self, and make Christ its "all in all." It will betake itself to its own wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In short, there is not an office or relation of Christ, that will be recognized and embraced, until the soul has first come into circumstances to have its wants, in relation to that office of Christ, developed by some trial, and often by some fall under temptation; then, and not until, in addition to this, Christ is clearly and prevailingly revealed by the Holy Spirit, insomuch that self is put down, and Christ is exalted in the heart. Sin has so becrazed and befooled mankind, that when Christ tells them, "without me ye can do nothing," "and if any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered," they neither apprehend what or how much he means, and how much is really implied in these and similar sayings, until one trial after another fully developes the appalling fact, that they are nothing, so far as spiritual good is concerned, and that Christ is "all and in all."

(xxxii.) Another relation in which the soul must know Christ, before it will steadily abide in him, is that of "the Resurrection and the Life." Through and by Christ the soul is raised from spiritual death. Christ as the resurrection and the life, is raised in the soul. He arises or revives the Divine image out of the spiritual death that reigns within us. He is begotten by the Holy Spirit, and born within us. He arises through the death that is within us, and developes his own life within our own being. Will any one say, "this is a hard saying, who can hear it?" Until we know by our own experience the power of this resurrection within us, we shall never understand "the fellowship of his sufferings and be made conformable to his death." He raises our will from its fallen state of death in trespasses and sins, or from its state of committal and voluntary enslavement to lust and to self, to a state of conformity to the will of God. Through the intellect, he pours a stream of quickening truth upon the soul. He thus quickens the will into obedience. By making fresh discoveries to the soul, he strengthens and confirms the will in obedience. By thus raising, and sustaining, and quickening the will, he rectifies the sensibility, and quickens and raises the whole man from the dead, or rather builds up a new and spiritual man upon the death and ruins of the old and carnal man. He raises the same powers and faculties that were dead in trespasses and sins to a spiritual life. He overcomes their death, and inspires them with life. He lives in saints and works in them to will and to do; and they live in him, according to the saying of Christ in his address to his Father, Joh 17:21 : "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;" and again, Joh 17:23 : "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." He does not raise the soul to spiritual life, in any such sense that it has life separate from him for one moment. The spiritual resurrection is a continual one. Christ is the resurrection in the sense that he is at the foundation of all our obedience at every moment. He, as it were, raises the soul or the will from the slavery of lust to a conformity to the will of God, in every instance and at every moment of its consecration to the will of God. But this he does only upon condition of our apprehending and embracing him in this relation. In reading the Bible, I have often been struck with the fact, that the inspired writers were so far ahead of the great mass of professed believers. They write of the relations in which Christ had been spiritually revealed to them. All the names, and titles, and official relations of Christ, must have had great significancy with them. They spoke not from theory, or from what man had taught them, but from experience, from what the Holy Spirit taught them. As the risen Christ is risen and lives, and is developed in one relation after another, in the experience of believers, how striking the writings of inspiration appear! As the necessities of our being are developed in experience, and as Christ is revealed, as in all new circumstances and relations, just that and all that we need, who has not marvelled to find in the Bible, way-marks, and guide-boards, and milestones, and all the evidences that we could ask or desire, that inspired men have gone this way, and have had substantially the same experiences that we have. We are often also struck with the fact, that they are so far ahead of us. At every stage in our progress we seem to have, as it were, a new and improved edition of the Bible. We discover worlds of truth before unnoticed by us--come to know Christ in precious relations in which we had known nothing of him before. And ever, as our real wants are discovered, Christ is seen to be all that we need, just the thing that exactly and fully meets the necessities of our souls. This is indeed "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

(xxxiii.) Another precious and most influential relation of Christ in the affair of our sanctification, is that of the Bridegroom or Husband of the soul. The individual soul needs to be espoused to Christ, to enter into this relation personally by its own consent. Mere earthly and outward marriages are nothing but sin, unless the hearts are married. True marriage is of the heart, and the outward ceremony is only a public manifestation or profession of the union or marriage of the souls or hearts. All marriage may be regarded as typical of that union into which the spiritual soul enters with Christ. This relation of Christ to the soul is frequently recognized, both in the Old and the New Testament. It is treated of by Paul as a great mystery. The seventh and eighth chapters of Romans present a striking illustration of the results of the soul's remaining under the law, on the one hand, and of its being married to Christ on the other. The seventh chapter begins thus, "Know ye not, brethren, for I speak to them that know the law, how that the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth. For the woman who hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress though she be married to another man. Therefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to Christ who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." The apostle then proceeds to show the results of these two marriages, or relations of the soul. When married to the law, he says of it, "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." But when married to Christ, he proceeds to say, "we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." The remaining part of this chapter is occupied with an account of the soul's bondage while married to the law, of its efforts to please its husband, with its continual failures, its deep convictions, its selfish efforts, its consciousness of failures, and its consequent self-condemnation and despondency. It is perfectly obvious, when the allegory with which the apostle commences this chapter is considered, that he is portraying a legal experience, for the purpose of contrasting it with the experience of one who has attained to the true liberty of perfect love.

The eighth chapter represents the results of the marriage of the soul to Christ. It is delivered from its bondage to the law, and from the power of the law of sin in the members. It brings forth fruit unto God. Christ has succeeded in gaining the affections of the soul. What the law could not do Christ has done, and the righteousness of the law is now fulfilled in the soul. The representation is as follows: The soul is married to the law, and acknowledges its obligation to obey its husband. The husband requires perfect love to God and man. This love is wanting, the soul is selfish. This displeases the husband, and he denounces death against her, if she does not love. She recognizes the reasonableness of both the requisition and the threatening, and resolves upon full obedience. But being selfish, the command and threatening but increase the difficulty. All her efforts at obedience are for selfish reasons. The husband is justly firm and imperative in his demands. The wife trembles, and promises, and resolves upon obedience. But all in vain. Her obedience is only feigned, outward, and not love. She becomes disheartened and gives up in despair. As sentence is about to be executed, Christ appears. He witnesses the dilemma. He reveres, and honours, and loves the husband. He entirely approves his requisition and the course he has taken. He condemns, in most unqualified terms, the wife. Still he pities and loves her with deep benevolence. He will consent to nothing which shall have the appearance of disapproving the claims or the course of her husband. His rectitude must be openly acknowledged. Her husband must not be dishonoured. But, on the contrary, he must be "magnified and made honourable." Still Christ so much pities the wife, as to be willing to die as her substitute. This he does, and the wife is regarded as dying in and by him her substitute. Now, since the death of either of the parties is a dissolution of the marriage covenant, and since the wife in the person of her substitute has died under and to the law her husband, she is now at liberty to marry again. Christ rises from the dead. This striking and overpowering manifestation of disinterested benevolence, on the part of Christ, in dying for her, subdues her selfishness and wins her whole heart. He proposes marriage, and she consents with her whole soul. Now she finds the law of selfishness, or of self-gratification, broken, and the righteousness of the law of love fulfilled in her heart. The last husband requires just what the first required, but having won her whole heart, she no longer needs to resolve to love, for love is as natural and spontaneous as her breath. Before the seventh of Romans was the language of her complaint. Now the eighth is the language of her triumph. Before she found herself unable to meet the demands of her husband, and equally unable to satisfy her own conscience. Now she finds it easy to obey her husband, and that his commandments are not grievous, although they are identical with those of the first husband. Now this allegory of the apostle is not a mere rhetorical flourish. It represents a reality, and one of the most important and glorious realities in existence, namely, the real spiritual union of the soul to Christ, and the blessed results of this union, the bringing forth of fruit unto God. This union is, as the apostle says, a great mystery; nevertheless, it is a glorious reality. "He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." 1Co 6:17.

Now until the soul knows what it is to be married to the law, and is able to adopt the language of the seventh of Romans, it is not prepared to see, and appreciate, and be properly affected by, the death and the love of Christ. Great multitudes rest in this first marriage, and do not consent to die and rise again in Christ. They are not married to Christ, and do not know that there is such a thing, and expect to live and die in this bondage, crying out, "O wretched man that I am?" They need to die and rise again in Christ to a new life, founded in and growing out of a new relation to Christ. Christ becomes the living head or husband of the soul, its surety, its life. He gains and retains the deepest affection of the soul, thus writing his law in the heart, and engraving it in the inward parts.

But not only must the soul know what it is to be married to the law, with its consequent thraldom and death, but it must also for itself enter into the marriage relation with a risen, living Christ. This must not be a theory, an opinion, a tenet; nor must it be an imagination, a mysticism, a notion, a dream. It must be a living, personal, real entering into a personal and living union with Christ, a most entire and universal giving of self to him, and receiving of him in the relation of spiritual husband and head. The spirit of Christ and our spirit must embrace each other, and enter into an everlasting covenant with each other. There must be a mutual giving of self, and receiving of each other, a blending of spirits, in such a sense as is intended by Paul in the passage already quoted: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

My brother, my sister, do you understand this? Do you know what both these marriages are, with their diverse results? If you do not, make no longer pretence to being sanctified, for you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. "Escape for thy life."

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXV.

SANCTIFICATION.

CONDITIONS OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.--CONTINUED.

(xxxiv.) Another interesting and highly important relation which Christ sustains to his people is that of Shepherd. This relation presupposes the helpless and defenceless condition of Christians in this life, and the indispensable necessity of guardianship and protection. Christ was revealed to the psalmist in this relation, and when on earth he revealed himself to his disciples in this relation. It is not enough, however, that he should be revealed merely in the letter, or in words as sustaining this relation. The real spiritual import of this relation, and what is implied in it, needs to be revealed by the Holy Spirit, to give it efficiency, and inspire that universal trust in the presence, care, and protection of Christ that is often essential to preventing a fall in the hour of temptation. Christ meant all that he said, when he professed to be the Good Shepherd that cared for his sheep, that would not flee, but that would lay down his life for them. In this relation, as in all others, there is infinite fulness and perfection. If the sheep do thoroughly know and confide in the shepherd, they will follow him, will flee to him for protection in every hour of danger, will at all times depend on him for all things. Now all this is received and professed in theory by all professors of religion. And yet how few, comparatively, seem to have had Christ so revealed to them, as to have secured the actual embracing of him in this relation, and a continual dependence on him for all that is implied in it. Now, either this is a vain boast of Christ, or else he may be, and ought to be depended upon, and the soul has a right to throw itself upon him for all that is implied in the relation of Good Shepherd. But this relation, with all the other relations of Christ, implies a corresponding necessity in us. This necessity we must see and feel, or this relation of Christ will have no impressive significancy. We need, then, in this case, as in all others, the revelation of the Holy Spirit, to make us thoroughly to apprehend our dependence, and to reveal Christ in the spirit and fulness of this relation, until our souls have thoroughly closed with him. Some persons fall into the mistake of supposing, that when their necessities and the fulness of Christ have been revealed to their mind by the Spirit, the work is done. But unless they actually receive him, and commit themselves to him in this relation, they will soon find to their shame that nothing has been done to purpose, so far as their standing in the hour of temptation is concerned. He may be clearly revealed in any of his relations, the soul may see both its necessities and his fulness, and yet forget or neglect actively and personally to receive him in these relations. It should never be forgotten, that this is in every case indispensable. The revelation is designed to secure our acceptance of him; if it does not do this, it has only greatly aggravated our guilt, without at all securing to us the benefits of these relations. It is amazing to see how common it is, and has been, for ministers to overlook this truth, and, of course, neither to practise it themselves, nor urge it upon their hearers. Hence Christ is not known to multitudes, and is not in many cases received even when he is revealed by the Holy Spirit. If I am not greatly mistaken, thorough inquiry would show that error upon this subject exists to a most appalling extent. The personal and individual acceptance of Christ in all his offices and relations, as the *sine quà non* of entire sanctification, seems to me to be seldom either understood or insisted on by ministers of the present day, and of course little thought of by the church. The idea of accepting for ourselves a whole Saviour, of appropriating to our own individual selves all the offices and relations of Jesus, seems to be a rare idea in this age of the church. But for what purpose does he sustain these relations? Is the bare apprehension of these truths, and of Christ in these relations enough, without our own activity being duly excited by the apprehension, to lay hold and avail ourselves of his fulness? What folly and madness for the church to expect to be saved by a neglected Saviour! To what purpose is it for the Spirit to make him known to us, unless we as individuals embrace him and make him our own? Let the soul but truly and fully apprehend and embrace Christ in this relation of Shepherd, and it shall never perish, neither shall any pluck it out of his hand. The knowing of Christ in this relation secures the soul against following strangers. But thus knowing him is indispensable to securing this result. If we know him as Shepherd we shall follow him, but not else. Let this be well considered.

(xxxv.) Christ is also the Door, by and through which the soul enters the fold, and finds security and protection among the sheep. This needs also to be spiritually apprehended, and the Door needs to be spiritually and personally entered, to secure the guardianship of the Good Shepherd. Those who do not spiritually and truly apprehend Christ as the Door, and enter by and through him, and yet hope for salvation, are surely attempting to climb up some other way, and are therefore thieves and robbers. This is a familiar and well-known truth, in the mouth, not only of every minister and Christian, but of every sabbath school child. Yet how few really apprehend and embrace its spiritual import. That there is no other means or way of access to the fold of God, is admitted by all the orthodox; but who really perceives and knows, through the personal revelation of the Holy Spirit, what, and all that Christ meant in the very significant words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep;" "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture?" He who truly discovers this Door, and gains access by it, will surely realize in his own experience the faithfulness of the Good Shepherd, and will go in and out, and find pasture. That is, he will surely be fed, be led into green pastures, and beside the still waters.

But it is well to inquire, what is implied in this relation of Christ.

(*a.*) It implies, that we are shut out from the protection and favour of God, except as we approach him through and by Christ.

(*b.*) It implies that we need to know, and clearly to apprehend and appreciate this fact.

(*c.*) That we need to discover the Door, and what is implied both in the Door, and in entering it.

(*d.*) That entering it implies the utter renunciation of self, of self-righteousness, self-protection and support, and a putting ourselves entirely under the control and protection of the Shepherd.

(*e.*) That we need the revelation of the Holy Spirit to make us clearly apprehend the true spiritual import of this relation, and what is implied in it.

(*f.*) That when Christ is revealed in this relation, we need to embrace him, and for ourselves to enter, by and through him, into the enclosure that everywhere surrounds the children of God.

It is an inward, and not a mere outward revelation that we need. A heart-entering revelation, and not a mere notion, idea, theory, dream of the imagination. It is really an intelligent act of the mind; as real an entering into the fold or favour of God, by and through Christ, as to enter the house of God on the sabbath-day by the door. When the soul enters by the door, it finds an infinitely different reception and treatment from that of those who climb up into the church upon a ladder of mere opinion, a scaling ladder of mere orthodoxy. This last class are not fed. They find no protection from the Good Shepherd. They do not know the Shepherd, or follow him, because they have climbed up another way. They have not confidence in him, cannot approach him with boldness, and claim his guardianship and protection. Their knowledge of Christ is but an opinion, a theory, a heartless and fruitless speculation. How many give the saddest proof that they have never entered by the door, and consequently have no realization, in their own life and experience, of the blessed and efficient protection and support of the Good Shepherd. Here I must not forget again to insist upon the necessity of a personal revelation of our relations to God, as being naturally excluded from all access to him and his favour, save through Christ the door; and also the necessity of the personal revelation to us, by the Holy Spirit, of Christ as the door, and of what is implied in this; and lastly and emphatically, upon the indispensable necessity of a personal, responsible, active, and full entering in at this door, and gaining access for ourselves to the enclosure of the love and favour of God. Let this never for one moment be forgotten or overlooked. I must enter for and by myself. I must truly enter. I must be conscious that I enter. I must be sure that I do not misapprehend what is implied on entering; and at my peril I must not forget or neglect to enter.

And here it is important to inquire, Have you had this personal and spiritual revelation? Have you clearly seen yourself without the fold, exposed to all the unrelenting cruelty of your spiritual enemies, and shut out for ever by your sin from the favour and protection of God? When this has been revealed, have you clearly apprehended Christ as the door? Have you understood what is implied in his sustaining this relation? And last, but not least, have you entered this door by faith? Have you seen the door open, and have you entered for yourself, and have you daily this evidence, that you follow the Shepherd, and find all you need?

(xxxvi.) Christ is also the Way of salvation.

Observe, he is not a mere teacher of the way, as some vainly imagine and teach. Christ is truly "the way" itself, or he is himself "the way." Works are not the way, whether these works are legal or gospel works, whether works of law or works of faith. Works of faith are a condition of salvation; but they are not "the way." Faith is not the way; faith is a condition of entering and abiding in this way, but it is not "the way." Christ is himself "the way." Faith receives him to reign in the soul, and to be its salvation; but it is Christ himself who is "the way." The soul is saved by Christ himself, not by doctrine, not by the Holy Spirit, not by works of any kind, not by faith, or love, or by anything whatever, but by Christ himself. The Holy Spirit reveals and introduces Christ to the soul, and the soul to Christ. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. But he leaves it to Christ to save us. He urges and induces us to accept of Christ, to receive him by appropriating faith, as he reveals him to us. But Christ is the way. It is his being received by us, that saves the soul. But we must perceive the way; we must enter this way by our own act. We must proceed in this way. We must continue in this way to the end of life, and to all eternity, as the indispensable condition of our salvation. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," said Christ. "Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me ye should have known my Father also, and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" Here Christ so identifies himself with the Father as to insist, that he who had seen one had seen the other. When therefore he says, no man cometh to the Father but by him, we are to understand, that no man need expect to find the true God elsewhere than in him. The visible Christ embodied the true Godhead. He is the way to God, for and because he is the true God, and the eternal life, and salvation of the soul. Many seem to understand Christ in this relation as nothing more than a teacher of a system of morality, by the observance of which we may be saved. Others regard this relation as only implying, that he is the way, in the sense of making an atonement, and thus rendering it possible for us to be forgiven. Others still understand this language as implying, not only that Christ made an atonement, and opened up a way of access, through his death and mediation, to God; but also that he teaches us the great truths essential to our salvation. Now all this, in my apprehension, falls entirely, and I may say, infinitely short of the true spiritual meaning of Christ, and the true spiritual import of this relation. The above is implied and included in this relation, no doubt, but this is not all, nor the essential truth intended in Christ's declaration. He did not say, I came to open the way, nor to teach the way, nor to call you into the way, but "I am the way." Suppose he had intended merely, that his instructions pointed out the way, or that his death was to open the way, and his teaching point it out, would he not have said,--What! have I so long taught you, and have you not understood my doctrine? Would he not have said, *I have taught you the way*, instead of saying, *I am the way?* The fact is, there is a meaning in these words, more profoundly spiritual than his disciples then perceived, and than many now seem capable of understanding. He is himself the way of salvation, because he is the salvation of the soul. He is the way to the Father, because he is in the Father, and the Father in him. He is the way to eternal life, because he is himself the very essence and substance of eternal life. The soul that finds him needs not to look for eternal life, for it has found it already. These questions of Thomas and Philip show how little they really knew of Christ, previous to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Vast multitudes of the professed disciples of the present day seem not to know Christ as "the way." They seem not to have known Christ in this relation as he is revealed by the Holy Spirit. This revelation of Christ as "the way" by the Comforter is indispensable to our so knowing him as to retain our standing in the hour of temptation. We must know, and enter, and walk, and abide in this true and living way for ourselves. It is a living way, and not a mere speculation.

Do you, my brother, know Christ by the Holy Spirit as the "living way?" Do you know Christ for yourself, by a personal acquaintance? Or do you know him only by report, by hearsay, by preaching, by reading, and by study? Do you know him as in the Father, and the Father as in him? Philip seemed not to have had a spiritual and personal revelation of the proper deity of Christ to his own soul. Have you had this revelation? And when he has been revealed to you, as the true and living way, have you by faith personally entered this way? Do you abide steadfast in it? Do you know by experience what it is to live, and move, and have your very being in God? Be ye not deceived; he that does not spiritually discern, and enter this way, and abide in it unto the end, cannot be saved. Do see to it, then, that you know the way to be sanctified, to be justified, to be saved. See to it that you do not mistake the way, and betake yourself to some other way. Remember, works are not the way. Faith is not the way. Doctrine is not the way. All these are conditions of salvation, but Christ in his own person, is "the way." His own life, living in and united to you, is the way, and the only way. You enter this way by faith; works of faith result from, and are a condition of, abiding in this way; but the way itself is the indwelling, living, personally embraced and appropriated Christ, the true God and the eternal life. Amen, Lord Jesus! the way is pleasant, and all its paths are peace.

(xxxvii.) Christ is also "the Truth," and as such he must be apprehended and embraced, to secure the soul from falling in the hour of trial. In this relation many have known Christ merely as one who declared the truth, as one who revealed the true God and the way of salvation. This is all they understand by this assertion of Christ, that he is the truth.

But if this is all, why may not the same with equal truth be said of Moses, and of Paul, and John? They taught the truth. They revealed the true God, so far as holy lives and true doctrine are concerned; and yet who ever heard of John, or Paul, or Moses, as being the way or the truth? They taught the way and the truth, but they were neither the way nor the truth, while Christ is truth. What then, is truth? Why, Christ is the truth. Whoever knows Christ spiritually knows the truth. Words are not the truth. Ideas are not the truth. Both words and ideas may be signs or representatives of the truth. But the truth lives, and has a being and a home in Christ. He is the embodiment and the essence of truth. He is reality. He is substance, and not shadow. He is truth revealed. He is elementary, essential, eternal, immutable, necessary, absolute, self-existent, infinite truth. When the Holy Spirit reveals truth, he reveals Christ. When Christ reveals truth, he reveals himself. Philosophers have found it difficult to define truth. Pilate asked Christ, "What is truth?" but did not wait for an answer. The term is doubtless used in a double sense. Sometimes the mere reflection or representation of things in signs, such as words, actions, writings, pictures, and diagrams, &c., is called truth; and this is the popular understanding of it. But all things that exist are only signs, reflections, symbols, representations, or types, of the Author of all things. That is, the universe is only the objective representation of the subjective truth, or is the reflection or reflector of God. It is the mirror that reflects the essential truth, or the true and living God.

But I am aware that none but the Holy Spirit can possess the mind of the import of this assertion of Christ. It is full of mystery and darkness, and is a mere figure of speech to one unenlightened by the Holy Spirit, in respect to its true spiritual import. The Holy Spirit does not reveal all the relations of Christ to the soul at once. Hence there are many to whom Christ has been revealed in some of his relations, while others are yet veiled from the view. Each distinct name, and office, and relation needs to be made the subject of a special and personal revelation to the soul, to meet its necessities, and to confirm it in obedience under all circumstances. When Christ is revealed and apprehended as the essential, eternal, immutable truth, and the soul has embraced him as such, as he of whom all that is popularly called truth is only the reflection, as he of whom all truth in doctrine, whether of philosophy in any of its branches, or revelation in any of its departments; I say, when the mind apprehends him as that essential truth of which all that men call truth is only the reflection, it finds a rock, a resting-place, a foundation, a stability, a reality, a power in truth, of which before it had no conception. If this is unintelligible to you, I cannot help it. The Holy Spirit can explain and make you see it; I cannot. Christ is not truth in the sense of mere doctrine, nor in the sense of a teacher of true doctrine, but as the substance or essence of truth. He is that of which all truth in doctrine treats. True doctrine treats of him, but is not identical with him. Truth in doctrine is only the sign, or declaration, or representation of truth in essence, of living, absolute, self-existent truth in the Godhead. Truth in doctrine, or true doctrine, is a medium through which substantial or essential truth is revealed. But the doctrine or medium is no more identical with truth than light is identical with the objects which it reveals. Truth in doctrine is called light, and is to essential truth what light is to the objects that radiate or reflect it. Light coming from objects is at once the condition of their revelation, and the medium through which they are revealed. So true doctrine is the condition and the means of knowing Christ the essential truth. All truth in doctrine is only a reflection of Christ, or is a radiation upon the intelligence from Christ. When we learn this spiritually, we shall learn to distinguish between doctrine and Him whose radiance it is--to worship Christ as the essential truth, and not the doctrine that reveals him--to worship God instead of the Bible. We shall then find our way through the shadow to the substance. Many, no doubt, mistake and fall down and worship the doctrine, the preacher, the Bible, the shadow, and do not look for the ineffably glorious substance, of which this bright and sparkling truth is only the sweet and mild reflection or radiation.

Dearly beloved, do not mistake the doctrine for the thing treated of by the doctrine. When you find your intellect enlightened, and your sensibility quickened by the contemplation of doctrine, do not confound this with Christ. Look steadily in the direction from which the light emanates, until the Holy Spirit enables you to apprehend the essential truth, and the true light that enlighteneth every man. Do not mistake a dim reflection of the sun for the sun himself. Do not fall down at a pool and worship the sun dimly reflected from its surface, but lift your eye and see where he stands glorious in essential, and eternal, and ineffable brightness. It is beyond question, that multitudes of professed Christians know nothing further than the doctrine of Christ; they never had Christ himself personally revealed or manifested to them. The doctrine of Christ, as taught in the gospel, is intended to direct and draw the mind to him. The soul must not rest in the doctrine, but receive the living, essential person and substance of Christ. The doctrine makes us acquainted with the facts concerning Christ, and presents him for acceptance. But do not rest in the story of Christ crucified, and risen, and standing at the door, but open the door, and receive the risen, living, and divine Saviour, as the essential and all-powerful truth to dwell within you for ever.

(xxxviii.) Christ is "the TRUE LIGHT." John says of him, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the TRUE LIGHT, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again, "While ye have the light, believe in the light." "I am come a light into the world." Again, it is said of Saul on his way to Damascus, "And there shined around him a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun." It is said of Christ, in his transfiguration on the mount, "that his raiment became white as the light." Paul speaks of Christ as dwelling in light which no man can approach unto. Peter says of him, "who called you into his marvellous light." John says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Of the New Jerusalem it is said, that the inhabitants have no need of the sun, nor of the moon, "for the glory of God and the Lamb are the light thereof."

Light certainly appears to be of two kinds, as every spiritual mind knows, physical and spiritual. Physical, or natural light, reveals or makes manifest physical objects, through the fleshly organ, the eye. Spiritual light is no less real light than physical. In the presence of spiritual light the mind directly sees spiritual truths and objects, as, in the presence of material or natural light, it distinctly sees material objects. The mind has an eye, or seeing faculty, which uses the material eye and natural light, to discern material objects. It is not the eye that sees. It is always the mind that sees. It uses the eye merely as an instrument of vision, by which it discerns material objects. The eye and the light are conditions of seeing the material universe, but it is always the mind that sees. So the mind directly sees spiritual realities in the presence of spiritual light. But what is light? What is natural, and what is spiritual light? Are they really identical, or are they essentially different? It is not my purpose here to enter into any philosophical speculations upon this subject; but I must observe, that, whatever spiritual light is, the mind, under certain circumstances, cannot discern the difference, if difference there is, between them. Was that spiritual or physical light which the disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration? Was that spiritual or physical light which Paul and his companions saw on their way to Damascus? What light is that which falls upon the mental eye of the believer when he draws so near to God, as not at all to distinguish at the moment the glory that surrounds him from material light? What was that light which made the face of Moses shine with such brightness, that the people were unable to look upon it? And what is that light which lights up the countenance of a believer, when he comes direct and fresh from the mount of communion with God? There is often a visible light in his countenance. What is that light which often shines upon the pages of the Bible, making its spiritual meaning as manifest to the mind, as the letters and words are? In such seasons the obscurity is removed from the spirit of the Bible, just as really and as visibly, as the rising sun would remove the obscurity of midnight from the letter. In one case you perceive the letter clearly in the presence of natural light. You have no doubt, you can have no doubt, that you see the letters and words as they are. In the other, you apprehend the spirit of the Bible, just as clearly as you see the letter. You can no more doubt, at the time, that you see the true spiritual import of the words, than that you see the words themselves. Both the letter and the spirit seem to be set in so strong a light, that you know that you see both. Now what light is this in which the spirit of the Bible is seen? That it is light, every spiritual man knows. He calls it light. He can call it nothing else. At other times the letter is as distinctly visible as before, and yet there is no possibility of discerning the spirit of the Bible. It is then only known in the letter. We are then left to philologize, and philosophize, and theorize, and theologize, and are really all in the dark, as to the true spiritual import of the Bible. But when "the true light that lighteth every man" shines upon the word, we get at once a deeper insight into the real spiritual import of the word, than we could have gotten in a life-time without it. Indeed, the true spiritual import of the Bible is hid from the learning of this world, and revealed to the babes who are in the light of Christ. I have often been afflicted with the fact, that true spiritual light is rejected and condemned, and the very idea of its existence scouted by many men who are wise in the wisdom of this world. But the Bible everywhere abounds with evidence, that spiritual light exists, and that its presence is a condition of apprehending the reality and presence of spiritual objects. It has been generally supposed, that the natural sun is the source of natural light. Sure it is, that light is a condition of our beholding the objects of the material universe. But what is the source of spiritual light? The Bible says Christ is. But what does this mean? When it is said, that he is the true light, does it mean only, that he is the teacher of true doctrine? or does it mean, that he is the light in which true doctrine is apprehended, or its spiritual import understood, that he shines through and upon all spiritual doctrine, and causes its spiritual import to be apprehended, and that the presence of his light, or, in other words, his own presence, is a condition of any doctrine being spiritually understood? He is no doubt the essential light. That is, light is an attribute of his divinity. Essential, uncreated light is one of the attributes of Christ as God. It is a spiritual attribute of course; but it is an essential and a natural attribute of Christ, and whoever knows Christ after the Spirit, or whoever has a true, spiritual, and personal acquaintance with Christ as God, knows that Christ is light, that his being called light is not a mere figure of speech; that his "covering himself with light as with a garment;" his enlightening the heavenly world with so ineffable a light, that no man can approach thereunto and live, that the strongest seraphim are unable to look with unveiled face upon his overpowering effulgence. I say, to a spiritual mind these are not mere figures of speech; they are understood by those who walk in the light, or who walk in the light of Christ, to mean what they say.

I dwell upon this particular relation of Christ, because of the importance of its being understood, that Christ is the real and true light who alone can cause us to see spiritual things as they are. Without his light we walk in the midst of the most overpowering realities, without being at all aware of their presence. Like one surrounded with natural darkness, or as one deprived of sight gropes his way and knows not at what he stumbles, so one deprived of the presence and light of Christ, gropes his way and stumbles at he knows not what. To attain to true spiritual illumination, and to continue and walk in this light, is indispensable to entire sanctification. O, that this were understood! Christ must be known as the true and only light of the soul. This must not be held merely as a tenet. It must be understood and spiritually experienced and known. That Christ is in some undeterminate sense the light of the soul and the true light, is generally admitted, just as multitudes of other things are admitted, without being at all spiritually and experimentally understood. But this relation or attribute of Christ must be spiritually known by experience, as a condition of abiding in him. John says, "this then is the message which we have heard of him, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This light is come into the world, and if men do not love darkness rather than light, they will know Christ as the true light of the soul, and will so walk in the light as not to stumble.

I desire much to amplify upon this relation of Christ, but must forbear, or I shall too much enlarge this course of instruction. I would only endeavour to impress you deeply with the conviction that Christ is light, and that this is no figure of speech. Rest not, my brother, until you truly and experimentally know him as such. Bathe your soul daily in his light, so that when you come from your closet to your pulpit, your people shall behold your face shining as if it were the face of an angel.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXVI.

SANCTIFICATION.

CONDITIONS OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION--CONTINUED.

(xxxix.) Another relation which Christ sustains to the believer, and which it is indispensable that he should recognize and spiritually apprehend, as a condition of entire sanctification, is that of "Christ within us."

"Know ye not," says the apostle, "that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."-- 2Co 13:5. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."-- Rom 8:9-10. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."-- Gal 4:19. "Yet not I but Christ liveth in me."-- Gal 2:20. Now it has often appeared to me, that many know Christ only as an outward Christ, as one who lived many hundred years ago, who died, and arose, and ascended on high, and who now lives in heaven. They read all this in the Bible, and in a certain sense they believe it. That is, they admit it to be true historically. But have they Christ risen within them? Living within the veil of their own flesh, and there ever making intercession for them and in them? This is quite another thing. Christ in heaven making intercession is one thing; this is a great and glorious truth. But Christ in the soul, there also living "to make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered," is another thing. The Spirit that dwells in the saints is frequently in the Bible represented as the Spirit of Christ, and as Christ himself. Thus in the passage just quoted from the eighth of Romans, the apostle represents the Spirit of God that dwells in the saints as the Spirit of Christ, and as Christ himself.-- Rom 8:9-10 : "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This is common in the Bible. The Spirit of Christ then, or the real Deity of Christ, dwells in the truly spiritual believer. But this fact needs to be spiritually apprehended, and kept distinctly and continually in view. Christ not only in heaven, but Christ within us, as really and truly inhabiting our bodies as we do, as really in us as we are in ourselves, is the teaching of the Bible, and must be spiritually apprehended by a divine, personal, and inward revelation, to secure our abiding in him. We not only need the real presence of Christ within us, but we need his manifested presence to sustain us in hours of conflict. Christ may be really present within us as he is without us, without our apprehending his presence. His manifesting himself to us as with and in us, is by himself conditionated upon our faith and obedience. His manifesting himself within us, and thus assuring us of his constant and real presence, confirms and establishes the confidence and obedience of the soul. To know Christ after the flesh, or merely historically as an outward Saviour, is of no spiritual avail. We must know him as an inward Saviour, as Jesus risen and reigning in us, as having arisen and established his throne in our hearts, and as having written and established the authority of his law there. The old man dethroned and crucified, Christ risen within us and united to us, in such a sense that we "twain are one spirit," is the true and only condition and secret of entire sanctification. O that this were understood! Why, many ministers talk and write about sanctification, just as if they supposed, that it consisted in, and resulted from, a mere self-originated formation of holy habits. What blindness is this in spiritual guides! True sanctification consists in entire consecration to God; but be it ever remembered, that this consecration is induced and perpetuated by the Spirit of Christ. The fact, that Christ is in us, needs to be so clearly apprehended by us as to annihilate the conception of Christ as only afar off, in heaven. The soul needs so to apprehend this truth, as to turn within, and not look without for Christ, so that it will naturally seek communion with him in the closet of the soul, or within, and not let the thoughts go in search of him without. Christ promised to come and take up his abode with his people, to manifest himself unto them, &c., that the Spirit whom he would send, (which was his own Spirit, as abundantly appears from the Bible,) should abide with them for ever, that he should be with them and in them. Now all this language needs to be spiritually apprehended, and Christ needs to be recognized by his Spirit, as really present with us as we are with ourselves, and really as near to us as we are to ourselves, and as infinitely more interested in us than we are in ourselves. This spiritual recognition of Christ present with and in us, has an overpowering charm in it. The soul rests in him, and lives, and walks, and has its being in his light, and drinks at the fountain of his love. It drinks also of the river of his pleasures. It enjoys his peace, and leans upon his strength.

Many professors have not Christ formed within them. The Galatian Christians had fallen from Christ. Hence the apostle says: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Have you a spiritual apprehension of what this means?

(xl.) We must spiritually know Christ as "our strength," as a condition of entire sanctification. Says the Psalmist, Psa 18:1 : "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;" and again, Psa 19:14 : "O Lord my strength;" and again, Psa 31:4 : "Pull me out of the net, for thou art my strength;" and again, Psa 43:2 : "Thou art the God of my strength:" and again, Psa 59:17 : "To thee, O my strength, will I sing;" and again, Psa 144:1 : "Blessed be the Lord my strength." In Isa 27:5 : "The Lord says, Let him take hold of my strength, and he shall make peace with me." Jeremiah says, Jer 16:19 : "O Lord, my strength." Hab 3:19 : "God is my strength." In 2Co 12:9, Christ says to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." We are commanded to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that is, to appropriate his strength by faith. We are exhorted to take hold of his strength, and doing this is made a condition of making peace with God. That God is in some sense our strength, is generally admitted. But I fear it is rare to apprehend the true spiritual sense in which he is our strength. Many take refuge not in his strength by faith, but in the plea, that he is their strength, and that they have none of their own, while they continue in sin. But this class of persons neither truly understand nor believe, that God is their strength. It is with all who hold this language and yet live in sin, an opinion, a tenet, a say-so, but by no means a spiritually apprehended and embraced truth. If the real meaning of this language were spiritually apprehended and embraced with the heart, the soul would no more live in sin. It could no more be overcome with temptation, while appropriating Christ, than God could be overcome.

The conditions of spiritually apprehending Christ as our strength are,--

(*a.*) The spiritual apprehension of our own weakness, its nature and degree.

(*b.*) The revelation of Christ to us as our strength by the Holy Spirit.

When these revelations are truly made, and self-dependence is, therefore, for ever annihilated, the soul comes to understand wherein its strength lies. It renounces for ever its own strength, and relies wholly on the strength of Christ. This it does not in the antinomian, do-nothing, sit-still sense of the term; but, on the contrary, it actively takes hold of Christ's strength, and uses it in doing all the will of God. It does not sit down and do nothing, but, on the contrary, it takes hold of Christ's strength, and sets about every good word and work as one might lean upon the strength of another, and go about doing good. The soul that understands and does this, as really holds on to and leans upon Christ, as a helpless man would lean upon the arm or shoulder of a strong man, to be borne about in some benevolent enterprise. It is not a state of quietism. It is not a mere opinion, a sentiment, a fancy. It is, with the sanctified soul, one of the clearest realities in existence, that he leans upon and uses the strength of Christ. He knows himself to be constantly and perseveringly active, in thus availing himself of the strength of Christ; and being perfectly weak in himself, or perfectly emptied of his own strength, Christ's strength is made perfect in his weakness. This renunciation of his own strength is not a denial of his natural ability, in any such sense as virtually to charge God with requiring what he is unable to perform. It is a complete recognition of his ability, were he disposed to do all that God requires of him, and implies a thorough and honest condemnation of himself for not using his powers as God requires. But while it recognizes its natural liberty or ability, and its consequent obligation, it at the same time clearly and spiritually sees, that it has been too long the slave of lust ever to assert or to maintain its spiritual supremacy, as the master instead of the slave of appetite. It sees so clearly and affectingly, that the will or heart is so weak in the presence of temptation, that there is no hope of its maintaining its integrity, unsupported by strength from Christ, that it renounces for ever its dependence on its own strength, and casts itself wholly and for ever on the strength of Christ. Christ's strength is appropriated only upon condition of a full renunciation of one's own. And Christ's strength is made perfect in the soul of man only in its entire weakness; that is, only in the absence of all dependence on its own strength. Self must be renounced in every respect in which we appropriate Christ. He will not share the throne of the heart with us, nor will he be put on by us, except in so far as we put off ourselves. Lay aside all dependence on yourself, in every respect in which you would have Christ. Many reject Christ by depending on self, and seem not to be aware of their error.

Now, let it be understood and constantly borne in mind, that this self-renunciation and taking hold on Christ as our strength, is not a mere speculation, an opinion, an article of faith, a profession, but must be one of the most practical realities in the world. It must become to the mind an omnipresent reality, insomuch that you shall no more attempt any thing in your own strength than a man who never could walk without crutches would attempt to arise and walk without thinking of them. To such a one his crutches become a part of himself. They are his legs. He as naturally uses them as we do the members of our body. He no more forgets them, or attempts to walk without them, than we attempt to walk without our feet. Now just so it is with one who spiritually understands his dependence on Christ. He knows he can walk, and that he must walk, but he as naturally uses the strength of Christ in all his duties, as the lame man uses his crutches. It is as really an omnipresent reality to him, that he must lean upon Christ, as it is to the lame man that he must lean upon his crutch. He learns on all occasions to keep hold of the strength of Christ, and does not even think of doing any thing without him. He knows that he need not attempt any thing in his own strength; and that if he should, it will result in failure and disgrace, just as really and as well as the man without feet or legs knows that for him to attempt to walk without his crutch would ensure a fall. This is a great, and, I fear, a rarely learned lesson with professed Christians, and yet how strange that it should be so, since, in every instance, attempts to walk without Christ have resulted in complete and instantaneous failure. All profess to know their own weakness and their remedy, and yet how few give evidence of knowing either.

(xli.) Christ is also the Keeper of the soul; and in this relation he must be revealed to, and embraced by, each soul as the condition of its abiding in Christ, or, which is the same thing, as a condition of entire sanctification. Psa 121:1-8. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore." This Psalm, with a great many other passages of scripture, represents God as exerting an efficient influence in preserving the soul from falling. This influence he exerts, of course not physically or by compulsion, but it is and must be a moral influence, that is, an influence entirely consistent with our own free agency. But it is efficient in the sense of being a prevailing influence.

But in this relation, as in all others, Christ must be apprehended and embraced. The soul must see and well appreciate its dependence in this respect, and commit itself to Christ in this relation. It must cease from its own works, and from expecting to keep itself, and commit itself to Christ, and abide in this state of committal. Keeping the soul implies watching over it to guard it against being overcome with temptation. This is exactly what the Christian needs. His enemies are the world, the flesh, and Satan. By these he has been enslaved. To them he has been consecrated. In their presence he is all weakness in himself. He needs a keeper to accompany him, just as a reformed inebriate sometimes needs one to accompany and strengthen him in scenes of temptation. The long established habitudes of the drunkard render him weak in the presence of his enemy, the intoxicating bowl. So the Christian's long-cherished habits of self-indulgence render him all weakness and irresolution, if left to himself in the presence of excited appetite or passion. As the inebriate needs a friend and brother to warn and expostulate, to suggest considerations to strengthen his purposes, so the sinner needs the Parakletos to warn and suggest considerations to sustain his fainting resolutions. This Christ has promised to do; but this, like all the promises, is conditionated upon our appropriating it to our own use by faith. Let it then be ever borne in mind, that as our keeper, the Lord must be spiritually apprehended and cordially embraced and depended upon, as a condition of entire sanctification. This must not be a mere opinion. It must be a thorough and honest closing in with Christ in this relation.

Brother, do you know what it is to depend on Christ in this relation, in such a sense, that you as naturally hold fast to him, as a child would cling to the hand or the neck of a father, when in the midst of perceived danger? Have you seen your need of a keeper? If so, have you fled to Christ in this relation? As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, that is, abide in him, and he will abide in you, and keep you from falling. The apostle certifies, or rather assumes, that he is able to keep you from falling. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy--to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."-- Jud 1:24-25. Paul also says: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

(xlii.) The soul also needs to know Christ, not merely as a master, but as a Friend. Joh 15:13-15 : "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Christ took the utmost pains to inspire his disciples with the most implicit confidence in himself. He does the same still. Most Christians seem not to have apprehended the condescension of Christ sufficiently to appreciate fully, not to say at all, his most sincere regard for them. They seem afraid to regard him in the light of a friend, one whom they may approach on all occasions with the utmost confidence and holy familiarity, one who takes a lively interest in everything that concerns them, one who sympathizes with them in all their trials, and feels more tenderly for them than they do for their nearest earthly friends. Observe, what emphasis he gives to this relation, or to the strength of his friendship. He lays down his life for his friends. Now, imagine yourself to have an earthly friend who loved you so much as to lay down his life for you; to die too for a crime which you had committed against himself. Were you assured of the strength of his friendship, and did you know withal his ability to help you in all circumstances to be absolutely unlimited, with what confidence would you unbosom yourself to him! How would you rest in his friendship and protection! How slow even Christians are to apprehend Christ in the relation of a friend. They stand in so much awe of him, that they fear to take home to their hearts the full import and reality of the relation when applied to Christ. Yet Christ takes the greatest pains to inspire them with the fullest confidence in his undying and most exalted friendship.

I have often thought that many professed Christians had never really and spiritually apprehended Christ in this relation. This accounts for their depending upon him so little in seasons of trial. They do not realize that he truly feels for and sympathizes with them, that is, his feeling for and sympathy with them, his deep interest in and pity for them, are not apprehended spiritually as a reality. Hence they stand aloof, or approach him only in words, or at most, with deep feeling and desire, but not in the unwavering confidence that they shall receive the things which they ask of him. But to prevail they must believe. "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." The real, and deep, and abiding affection of Christ for us, and his undying interest in us personally, must come to be a living and an omnipresent reality to our souls, to secure our own abiding in faith and love in all circumstances. There is, perhaps, no relation of Christ in which we need more thoroughly to know him than this.

This relation is admitted in words by almost everybody, yet duly realized and believed by almost nobody. Yet how infinitely strange, that Christ should have given so high evidence of his love to, and friendship for us, and that we should be so slow of heart to believe and realize it! But until this truth is really and spiritually apprehended and embraced, the soul will find it impossible to fly to him in seasons of trial, with implicit confidence in his favour and protection. But let Christ be really apprehended and embraced, as a friend who has laid down his life for us, and would not hesitate to do it again were it needful, and rely upon it, our confidence in him will secure our abiding in him.

(xliii.) Christ is also to be regarded and embraced in the relation of an Elder Brother. Heb 2:10-18 : "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I, and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Mat 28:10 : "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Joh 20:17 : "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Rom 8:29 : "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." These and other passages present Christ in the relation of a brother. So he is not merely a friend, but a brother. He is a brother possessing the attributes of God. And is it not of great importance, that in this relation we should know and embrace him? It would seem as if all possible pains were taken by him to inspire us with the most implicit confidence in him. He is not ashamed to call us brethren; and shall we refuse or neglect to embrace him in this relation, and avail ourselves of all that is implied in it? I have often thought that many professed Christians really regard the relations of Christ as only existing in name, and not at all in reality and fact. Am I not a man and a brother? he says to the desponding and tempted soul. Himself hath said, A brother is made for adversity. He is the first-born among many brethren, and yet we are to be heirs with him, heirs of God, and joint heirs with him of all the infinite riches of the Godhead. "O fools and slow of heart," not to believe and receive this brother to our most implicit and eternal confidence. He must be spiritually revealed, apprehended, and embraced in this relation, as a condition of our experiencing his fraternal truthfulness.

Do let me inquire whether many Christians do not regard such language as pathetic and touching, but after all as only a figure of speech, as a pretence, rather than as a serious and infinitely important fact. Is the Father really our Father? Then Christ is our Brother, not in a figurative sense merely, but literally and truly our brother. My brother? Ah truly, and a brother made for adversity. O Lord, reveal thyself fully to our souls in this relation!

(xliv.) Christ is the true Vine, and we are the branches. And do we know him in this relation, as our parent stock, as the fountain from whom we receive our momentary nourishment and life? This union between Christ and our souls is formed by implicit faith in him. By faith the soul leans on him, feeds upon him, and receives a constantly sustaining influence from him. Joh 15:1-8 : "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Now, it is important for us to understand what it is to be in Christ, in the sense of this passage. It certainly is to be so united to him, as to receive as real and as constant spiritual support and nourishment from him, as the branch does natural nourishment from the vine. "If a man abide not in me," he says, "he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." Now, to be in him, implies such a union as to keep us spiritually alive and fresh. There are many withered professors in the church. They abide not in Christ. Their religion is stale. They can speak of former experience. They can tell how they once knew Christ, but every spiritual mind can see, that they are branches fallen off. They have no fruit. Their leaves are withered, their bark is dried; and they are just fit to be gathered and cast into the fire. O, this stale, last year's religion! Why will not professors that live on an old experience, understand that they are cast off branches, and that their withered, fruitless, lifeless, loveless, faithless, powerless condition testifies to their faces, and before all men, that they are fit fuel for the flames?

It is also of infinite importance, that we should know and spiritually apprehend the conditions of abiding in Christ, in the relation of a branch to a vine. We must apprehend our various necessities and his infinite fulness, and lay hold upon, and appropriate the whole that is implied in these relations, to our own souls and wants, as fast as he is revealed. Thus we shall abide in him, and receive all the spiritual nourishment we need. But unless we are thus taught by the Spirit, and unless we thus believe, we shall not abide in him, nor he in us. If we do thus abide in him, he says, we shall bear much fruit. Much fruit then is evidence that we do abide in him, and fruitlessness is positive evidence that we do not abide in him. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Great prevalence in prayer, then, is an evidence that we abide in him. But a want of prevalence in prayer is conclusive evidence that we do not abide in him. No man sins while he properly abides in Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new."

But let it not be forgotten that we have something to do to abide in Christ. "Abide in me," says Christ: this is required of us. We neither at first come to sustain the relation of a branch to Christ without our own activity, nor do or can we abide in him without a constant cleaving to him by faith. The will must of necessity be ever active. It must cleave to Christ or to something else. It is one thing to hold this relation in theory, and an infinitely different thing to understand it spiritually, and really cleave to Christ in the relation of the constant fountain of spiritual life.

(xlv.) Christ is also the "Fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness;"-- Zec 13:1. Christ, let it be ever remembered, and spiritually understood and embraced, is not only a justifying, but also a purifying Saviour. His name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins.

(xlvi.) As Jesus, therefore, he must be spiritually known and embraced. Jesus, Saviour! He is called Jesus, or Saviour, we are informed, because he saves his people, not only from hell, but also from their sins. He saves from hell only upon condition of his saving from sin. He has no Saviour, who is not in his own experience saved from sin. Of what use is it to call Jesus, Lord and Saviour, unless he is really and practically acknowledged as our Lord and as our Saviour from sin? Shall we call him Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says? Shall we call him Saviour, and refuse so to embrace him as to be saved from our sins?

(xlvii.) We must know him as one whose blood cleanses us from all sin. Heb 9:14.--"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" 1Pe 1:19.--"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1Pe 1:2.--"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Rev 1:5.--"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." When the shedding of Christ's blood is rightly apprehended and embraced, when his atonement is properly understood and received by faith, it cleanses the soul from all sin; or rather, I should say, that when Christ is received as one to cleanse us from sin by his blood, we shall know what James B. Taylor meant when he said, "I have been into the fountain, and am clean;" and what Christ meant when he said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." "Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." It is of the last importance that language like this, relating to our being cleansed from sin by Christ, should be elucidated to our souls by the Holy Spirit, and embraced by faith, and Christ truly revealed in this relation. Nothing but this can save us from sin. But this will fully and effectually do the work. It will cleanse us from all sin. It will cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols. It will make us "clean."

(xlviii.) "His name shall be called Wonderful." No inward or audible exclamation is more common to me of late years, than the term Wonderful. When contemplating the nature, the character, the offices, the relations, the salvation of Christ, I find myself often mentally, and frequently audibly exclaiming, WONDERFUL! My soul is filled with wonder, love, and praise, as I am led by the Holy Spirit to apprehend Christ, sometimes in one and sometimes in another relation, as circumstances and trials develope the need I have of him. I am more and more "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord," and at the Lord himself from year to year. I have come to the conclusion, that there is no end to this, either in time or in eternity. He will no doubt to all eternity continue to make discoveries of himself to his intelligent creatures, that shall cause them to exclaim "WONDERFUL!" I find my wonder more and more excited from one stage of Christian experience to another. Christ is indeed wonderful, contemplated in every point of view, as God, as man, as God-man, mediator. Indeed, I hardly know in which of his many relations he appears most wonderful, when in that relation he is revealed by the Holy Spirit. All, all is wonderful, when he stands revealed to the soul in any of his relations. The soul needs to be so acquainted with him as to excite and constantly keep awake its wonder and adoration. Contemplate Christ in any point of view, and the wonder of the soul is excited. Look at any feature of his character, at any department of the plan of salvation, at any part that he takes in the glorious work of man's redemption; look steadfastly at him as he is revealed through the gospel by the Holy Spirit, at any time and place, in any of his works or ways, and the soul will instantly exclaim--WONDERFUL! Yes, he shall be called Wonderful!

(xlix.) "Counsellor." Who that has made Jesus his wisdom, does not and has not often recognized the fitness of calling him "Counsellor?" Until he is known and embraced in this relation, it is not natural or possible for the soul to go to him with implicit confidence in every case of doubt. Almost everybody holds in theory the propriety and necessity of consulting Christ, in respect to the affairs that concern ourselves and his church. But it is one thing to hold this opinion, and quite another to apprehend and embrace Christ so spiritually in the relation of counsellor, as naturally to call him counsellor when approaching him in secret, and as naturally to turn and consult him on all occasions and in respect to everything that concerns us; and to consult him too with implicit confidence in his ability and willingness to give us the direction we need. Thoroughly and spiritually to know Christ in this relation is undoubtedly a condition of abiding steadfast in him. Unless the soul knows and duly appreciates its dependence upon him in this relation, and unless it renounces its own wisdom, and substitutes his in the place of it, by laying hold of Christ by faith as the counsellor of the soul, it will not continue to walk in his counsel, and consequently will not abide in his love.

(l.) The Mighty God. "My Lord and my God," exclaimed Thomas, when Christ stood spiritually revealed to him. It was not merely what Christ said to Thomas on that occasion, that caused him to utter the exclamation just quoted. Thomas saw indeed that Christ was raised from the dead, but so had Lazarus been raised from the dead. The mere fact, therefore, that Christ stood before him as one raised from the dead, could not have been proof that he was God. No doubt the Holy Spirit discovered to Thomas at the moment the true Divinity of Christ, just as the saints in all ages have had him spiritually revealed to them as the Mighty God. I have long been convinced, that it is in vain, so far as any spiritual benefit is concerned, to attempt to convince Unitarians of the proper Divinity of Christ. The scriptures are as plain as they can be upon this subject, and yet it is true, that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit. As I have said in substance often, the personal revelation of Christ to the inward man by the Holy Spirit, is a condition of his being known as the "Mighty God." What is Christ to any one who does not know him as God? To such a soul, he cannot be a Saviour. It is impossible that the soul should intelligently, and without idolatry, commit itself to him as a Saviour, unless it knows him to be the true God. It cannot innocently pray to him nor worship him, nor commit the soul to his keeping and protection, until it knows him as the Mighty God. To be orthodox merely in theory, in opinion, is nothing to the purpose of salvation. The soul must know Christ as God--must believe in or receive him as such. To receive him as anything else is an infinitely different thing from coming and submitting to him as the true, and living, and mighty God.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXVII.

SANCTIFICATION.

CONDITIONS OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.--CONTINUED.

(li.) Christ is our Shield. By this name, or in this relation, he has always been known to the saints. God said to Abraham, "I am thy shield."-- Gen 15:1. Psa 33:20 : "The Lord is my shield." Pro 30:5 : "He is a shield to them that put their trust in him." A shield is a piece of defensive armour used in war. It is a broad plate made of wood or metal, and borne upon the arm and hand, and in conflict presented between the body and the enemy to protect it against his arrows or his blows. God is the Christian's shield in the spiritual warfare. This is a most interesting and important relation. He who does not know Christ in this relation, and has not embraced and put him on, as one would buckle on a shield, is all exposed to the assaults of the enemy, and will surely be wounded if not slain by his fiery darts. This is more than a figure of speech. No fact or reality is of more importance to the Christian, than to know how to hide himself behind and in Christ in the hour of conflict. Unless the Christian has on his shield, and knows how to use it, he will surely fall in battle. When Satan appears, the soul must present its shield, must take refuge behind and in Christ, or all will be defeat and disgrace. When faith presents Christ as the shield, Satan retires vanquished from the field in every instance. Christ always makes way for our escape; and never did a soul get wounded in conflict who made the proper use of this shield. But Christ needs to be known as our protection, as ready on all occasions to shield us from the curse of the law, and from the artillery of the enemy of our souls. Be sure to truly know him, and put him on in this relation, and then you may always sing of victory.

(lii.) The Lord is "the Portion" of his people. "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," said God to Abraham. As the reward or portion of the soul, we need to know and embrace Christ as the condition of abiding in him. We need to know him as "our exceeding great portion,"--a present, all-satisfying portion. Unless we so know Christ as to be satisfied with him, as all we can ask or desire, we shall not of course abstain from all forbidden sources of enjoyment. Nothing is more indispensable to our entire sanctification, than to apprehend the fulness there is in Christ in this relation. When the soul finds in him all its desires and all its wants fully met, when it sees in him all that it can conceive of as excellent and desirable, and that he is its portion, it remains at rest. It has little temptation to go after other lovers, or after other sources of enjoyment. It is full. It has enough. It has an infinitely rich and glorious inheritance. What more can it ask or think? The soul that understands what it is to have Christ as its portion, knows that he is an infinite portion; that eternity can never exhaust, or even diminish it in the least degree; that the mind shall to all eternity increase in the capacity of enjoying this portion; but that no increase of capacity and enjoyment can diminish ought of the infinite fulness of the Divine Portion of our souls.

(liii.) Christ is our Hope. 1Ti 1:1 : "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." Col 1:27 : "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." Our only rational expectation is from him. Christ in us is our hope of glory. Without Christ in us we have no good or well-grounded hope of glory. Christ in the gospel, Christ on the cross, Christ risen, Christ in heaven, is not our hope; but Christ in us, Christ actually present, living, and reigning in us, as really as he lives and reigns in glory, is our only well-grounded hope. We cannot be too certain of this, for unless we despair of salvation in ourselves or in any other, we do not truly make Christ our hope. The soul that does not know, and spiritually know Christ in this relation has no well-grounded hope. He may hope that he is a Christian. He may hope that his sins are forgiven, that he shall be saved. But he can have no good hope of glory. It cannot be too fully understood, or too deeply realized, that absolute despair of help and salvation in any other possible way, except by Christ in us, is an unalterable condition of our knowing and embracing Christ as our hope. Many seem to have conceived of Christ as their hope, only in his outward relation, that is, as an atoning Saviour, as a risen and ascended Saviour. But the indispensable necessity of having Christ within them, ruling in their hearts, and establishing his government over their whole being, is a condition of salvation of which they have not thought. Christ cannot be truly and savingly our hope, any farther than he is received into and reigns in our souls. To hope in merely an outward Christ is to hope in vain. To hope in Christ with the true Christian hope, implies:--

(*a.*) The ripe and spiritual apprehension of our hopeless condition without him. It implies such an apprehension of our sins and governmental relations, as to annihilate all hope of salvation upon legal grounds.

(*b.*) Such a perception of our spiritual bondage to sin, as to annihilate all hope of salvation without his constant influence and strength to keep us from sin.

(*c.*) Such a knowledge of our circumstances of temptation, as to empty us of all expectation of fighting our own battles, or of, in the least degree, making headway against our spiritual foes, in our own wisdom and strength.

(*d.*) A complete annihilation of all hope from any other source.

(*e.*) The revelation of Christ to our souls as our hope by the Holy Spirit.

(*f.*) The apprehension of him as one to dwell in us, and to be received by faith to the supreme control of our souls.

(*g.*) The hearty and joyful reception of him in this relation. The dethroning of self, or the utter denial or rejection of self, and the enthroning and crowning of Christ in the inner man. When Christ is clearly seen to be the only hope of the soul, and when he is spiritually received in this relation, the soul learns habitually and constantly to lean upon him, to rest in him, and make no efforts without him.

(liv.) Christ is also our Salvation. Exo 15:2 : "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation, he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Psa 27:1 : "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psa 38:22 : "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation." Psa 62:7 : "In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." Psa 118:14 : "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." Isa 12:2 : "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Isa 49:6 : "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." Luk 2:30 : "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." These and multitudes of similar passages present Christ, not only as our Saviour, but as our salvation. That is, he saves us by becoming himself our salvation. Becoming our salvation includes and implies the following things:--

(*a.*) Atonement for our sins.

(*b.*) Convincing us of and converting us from our sins.

(*c.*) Sanctifying our souls.

(*d.*) Justifying, or pardoning and accepting, or receiving us to favour.

(*e.*) Giving us eternal life and happiness.

(*f.*) The bestowment of himself upon us as the portion of our souls.

(*g.*) The everlasting union of our souls with God.

All this Christ is to us, and well he may be regarded not only as our Saviour, but as our salvation. Nothing is or can be more important, than for us to apprehend Christ in the fulness of his relations to us. Many seem to have but extremely superficial apprehensions of Christ. They seem in a great measure blind to the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of their infinite necessities. Hence they have never sought for such a remedy as is found in Christ. The great mass of Christian professors seem to conceive of the salvation of Christ, as consisting in a state of mind resulting not from a real union of the soul with Christ, but resulting merely from understanding and believing the doctrines of Christ. The doctrine of Christ, as taught in the Bible, was designed to gain for Christ a personal reception to dwell within, and to rule over us. He that truly believes the gospel, will receive Christ as he is presented in the gospel, that is, for what he is there asserted to be to his people, in all the relations he sustains to our souls, as fast as these relations are revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

The newly converted soul knows Christ in but few relations. He needs trials and experience to develope his weakness, and to reveal to him his multiplied necessities, and thus lead him to a fuller knowledge of Christ. The new convert embraces Christ, so far as he knows him; but at first he knows but little of his need of him, except in his governmental relations. Subsequent experience is a condition of his knowing Christ in all his fulness. Nor can he be effectually taught the fulness there is in Christ, any faster than his trials develope his real necessities. If he embraces all he understands of Christ, this is the whole of present duty in respect to him; but, as trials are in his way, he will learn more of his own necessities, and must learn more of Christ, and appropriate him in new relations, or he will surely fall.

(lv.) Christ is also the Rock of our Salvation:--

Psa 19:14. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, [margin *Rock*] and my Redeemer." Psa 28:1. "Unto, thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me; lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." Psa 31:2-3. "Bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily, be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore, for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me."

It is deeply interesting and affecting to contemplate the relations in which Christ revealed himself to the Old Testament saints. He is a rock of salvation, a strong-hold or place of refuge. In this relation the soul must know him, and must take hold of him, or take shelter in him.

(lvi.) He is also a Rock cleft from which the waters of life flow. 1Co 10:4. "And did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." As such the soul must know and embrace him.

(lvii.) He is a Great Rock that is higher than we, rising amid the burning sands of our pilgrimage, under the cooling shadow of which the soul can find repose and comfort. He is like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. To apprehend Christ in this relation, the soul needs to be brought into sharp and protracted trials, until it is faint and ready to sink in discouragement. When the struggle is too severe for longer endurance, and the soul is on the point of giving up in despair, then when Christ is revealed as a great rock standing for its defence against the heat of its trials, and throwing over it the cooling, soothing influence of his protection, it finds itself refreshed and at rest, and readily adopts the language of a numerous class of passages of scripture, and finds itself to have apprehended Christ, as inspired men apprehended and embraced him. It is truly remarkable, that in all our experiences, we can find that inspired writers have had the like; and in every trial, and in every deliverance, in every new discovery of our emptiness, and of Christ's fulness, we find the language of our hearts most fully and aptly expressed in the language of the living oracles. We readily discover, that inspired men had fallen into like trials, had Christ revealed to them in the same relations, and had similar exercises of mind; insomuch, that no language of our own can so readily express all that we think, and feel, and see.

(lviii.) He is the Rock from which the soul is satisfied with honey. Psa 81:16. "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee." The spiritual mind apprehends this language spiritually, as it is doubtless really intended to be understood. It knows what it is to be satisfied with honey from the Rock, Christ. The divine sweetness that often refreshes the spiritual mind, when it betakes itself to the Rock Christ, reminds it of the words of this passage of scripture.

(lix.) He is the Rock or Foundation upon which the church, as the temple of the living God, is built.

Mat 16:18 : "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Rom 9:33 : "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." 1Pe 2:8 : "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

He is a sure foundation. He is an eternal rock, or the rock of ages--the corner-stone of the whole spiritual edifice. But we must build for ourselves upon this rock. It is not enough to understand as a tenet, a theory, an opinion, an article of our creed, that Christ is the rock in this sense. We must see that we do not build upon the sand. Mat 7:26-27 : "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; And the rain descended, and the floods came, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

(lx.) He is the "Strength of our heart." He is not only our refuge and strength in our conflicts with outward temptations and trials, in the sense expressed in Psa 46:1 : "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" but he is also the strength of our heart and our portion for ever, in the sense of Psa 73:26 : "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." He braces up and confirms the whole inner-man in the way of holiness. What Christian has not at times found himself ready to halt, and faint by the way. Temptation seems to steal upon him like a charm. He finds his spiritual strength very low, his resolution weak, and he feels as if he should give way to the slightest temptation. He is afraid to expose himself out of his closet, or even to remain within it lest he should sin. He says with David, "I shall fall by the hand of Saul." He finds himself empty, all weakness and trembling. Were it not that the strength of his heart interposes in time, he would doubtless realize in his experience his worst fears. But who that knows Christ, has not often experienced his faithfulness under such circumstances, and felt an immortal awaking, reviving, and strength, taking possession of his whole being? What spiritual minister has not often dragged himself into the pulpit, so discouraged and faint as to be hardly able to stand, or to hold up his head? He is so weak that his spiritual knees smite one against the other. He is truly empty, and feels as if he could not open his mouth. He sees himself to be an empty vine, an empty vessel, a poor helpless, strengthless infant, lying in the dust before the Lord, unable to stand, or go, or preach, or pray, or do the least thing for Christ. But lo! at this juncture his spiritual strength is renewed. Christ the strength of his heart developes his own almightiness within him. His mouth is open. He is strong in faith, giving glory to God. He is made at once a sharp threshing instrument, to beat down the mountains of opposition to Christ and his gospel. His bow is renewed in his hand and abides in strength. His mouth is opened, and Christ fills it with arguments. Christ has girded him to the battle, and made strong the arms of his hands, with the strength of the mighty God of Jacob.

The same in substance is true of every Christian. He has his seasons of being empty, that he may feel his dependence; and anon he is girded with strength from on high, and an immortal and superhuman strength takes possession of his soul. The enemy gives way before him. In Christ he can run through a troop, and in his strength he can leap over a wall. Every difficulty gives way before him, and he is conscious that Christ has strengthened him with strength in his soul. The will seems to have the utmost decision, so that temptation gets an emphatic no! without a moment's parley.

(lxi.) It is through Christ that we may reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God. This we are exhorted and commanded to do. That is, we may and ought to account or reckon ourselves, through him, as dead unto sin and alive unto God. But what is implied in this liberty to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord? Why certainly:--

(*a.*) That through and in him we have all the provision we need, to keep us from sin.

(*b.*) That we may expect, and ought to expect, to live without sin.

(*c.*) That we ought to account ourselves as having nothing more to do with sin, than a dead man has with the affairs of this world.

(*d.*) That we may and ought to lay hold of Christ for this full and present death unto sin and life unto God.

(*e.*) That if we do thus reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, in the true spiritual sense of this text, we shall find Christ unto our souls all we expect of him in this relation. If Christ cannot or will not save us from sin, upon condition of our laying hold of him, and reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God through him, what right had the apostle to say, "Reckon yourselves indeed dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord?" What! does the apostle tell us to account or reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and shall ministers tell us that such reckoning or expectation is a dangerous delusion?

Now, certainly nothing less can be meant, by reckoning ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ, than that, through Christ we should expect to live without sin. And not to expect to live without sin through Christ is unbelief. It is a rejection of Christ in this relation. Through Christ we ought to expect to live to God, as much as we expect to live at all. He that does not expect this, rejects Christ as his sanctification, and as Jesus who saves his people from their sins.

The foregoing are some of the relations which Christ sustains to us as to our salvation. I could have enlarged greatly, as you perceive, upon each of these, and easily have swelled this part of our course of study to a large volume. I have only touched upon these sixty-one relations, as specimens of the manner in which he is presented for our acceptance in the Bible, and by the Holy Spirit. Do not understand me as teaching, that we must first know Christ in all these relations, before we can be sanctified. The thing intended is that coming to know Christ in these relations is a condition, or is the indispensable means, of our steadfastness or perseverance in holiness under temptation--that, when we are tempted, from time to time nothing can secure us against a fall, but the revelation of Christ to the soul in these relations one after another, and our appropriation of him to ourselves by faith. The gospel has directly promised, in every temptation to open a way of escape, so that we shall be able to bear it. The spirit of this promise pledges to us such a revelation of Christ, as to secure our standing, if we will lay hold upon him by faith, as revealed. Our circumstances of temptation render it necessary, that at one time we should apprehend Christ in one relation, and at another time in another. For example, at one time we are tempted to despair by Satan's accusing us of sin, and suggesting that our sins are too great to be forgiven. In this case we need a revelation and an appropriation of Christ, as having been made sin for us; that is, as having atoned for our sins--as being our justification or righteousness. This will sustain the soul's confidence and preserve its peace.

At another time we are tempted to despair of ever overcoming our tendencies to sin, and to give up our sanctification as a hopeless thing. Now we need a revelation of Christ as our sanctification, &c.

At another time the soul is harassed with the view of the great subtlety and sagacity of its spiritual enemies, and greatly tempted to despair on that account. Now it needs to know Christ as its wisdom.

Again, it is tempted to discouragement on account of the great number and strength of its adversaries. On such occasions it needs Christ revealed as the Mighty God, as its strong tower, its hiding place, its munition of rocks.

Again, the soul is oppressed with a sense of the infinite holiness of God, and the infinite distance there is between us and God, on account of our sinfulness and his infinite holiness, and on account of his infinite abhorrence of sin and sinners. Now the soul needs to know Christ as its righteousness, and as a mediator between God and man.

Again, the Christian's mouth is closed with a sense of guilt, so that he cannot look up, nor speak to God of pardon and acceptance. He trembles and is confounded before God. He lies along on his face, and despairing thoughts roll a tide of agony through his soul. He is speechless, and can only groan out his self-accusations before the Lord. Now as a condition of rising above this temptation to despair, he needs a revelation of Christ as his advocate, as his high priest, as ever living to make intercession for him. This view of Christ will enable the soul to commit all to him in this relation, and maintain its peace and hold on to its steadfastness.

Again, the soul is led to tremble in view of its constant exposedness to besetments on every side, oppressed with such a sense of its own utter helplessness in the presence of its enemies, as almost to despair. Now it needs to know Christ as the Good Shepherd, who keeps a constant watch over the sheep, and carries the lambs in his bosom. He needs to know him as a watchman and a keeper.

Again, it is oppressed with a sense of its own utter emptiness, and is forced to exclaim, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. It sees that it has no life, or unction, or power, or spirituality in itself. Now it needs to know Christ as the true vine, from which it may receive constant and abundant spiritual nourishment. It needs to know him as the fountain of the water of life, and in those relations that will meet its necessities in this direction. Let these suffice, as specimens to illustrate what is intended by entire or permanent sanctification being conditioned on the revelation and appropriation of Christ in all the fulness of his official relations.

It is not intended, as has been said, that Christ must previously be known in all these relations before a soul can be sanctified at all; but that, when tried from time to time, a new revelation of Christ to the soul, corresponding to the temptation, or as the help of the soul in such circumstances, is a condition of its remaining steadfast. This gracious aid or revelation is abundantly promised in the Bible, and will be made in time, so that by laying hold on Christ in the present revealed relation, the soul may be preserved blameless, though the furnace of temptation be heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be.

In my estimation, the church, as a body--I mean the nominal church--have entirely mistaken the nature and means or conditions of sanctification. They have not regarded it as consisting in a state of entire consecration, nor understood that continual entire consecration was entire sanctification. They have regarded sanctification as consisting in the annihilation of the constitutional propensities, instead of the controlling of them. They have erred equally in regard to the means or conditions of entire sanctification. They seem to have regarded sanctification as brought about by a physical cleansing in which man was passive; or to have gone over to the opposite extreme, and regarded sanctification as consisting in the formation of habits of obedience. The old school have seemed to be waiting for a physical sanctification, in which they are to be, in a great measure, passive, and which they have not expected to take place in this life. Holding, as they do, that the constitution of both soul and body is defiled or sinful in every power and faculty, they of course cannot hold to entire sanctification in this life. If the constitutional appetites, passions, and propensities are in fact, as they hold, sinful in themselves, why then the question is settled, that entire sanctification cannot take place in this world, nor in the next, except as the constitution is radically changed, and that of course by the creative power of God. The new school, rejecting the doctrine of constitutional moral depravity, and physical regeneration and sanctification, and losing sight of Christ as our sanctification, have fallen into a self-righteous view of sanctification, and have held that sanctification is effected by works, or by forming holy habits, &c. Both the old and the new school have fallen into egregious errors upon this fundamentally important subject.

The truth is, beyond all question, that sanctification is by faith as opposed to works. That is, faith receives Christ in all his offices, and in all the fulness of his relations to the soul; and Christ, when received, works in the soul to will and to do of all his good pleasure, not by a physical, but by a moral or persuasive working. Observe, he influences the will. This must be by a moral influence, if its actings are intelligent and free, as they must be to be holy. That is, if he influences the will to obey God, it must be by a divine moral suasion. The soul never in any instance obeys in a spiritual and true sense, except it be thus influenced by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. But whenever Christ is apprehended and received in any relation, in that relation he is full and perfect; so that we are complete in him. For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and that we might all receive of his fulness until we have grown up into him in all things, "Until we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXVIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

VII. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

To the doctrine we have been advocating it is objected, that the real practical question is not,

1. Whether this state is attainable on the ground of natural ability; for this is admitted.

2. It is not whether it is rational to hope to make this attainment, provided we set our hearts upon making it, and persevere in aiming to attain it; for this is admitted.

3. It is not whether this state is a rational object of pursuit, provided any are disposed to pursue it. But,

4. Is it rational for Christians to hope that they shall pursue it, and shall perseveringly set their hearts upon it? Is it rational for Christians to hope, that they shall so endeavour to attain it, as to fulfil the conditions of the promises wherein it is pledged?

To this I reply, that it makes a new issue. It yields the formerly contested ground, and proposes an entirely new question. Hitherto the question has been, Is this state an object of rational pursuit, provided any are disposed to pursue it? May Christians aim at this attainment with the rational hope of making it? This point is now yielded, if I understand the objection, and one entirely distinct is substituted, namely, Is it rational for Christians to hope, that they shall pursue after this attainment, or that they shall aim at and set themselves to make this attainment? This, I say, is quite another question, different from the one heretofore argued. It is however an important one, and I am quite willing to discuss it, but with this distinct understanding, that it is not the question upon which issue has been heretofore taken. This question, as we shall see, calls up a distinct inquiry. In this discussion I shall pursue the following outline:

1. What constitutes hope?

2. What is implied in a rational hope?

3. The grounds of rational hope may vary indefinitely in degree.

4. Wrong views may inspire an irrational hope.

5. Wrong views may prevent a rational hope.

6. Hope is a condition of the attainment in question.

7. What the objection under consideration admits.

8. What I understand it to deny.

9. What it amounts to.

10. What it must assume in reference to the provisions of grace.

11. What these provisions are not.

12. What they are.

13. What real grounds of hope there are in respect to the question under consideration.

14. Consider the tendency of denying that there are valid grounds of hope in this case.

1. I am to show what hope is.

Hope, in common parlance, and as I shall use the term in this discussion, is not a phenomenon of will, nor is it a voluntary state of mind. It includes a phenomenon both of the intellect and the sensibility. It is a state of mind compounded of desire and expectation. Desire alone is not hope. A man may desire an event ever so strongly, yet, if he has no degree of expectation that the desired event will occur, he cannot justly be said to hope for it. Expectation is not hope, for one may expect an event ever so confidently, yet if he does not at all desire it, he cannot be truly said to hope for it. Hope comprehends both desire and expectation. There must be some degree of both of these to compose hope.

2. What is implied in a rational hope?

(1.) The desire must be reasonable; that is, in accordance with reason. The thing desired must be such as reason sanctions or approves. If the desire is an unreasonable one, the fact, that there is good ground for expecting the desired end, will not make the hope rational. The expectation might in this case be rational, in the sense that there is valid reason for the expectation. But expectation alone is not hope. A rational hope must include a rational desire, or a desire in accordance with reason, and a rational expectation, that is, an expectation in accordance with reason.

(2.) The expectation to be rational must have for its foundation at least some degree of evidence. Hope may be, and often is, indulged barely on the ground that the desired event is possible, in the absence of all evidence that it is likely to occur. Thus we say of one who is at the point of death, and whose life is despaired of by all but his nearest friends, "where there is life there is hope." When events are so greatly desired men are wont to indulge the hope that the event will occur, even in the absence of all evidence that it will occur, and in the face of the highest evidence, that it will not occur. But such hope can hardly be said to be rational. Hope to be rational must have for its support, not a bare possibility that the desired event may occur, but at least some degree of evidence that it will occur. This is true of hope in general. When an event is conditioned upon the exercise of our own agency, and upon an agency which we are able, either in our own strength or through grace to exert, it may be more or less rational to expect the occurrence of the event in proportion as we more or less desire it. Hope includes desire: there can be no hope without desire. There may be a good ground of hope, when there is in fact no hope. There may be a reason and a good reason for desire, where there is no desire. There may be and is good reason for sinners to desire to be Christians, when they have no such desire. Again, there may be good reason for both desire and expectation, when in fact there is neither. The thing which it is reasonable to desire may not be desired, and there may be good reason for expecting that an event will occur, when no such expectation is indulged. For example, a child may neither desire nor expect to comply with the wishes of a parent, in a given instance. Yet it may be very reasonable for him to desire to comply, in this instance, with parental authority; and the circumstances may be such as to afford evidence, that he will be brought to compliance, and yet there may be in this case no hope exercised by the child that he shall comply. There may be then a rational ground for hope when there is no hope. A thing may be strongly desired, and yet the evidence that it will occur may not be apprehended; and therefore, although such evidence may exist, it may not be perceived by the mind, or the mind may be so occupied with contemplating opposing evidence, or with looking at discouraging circumstances, as not to apprehend the evidence upon which a rational hope may be, or might be grounded.

Again, when the event in question consists in the action of the will, in conformity with the law of the reason, the probability that it will thus act depends upon the states of the sensibility, or upon the desires. It may therefore be more or less rational to expect this conformity of the will to the law of the intelligence, in proportion as this state of the will is more or less strongly desired. I merely make this remark in this place; we shall see its application hereafter. I also add in this place, that a man may more or less rationally expect to make the attainment under consideration, that is, to obtain in this life a complete victory over sin, in proportion as he more or less ardently desires it. This we shall see hereafter. The indulgence of hope implies existing desire, and as I said, the hope to be rational must have some degree of evidence, that the thing hoped for will occur.

3. The grounds of rational hope may vary indefinitely in degree.

I have said, that there may be rational grounds of hope when there is no hope. A sinner under terrible conviction of sin, and in present despair, may have grounds and strong grounds of hope, while he has no hope.

Again, the grounds of hope may be more or less strong, in proportion as hope is more or less strong. For example, an event which is dependent upon the exercise of our own agency, may be more or less likely to occur, in proportion to the strength or weakness of our hope that it will occur. Hope is compounded, as we have said, of desire and expectation. An event dependent upon our agency may be more or less likely to occur, in proportion as we desire its occurrence, and entertain the confident expectation that it will occur. In such a case, although the evidence may be really but slight upon which the expectation is at first founded, yet the very fact, that the mind has become confident that a strongly desired event will take place, which event depends upon the energetic and persevering exercise of our own agency; I say, the strength of the confidence, as well as the strength of the desire, may render the event all the more probable, and thus the grounds of hope may be increased by the increase of hope. For it should be remembered, that hope is possible and common when there are no good grounds for it, and the very fact, that a hope at present with slight grounds does exist, may increase the grounds of rational hope. Suppose, for example, that an Indian in our western forests, who had never heard the gospel, should come in some way to have the idea, and the desire, and expectation, of finding out a way of salvation. Now, before he had this hope, there could not be said to have been more than slight rational ground for it. But since he has the idea, the desire, and the expectation, he may from these facts have a rational ground of hope, that he shall discover a way of salvation. The desire and the expectation may render it highly probable, that he will in some manner discover the right way.

Again: the rational ground of hope, in respect to at least a certain class of events, may be greatly increased by the fact, that there is a present willingness that the desired and expected event should occur, and an endeavour to secure it. Hope does not necessarily imply a willingness. For example, a sinner may desire to be converted, and he may expect that he shall be, and yet not at present be willing to be; that is, he may conceive rightly of what constitutes conversion or turning to God, and he may, for the sake of his own salvation, desire to turn, that is, to turn as a condition of his own salvation, and he may expect that he shall in future turn; and yet he is not by the supposition as yet willing to turn; for willing is turning, and if he is willing he has turned already. If the event hoped for consists in, or is dependent upon, future acts of our own will, the grounds of hope that the event will occur, may be indefinitely strengthened by the fact, that we have the present consciousness of not only hoping for its occurrence, but also, that our will or heart is at present set upon it.

Myriads of circumstances may be taken into the account, in balancing and weighing the evidence for or against the occurrence of a given event. The event may depend in a great measure upon our desires, and when it really does depend under God upon our desires, present willingness and efforts, the grounds of confidence or of hope must vary, as our hopes and endeavours vary. There may be, as I have said, ground for hope when there is no hope, and the ground of hope may be indefinitely increased by the existence of hope. There may be a strong hope and a weak hope; strong grounds or reasons for hope, or weak grounds of hope. When there is any degree of present evidence that an event will occur, there is some ground of rational hope.

4. Wrong views may inspire an irrational hope.

This follows from the nature of hope. A thing may be desired--wrong views may inspire confidence or beget expectation, when there is not the slightest ground for expectation. The hope of the Universalist is a striking instance of this. The same is true of false professors of religion. They desire to be saved. False views inspire confidence that they are Christians, and that they shall be saved.

5. Wrong views may prevent a rational hope.

This is also common, as every one knows. A thing may be desired, and there may be the best grounds for confidence or expectation, which is an element of hope. But false views may forbid the expectation to be entertained. In this case, one element of hope exists, that is, desire, but the other, to wit, expectation, is rendered impossible by erroneous views.

Again: expectation may exist, yet false views may prevent desire. For example, I may expect to see a certain individual whom, from false impressions respecting him, I have no desire to see. It is indispensable to hope, that the views be such as to beget both desire and expectation.

6. Hope is a condition of the attainment in question.

(1.) The attainment implies and consists in the right future exercise of our own agency.

(2.) The right future exercise of our own agency, in respect to the state in question, depends under God, or is conditioned upon, the previous use of means to secure that result.

(3.) Those means will never be used unless there is hope; that is, unless there is both desire and expectation. If therefore any false instruction shall forbid the expectation of attaining the state in question, the attainment will not be sought, it will not be aimed at. There may be ever so good grounds or reasons to expect to make this attainment, yet if these grounds are not discovered, and the expectation is not intelligent, the attainment will be delayed. There must be hope indulged in this case, as a condition of making this attainment.

7. What I understand the objection to admit.

(1.) That the state in question is a possible state, or a possible attainment, both on the ground of natural ability and through grace.

(2.) That this attainment is provided for in the promises of the gospel; that is, that the promises of the gospel proffer grace to every believer sufficient to secure him against sin in all the future, on condition that he will believe and appropriate them.

(3.) That all the necessary means are provided and brought within the Christian's reach to secure this attainment, and that there is no insurmountable difficulty in the way of this attainment, provided he is willing, and will use these necessary means in the required manner.

(4.) There is rational ground for hoping to make this attainment, if any will set their heart to make it.

(5.) Consequently, that this attainment is a rational object of pursuit; that it is rational to hope to make it, provided we are disposed to make it, or to aim to make it.

8. What I understand the objection to deny.

That it is rational for any Christian to hope, so to use the means as to secure the attainment in question; that is, that no Christian can rationally hope to exercise such faith, and so to use the means of grace, and so to avail himself of the proffered grace of the gospel, and so to fulfil the conditions of the promises, as to receive their fulfilment, and make the attainment in question in this life. The objection, as I understand it, denies that we can rationally hope, by present faith and the present use of our powers, to render it probable, that we shall in future use them aright; or, in other words, the objection denies that we can, by any thing whatever that we can at present do, gain any evidence, or lay a foundation for any rational hope that in future we shall obey God; or it denies that our present desire, or will, or faith, or efforts, have through grace any such connexion with our future state in this life, as to render it in any degree probable, that we shall receive the fulfilment of such promises as the following: 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." It denies, that it is rational for us to hope, by the improvement of present grace, to secure future grace; that it is rational for us to expect, by a present laying hold on such promises as the one just quoted, to secure its present and its future fulfilment to us; it denies that it is rational for us to lay hold of such promises as that just quoted, with the expectation that they will be fulfilled to us; that is, we cannot at present do anything whatever, however much we may will and desire it, that shall render it in the least degree probable, that these promises will ever be fulfilled to us in this life. The objection must proceed upon denying this, for it is certain, that Christians do desire this attainment, and will it too; that is, they will at least that it might be so. If all Christians do not hope for it, it is because they regard it as not attainable.

9. What the objection really amounts to.

(1.) That, although the promise just quoted is undeniably a promise of the very state in question in this life, yet it is irrational to hope, by anything that we can at present do, however much we may at present will and desire it, to secure to ourselves either its present or its future fulfilment in this life.

(2.) It amounts to a denial, that at any future time during this life it will be rational for us to hope, by anything that we can at that time do, to secure either at that or any other time, the fulfilment of the promise to us.

(3.) It amounts to a denial, that we can rationally hope, at any time in this life, to believe or do anything that will render it in the least degree probable, that this promise will be fulfilled to us; that, however much we may at present desire and will to secure the thing promised, we can at present or at any future time, rationally hope to secure the thing promised.

(4.) It amounts to a denial, that it is rational to expect under any circumstances, that this class of promises will ever be fulfilled to the saints.

(5.) The principles assumed and lying at the foundation of this objection must, if sound, prove the gospel a delusion. If it is true, that by no present act of faith we can secure to us the present or the future fulfilment of the promise of entire sanctification, I see not why this is not equally true in respect to all the promises. If there is no such connexion between our present and future faith and obedience, as to render it even in the least degree probable, that the promises of persevering grace shall be vouchsafed to us, then what is the gospel but a delusion? Where is the ground of a rational hope of salvation? But suppose it should be replied to this, that in respect to other promises, and especially in respect to promises of salvation and of sufficient grace to secure our salvation, there is such a connexion between present faith and future faith and salvation, as to render the latter at least probable, and as therefore to afford a rational ground of hope of perseverance, in such a sense as to secure salvation; but that this is not the case with the promises of entire sanctification. Should this be alleged, I call for proof. Observe, I admit the connexion contended for as just stated between present faith and obedience, and future perseverance, and final salvation, that the former renders the latter at least probable; but I also contend, that the same is true in respect to the promises of entire sanctification. Let the contrary be shown, if it can be. Let the principle be produced, if it can be, either from scripture or reason, that will settle and recognize the difference contended for, to wit, that present faith and obedience do lay a rational foundation of hope that we shall persevere to the end of life, in such a sense as that we shall be saved; and yet that present faith in the promises of entire sanctification does not render it in the least degree probable, that we shall ever receive the fulfilment of those promises. Let it be shown, if it can be, that the present belief of certain promises renders it certain or probable that they will be fulfilled to us, but that no such connexion obtains in respect to other promises. Let it be shown, if it can be, that present faith in the promises of perseverance and salvation renders it either certain or probable, that these promises will be fulfilled to us, while present faith in the promise of entire sanctification in this life, renders it neither certain, nor in the least degree probable, that these promises will ever, in this life, be fulfilled to us.

Suppose a Calvinist should allege, that the first act of faith renders it certain that the new believer will be saved, and therefore it renders it certain that he will persevere to the end of life, but that the same is not true of promises of entire sanctification in this life. I ask for his proof of the truth of this assertion; that is, I ask him to prove, that faith in the latter promises does not sustain as real and as certain a relation to the reception of the thing promised as does faith in the former promises. Suppose him to answer, that God has revealed his design to save all Christians, and from hence we know, that if they once believe they shall certainly persevere and be saved. But in answer to this I ask, is it not as expressly revealed as possible, that God will wholly sanctify all Christians, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve them blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? The language in 1 Thes. v. 23, 24, may be regarded either as an express promise, or as an express declaration: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Here observe, Paul expressly affirms that God will do it. Now where in the bible is there a more express promise, or a more express revelation of the will and design of God than this? Nowhere. But suppose it should be replied to this, that, if we take this view of the subject, it follows, that all saints have been wholly sanctified in this life. I answer, they no doubt have been, for there is not a word in the Bible of their being sanctified in any other life than this; and if they have gone to heaven, they were no doubt sanctified wholly in this life.

But, secondly, it would not follow, that they have all been wholly sanctified until at or near the close of life, because many of them have probably never understood and appropriated this and similar promises by faith, and consequently have failed to realize in their own experience their fulfilment, for any considerable length of time before their death. The exact question here is: If the soul at present apprehends, and lays hold on the promises of entire sanctification in this life, is there not as real and as certain a connexion between present faith and the future fulfilment of the promise, as there is between present faith in any other promises and the future fulfilment of those promises. If this is not so, let the contrary be shown, if it can be. The burden of proof lies on the objector. If to this any one should reply, that present faith in any promise does not sustain any such relation to the fulfilment of the promise, as to render it rational to hope for its fulfilment, I answer, that if this is so, then the gospel is a mere nullity and sheer nonsense. Nay, it is infinitely worse than nonsense.

I will not at present contend that present faith in any promise of future good sustains such a relation to its fulfilment, that its fulfilment to us is absolutely certain; but upon this I do insist, that present faith in any promise of God does render it at least in some degree probable, that the promise will be fulfilled to us; and that therefore we have ground of rational hope, when we are conscious of desiring a promised blessing, and of laying hold by faith upon the promise of it, and of setting our hearts upon obtaining it;--I say, when we are conscious of this state of mind in regard to any promised blessing, we have rational ground of hope that we shall receive the thing promised. And it matters not at all what the blessing promised is. If God has promised it, he is able to give it; and we have no right to say, that the nature of the thing promised forbids the rational expectation that we shall receive it. It is plain that the principle on which this objection is based amounts to a real denial of the gospel, and makes all the promises a mere nullity.

10. What this objection must assume in reference to the provisions of grace:--

That grace has made no provisions for securing the fulfilment of the conditions of the promises. This must certainly be assumed in relation to the promises of entire sanctification in this life; that grace has made no such provisions as to render the fulfilment of the conditions of this class of promises in any degree probable; that the grace of God in Jesus Christ does not even afford the least degree of evidence, that real saints will ever in this life so believe those promises as to secure the blessing promised; that therefore it is irrational for the saints to hope, through any provisions of grace, to fulfil the conditions and secure the blessing promised; the grace of God is not sufficient for the saints, in the sense, that it is rational for them to hope so to believe the promises of entire sanctification, as to secure the thing promised. The gospel and the grace of God then are a complete failure, so far as the hope of living in this life without rebellion against God is concerned. His name is called Jesus in vain, so far as it respects salvation from sin in this life. There is then no rational ground of hope, that by anything we can possibly do while in the present exercise of faith, and love, and zeal, we can render it, through grace, in the least degree probable, that we shall persevere in seeking this blessing until we have fulfilled the condition of the promise, and secured the blessing. Nothing that we can now do, while in faith and love, will render it through grace in the least degree probable, that we shall at any future time believe or do anything that will secure to us the promised blessing. Christians do at present desire this attainment, and have a heart or will to it. This objection must assume that grace has made no such provision as to render the hope rational, that this will and desire will exist in future, do what we may at present to secure it.

11. What the provisions of grace are not.

(1.) Grace has made no provision to save any one without entire holiness of heart.

(2.) It has made no provision to secure holiness without the right exercise of our own will or agency, for all holiness consists in this.

(3.) It has made no provision to save any one who will not fulfil the conditions of salvation.

(4.) It has made no provision for the bestowment of irresistible grace, for the very terms imply a contradiction. A moral agent cannot be forced or necessitated to act in any given manner, and still remain a moral agent. That is, he cannot be a moral agent in any case in which he acts from necessity.

(5.) Grace has made no provision to render salvation possible without hope; that is, without desire and expectation.

12. What these provisions are.

In this place, I can only state what I understand them to be; and to avoid much repetition, I must request the reader to consult foregoing and subsequent lectures, where these different points are developed and discussed at length.

(1.) God foresaw that all mankind would fall into a state of total alienation from him and his government.

(2.) He also foresaw that by the wisest arrangement, he could secure the return and salvation of a part of mankind.

(3.) He resolved to do so, and "chose them to eternal salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

(4.) He has instituted a system of means to effect this end; that is, with design to effect it.

(5.) These means are:--

(i.) The revelation of the law.

(ii.) The atonement and mediatorial work of Christ.

(iii.) The publication of the gospel, and the institution of all the means of grace.

(iv.) The administration of providential and moral governments.

(v.) The gift and agency of the Holy Spirit to excite in them desire, and to work in them to will and to do, in so far as to secure in them the fulfilment of the conditions, and to them the fulfilment of the promises.

(6.) Grace has made sufficient provisions to render the salvation of all possible, and such as will actually secure the salvation of a portion of mankind.

(7.) Grace has brought salvation so within the reach of all who hear the gospel, as to leave them wholly without excuse, if they are not saved.

(8.) Grace has made the salvation of every human being secure, who can be persuaded, by all the influences that God can wisely bring to bear upon him, to accept the offers of salvation.

(9.) Grace has provided such means and instrumentalities as will actually secure the conviction, conversion, perseverance, entire sanctification, and final salvation of a part of mankind.

(10.) Grace has not only provided the motives of moral government, but the influences necessary to secure the saving effect of this government over all the elect.

(11.) Grace has not only made promises to be fulfilled upon certain conditions, but it has provided an influence which will, in every case of the elect secure in them the fulfilment of the conditions of these promises unto salvation.

(12.) Grace has not only given commands, but has provided the requisite influence to secure obedience to them, in such a sense, as to secure the perseverance, sanctification, and full salvation of all the elect unto salvation.

This I understand to be a summary statement of the doctrine of grace, as it is taught in the Bible.

13. What are the real grounds of hope in respect to the question now under consideration?

Here it is necessary to state again distinctly, what is not, and what is, the real question to be decided.

It is not what Christians have hoped upon this subject, for they may have entertained groundless expectations and irrational hopes; or they may have had no hope or expectation, when there have been good grounds of hope. Let it be distinctly understood then, that the true point of inquiry is, have Christians a right to expect to obtain in this life a complete victory over sin? Not, do they expect it? but, have they a right to indulge such a hope? Provided they have such a hope, is it irrational? Or, provided they have not such a hope, have they good and sufficient ground for such hope revealed in the Bible? This brings us to inquire what are not, and what are, the grounds of rational hope.

(1.) They are not in the mere natural ability of man, for the Bible abundantly reveals the fact, that if man is left to himself, he will never so exert his agency as to comply with the conditions of salvation. This is equally true of all men.

(2.) They are not in the gospel, or in the means of grace, aside from the agency of the Holy Spirit, for the Bible reveals the fact, that no one will ever be sanctified by these means, without the agency of the Holy Spirit.

In prosecuting inquiry upon this subject, I remark:

(i.) That the inquiry now before us respects real Christians. It might be interesting and useful to look into the subject in its bearings upon the impenitent world, but this would occupy too much time and space in this place. It might be useful to inquire, what ground of rational hope any sinner may have, that he shall actually be converted and saved, when the gospel is addressed to him. It certainly cannot be denied, with any show of reason, that every sinner to whom the gospel call is addressed, has some reason to hope that God has designs of mercy toward him, and that he shall be converted, and kept, and sanctified, and saved. He must have some ground to hope for this result, upon the bare presentation to him of the offers of mercy. He has all the evidence he can ask or desire, that God is ready and willing to save him, provided that he is willing to accept of mercy, and comply with the conditions of salvation. So that, if he is disposed to accept it, he need not raise any question about the grounds of hope. There is nothing in his way but his own indisposition; if this is removed, he may surely hope to be saved. But the offers of mercy also afford some ground of hope, that the Holy Spirit will strive with him and overcome his reluctance, so that he may rationally hope to be converted.

The ground of this hope may be more or less strong in the case of individual sinners, as they find the providence and Spirit of God working together for the accomplishment of this result. If, for example, the sinner finds, in addition to the offers of salvation by the word of the gospel, that the Holy Spirit is striving with him, convincing him of sin, and trying to induce him to turn and live, he has of course increased grounds for the hope that he shall be saved.

But, as I said, the inquiry now before us respects the grounds of hope in Christians.

(ii.) I remark, that Christians, of course, from the very nature of their religion, have come strongly to desire a complete and lasting victory over sin. I need not in this place attempt to prove this.

(iii.) Christians not only desire this, but in fact so far as they are Christians, they will to obtain this victory. That is, when they have the heart of a child of God, and are in a state of acceptance with him, they will to render to God a present, full, universal, and endless obedience. This is implied in the very nature of true religion.

(iv.) The inquiry before us respects future acts of will. The state under consideration consists in an abiding consecration to God. The Christian is at present in this state, and the inquiry respects his grounds of hope, that he shall ever attain to a state in this life, in which he shall abide steadily and uniformly in this state, and go no more into voluntary rebellion against God. Has grace made no such provisions as to render the hope rational, that we shall in this life ever cease to sin? Or has it pleased God to make no such provisions, and are we to expect to sin as long as we live in this world? Has the Christian any rational ground for a hope, that he shall be sanctified in this life? that is, that he shall obtain a complete and final victory over sin in this life? The question here is, not whether Christians do hope for this, but, may they rationally hope for this? Have they good reason for such a hope, did they apprehend or understand this ground? They have desire, which is an element of hope--have they grounds for a rational expectation? I do not here inquire, whether they do expect it, but whether they have good and valid reason for such an expectation? Is the difficulty owing to a want in the provisions of grace, or in a misconception of these provisions? Some Christians do hope for this attainment. Are they mad and irrational, or have they good reason for this hope?

In replying to these inquiries, I remark, that the Holy Spirit is given to the saints for the express purpose revealed in such passages as the following. 1Th 5:23-24. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." With this, and similar promises, and express declarations in his hands, is it rational or irrational in him, to expect to receive the fulfilment of such promises? If it be answered, that these promises are conditioned upon his faith, and it is irrational for him to hope to fulfil the condition; I reply, that the Holy Spirit is given to him, and abides in him, to draw him into a fulfilment of the conditions of the promises. It is nowhere so much as hinted in the Bible, that the Holy Spirit will not do this until the close of life. Observe, that this is the very office-work of the Spirit, to work in us to fulfil the conditions of the promises of entire sanctification, and thus to secure this end. His business with and in us, is to procure our entire sanctification; and, as I said, there is not so much as a hint in the Bible, that he does not desire or design to secure this before death. Now, suppose we lay aside all knowledge of facts, in relation to the past experience of the church, and look into the Bible. From reading this, would any man get the idea, that God did not expect, desire, and intend, that saints should obtain an entire victory over sin in this life? When we read such promises and declarations as abound in the Bible, should we not see rational ground for hope, that we shall obtain a complete victory over sin in this life?

But here it may be said, that the past history of the church shows what are the real promises of grace; that grace has not in fact secured this attainment, at least to a great part of the church until at or near the close of life; and therefore grace in fact made no provision for this attainment in their case.

But if this objection has any weight, it proves equally, that grace has made in no case any provision for any one's being any better than he really is, and has been, and that it had been irrational in any one to have expected to be any better than in fact he has turned out to be. If he had at any time expected to be any better at any future time, than he turned out to be, this, upon the principle of the objection in question, would prove that he had no rational ground for the expectation: that grace in fact had made no such provision as to render any such hope rational. If this be true, we shall all see when we get into the eternal world, that in no case could we have indulged a rational hope of being any better than we have been, and that when we did indulge any such hope, we had no ground for it.

But again, if what the church has been settles the question of what it is rational for her to hope in time to be, why then we must dismiss the hope of any improvement. This objection proves too much, therefore it proves nothing.

But again, since the Holy Spirit is given to and abides in Christians, for the very purpose of securing their entire and permanent sanctification, and since there is no intimation in the Bible that this work is to be delayed until death, but, on the contrary, express declarations and promises, that as fully and expressly as possible teach the contrary, it is perfectly rational to hope for this, and downright unbelief not to expect it. What can be more express to this point than the promises and declarations that have been already quoted upon this subject?

Now the question is, not whether these promises and declarations have inspired hope, but might they not reasonably have done so? The question is, not whether these promises have been understood and relied upon, but might they not reasonably have inspired confidence, that we should, or that they should gain a complete and lasting victory over sin in this life? Do not let us be again diverted by the objection, that the provisions of grace, and what it is rational to hope for, is settled by what has been accomplished. We have seen that this objection is not valid.

Desire has existed, why has not expectation also existed? We shall see in its place. I said, that the Bible represents the design of God to be, to sanctify Christians wholly in this life, and nowhere so much as intimates, that this work is not to be complete in this life. Let such passages as the following be consulted upon this question. Tit 2:11-14. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This passage teaches that this state is to be expected; it also teaches that it is to be expected before death, (Tit 2:12.); that Christ gave himself to secure this result, (Tit 2:14.) The chapter concludes with this direction to Titus, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." Now suppose Titus to have taught, as some now teach, that it is dangerous error to hope to live in this life according to the teaching of this passage;--suppose he had told them, that although Christ had given himself expressly to secure this result, yet there was no rational ground of hope, that they would ever do this in this present evil world; would he have complied with the spirit of the apostle's injunction in verse fifteen?

Again: the thing spoken of in this passage is no doubt a state of entire sanctification, in the sense, that it implies a complete victory over sin in this present evil world.

Again, 2Co 6:17-18 : "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now in view of these promises, the apostle immediately adds the following injunction. 2Co 7:1 : "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Did the apostle think it irrational to expect or hope to make this attainment in this life? Suppose he had added to the injunction just quoted, that it was dangerous for them to expect to make the attainment which he exhorted them to make. Suppose he had said, you have no right to infer from the promises I have just quoted, that it is rational in you to hope to make this attainment in this life. But suppose the Corinthians to have inquired, Do not these promises relate to this life? Yes, says the apostle. And does not your injunction to perfect holiness in the fear of God, relate to this life? Yes. Did you not utter this injunction seeing that we have the promises? Yes. Is it not rational, seeing we have these promises, to hope to avail ourselves of them, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God in this life? Now suppose that to this last question the apostle had answered, No. Would not this have placed the apostle and the promises and his injunction in a most ridiculous light? To be sure it would. Would not any honest mind feel shocked at such an absurdity. Certainly.

Again, 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Now suppose that, immediately upon making this declaration, the apostle had added, you cannot rationally hope that God will do what I have just expressly affirmed that he will do. Suppose he had said, the declaration in the 24th verse is only a promise, and made upon a condition with which you cannot rationally hope to comply, and therefore as a matter of fact, you cannot rationally hope to be sanctified wholly and preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. How shocking and ridiculous would such a prayer, with such a promise, accompanied with such a conclusion, appear.

Again, a Christian is supposed not only to desire to make this attainment, but also to be at present willing to make it, and at present to have his heart set upon obedience to God, and upon attaining to such a degree of communion with God as to abide in Christ, and sin no more. A Christian is supposed at present to be disposed to make this attainment; not only to desire it, but also to will it. Now, may he rationally aim at it, and rationally intend or hope to make this attainment? Or must he calculate to sin so long as he lives; and is it irrational for him to expect or hope to have done with rebelling against God, and with unbelief, and accusing him of lying, as long as he lives? If he is at present desirous and willing to have done with sin, is it rational for him to hope, by any means within his reach and which he is at present disposed to use, to attain a state in which he shall have a permanent victory over sin, in which he shall abide in Christ, in such a sense as to have done with rebellion against God? By present willingness, desire and effort, is it rational for him to hope to secure a future desire and willingness, and an abiding state of heart-conformity to God? Are there any means within his reach, and which he can at present, while he has the will and desire, rationally hope so to use as to secure to him either at present, or at some future time in this life, a complete and lasting victory over sin? May he hope through present faith to secure future faith? through present love, and faith, and effort, to secure future faith, and love, and successful effort? For it is not contended by me, that the Christian will or can ever stand fast in the will of God without effort. This I have sufficiently insisted on. The question is exactly this: May a Christian, who is conscious of being at present willing to attain, and desirous of attaining, a state of abiding consecration to God in this life, rationally hope to make such an attainment? Has the grace of God made any such provision as to render such a hope rational? Not, can he rationally hope to make it without desire and effort; but with both present desire and effort? Not whether he could rationally hope to make such an attainment, if he is at present neither willing nor desirous to make it; but whether, provided he at present has both the will and desire, he may rationally hope to secure so rich an anointing of the Holy Spirit, and to be so thoroughly baptized into the death of Christ, as to remain henceforth in a state of abiding consecration to God?

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXIX.

SANCTIFICATION.

14. I come now to the consideration of the tendency of a denial, that Christians have valid grounds of hope, that they shall obtain a victory over sin in this life.

(1.) We have seen that true religion consists in benevolence, or in heart obedience to God. It consists essentially in the will's being yielded to the will of God, in embracing the same end that he embraces, and yielding implicit obedience to him in all our lives, or in our efforts to secure that end. This constitutes the essence of all true religion. The feelings or affections, or the involuntary emotions, are rather a consequence, than strictly a part of true religion. Since religion consists essentially in yielding the will to God in implicit obedience, it follows that faith or implicit confidence is a condition, or rather an essential element, of true religion.

(2.) We have in former lectures also seen what faith is; that it consists in committing the soul to God, in trust, or confidence. It is not an involuntary, but a voluntary state of mind. We have also seen, that intellectual conviction is an indispensable condition of faith; that this conviction is not evangelical faith, but is only a condition of it. Faith essentially consists in the will's embracing the truths perceived by the intellect; and this intellectual perception is, of course, indispensable to faith. We have seen, that faith cannot exist any further than truth is apprehended, understood, and intellectually believed. This intellectual apprehension, understanding, and belief, I say again, is not itself saving or evangelical faith, but only a condition of it. When truth is apprehended, understood and intellectually embraced or believed, then and so far, true faith is possible, and no further. Then, and not till then, can the will embrace and commit itself to truth.

(3.) Of course, as we have heretofore seen, faith is a condition of all heart obedience to the will of God. The will cannot consistently yield, and ought not to be yielded, to any being in whose wisdom and goodness we have not the best perceived and understood grounds of confidence. The intellect must apprehend the grounds of confidence, before we have a right to trust in, or commit our will to, the direction of any being. We ought to have the fullest intellectual conviction of the wisdom and uprightness of a being, before we can innocently yield up to him the direction of our powers, and commit ourselves to him in implicit and universal obedience.

(4.) Again, faith is also a condition of prevailing prayer. Without faith it is impossible to please God in anything. It is, as every reader of the Bible knows, the everywhere expressed or implied condition of the fulfilment of the promises of God; and we are expressly assured, that he who wavers, and does not implicitly believe or trust in God, must not expect to receive anything in answer to prayer.

(5.) Implicit confidence or faith is also a condition of sanctification, as we have fully seen. Indeed faith is indispensable to any progress in religion. Not a step is taken from first to last in the real and true service of God, without faith or heart-confidence in him. The very nature of religion forbids the expectation, and the possibility of progress in religion without faith.

(6.) Implicit confidence or faith is, of course, and as every one knows, a condition of salvation. Without faith a preparation for heaven is naturally impossible, and of course without faith salvation is naturally impossible.

(7.) We have also seen what hope is; that it is compounded of desire and expectation; that it includes a feeling, and some degree of expectation. As we have seen, both these elements are essential to hope. That which is not desired, cannot be hoped for, although it may be expected. So, that which is desired cannot be hoped for, unless it is also expected. Both expectation and desire are always essential to hope. It has also been seen, that a thing may be truly desirable, which is not desired. A thing may be ever so excellent and desirable in itself, yet, from false views of its nature, it may not be desired; so also a thing may be desired which is not expected; and there may be good reason to expect an event which is desired, and yet expectation may be prevented, for want of a knowledge of the reason, or grounds of expectation. There may be never so good and substantial evidence that an event will occur, and yet we may not expect it, for want of an apprehension of it. Since desire and expectation are both essential elements of hope, it follows, that whatever tends to inspire desire and expectation, tends to produce hope. And so, on the other hand, whatever tends to prevent desire and expectation, tends to prevent hope.

(8.) From what has been said, it is plain, that hope is a condition of the beginning of religion, and of all progress in it. Desire and expectation must both exist, as a condition of true religion. If there be no desire, there will of course be no attention to the subject, and no effort. But if there be desire, and no expectation or intellectual conviction, there can be no faith. Both desire and expectation are conditions of all religion, and of all salvation. Hope is a condition of all effort on almost every subject. Without both desire and expectation, the very sinews of effort are wanting.

Whatever therefore tends to prevent hope, tends to prevent religion. There is, as every one must see, a difference between a hope of eternal life, founded upon a consciousness of being a christian, and a hope founded upon the mere offer of salvation. The difference however does not consist in the nature of hope, but only in the evidence upon which expectation is based. The offer of salvation, as has been said, lays a good foundation for a rational hope, that we shall be converted and saved. But finding ourselves in the way of obedience, and drawn by the Holy Spirit, we have a higher evidence upon which to base expectation. Both desire and expectation are greatly increased in the latter case, but they may justly exist in a lower degree, in the former case.

The foregoing remarks prepare the way for saying,

(9.) That there are two effectual ways of opposing religion.

(i.) By so misrepresenting it as to prevent desire.

When God and his government and service are so represented as to prevent desire, this is one of the most effectual ways of opposing religion. If such representations are accredited, this is an effectual bar to religion in every case. This is a common way in which Satan and his emissaries oppose the religion of the Bible. They misrepresent God and religion, and hold it up to contempt, or so misrepresent it in multitudes of ways, as to cause the human mind necessarily to regard it as undesirable, as rather injurious than beneficial to the world, and to individuals. They represent religion, either as unnecessary, or as something that cannot be desired upon any other principle, than as the less of two evils--as something to be submitted to, rather than to go to hell, but as being far from anything desirable and lovely in itself. This, I say again, is one of the most common, and most fatal methods of opposing religion. Many men who think they are promoting religion, are among the most efficient agents of Satan in preventing it, by the false representations they make of it. They, by their spirit and manner, throw around and over it a fanatical, or a melancholic, or a superstitious cant, whining, and grimace, or a severity and a hatefulness that necessarily disgust, rather than attract the enlightened mind. Thus the soul is repelled instead of attracted; disgust is awakened, instead of desire. Such representations are among Satan's most efficient instrumentalities for opposing God and ruining souls.

(ii.) Another frequent and most successful method of opposing God and his government is, by discouraging expectation. This was the devil's first successful experiment with mankind. He succeeded in undermining confidence in God; this he did, by suggesting that God is selfish in his requisitions and prohibitions. Ever since the fall of our first parents, unbelief has been the easily besetting sin of our race. God has therefore taken, and is taking, all possible pains to restore confidence in himself and in his government, as a condition of saving the souls of fallen men.

We have seen, and Satan and his emissaries know, that intellectual expectation or conviction is a condition of faith, and that faith is a condition of all holiness and of salvation. It has therefore always been, and still is, one of the principal objects of Satan to prevent faith. To do this, he must destroy hope or expectation, and desire. Men are exceedingly prone to discredit the Divine testimony and character; and it would seem, that unbelief is the most common, as well as the most unreasonable, abomination in the world. It is remarkable with what readiness, and with what credulity, a hint or an insinuation against the testimony of God will be received. It would seem, that the human mind is in such an attitude towards God, that his most solemn declarations and his oath can be discredited, upon the bare denial of man, and even of the devil. Man seems to be more prone to unbelief, than to almost any other form of sin. Whatever, therefore, tends to beget distrust, or to prevent expectation in regard to the promises and truth of God, tends of course in the most direct and efficient manner to oppose God and religion. Now suppose ministers should set themselves so to caricature and misrepresent religion, as to render it undesirable, and even odious to the human mind; so that, as the human mind is constituted, it would be impossible to desire it. Who cannot see that such a ministry were infinitely worse than none; and would be the most successful and efficient instrumentality that Satan could devise to oppose God, and build up the influence of hell? If those who are supposed to know by experience, and who are the leaders in, and teachers of religion, represent it as undesirable, in just so far as they have influence, they are the most successful opposers of it. The result would be the same, whether they did this through misapprehension or design. If they mistook the nature of religion, and without designing to misrepresent it, did nevertheless actually do so, the consequence must be just as fatal to the interests of religion as if they were its real, but disguised enemies. This, as I have said, is no uncommon thing for ministers, through misapprehension to misrepresent the gospel so grossly as to repel, rather than attract, the human mind. In so doing they of course render hope impossible, by preventing the possibility of one of its essential elements, desire. There is then no effort made on the part of the hearers of the ministers, to obtain what they are prevented from desiring. Such ministers preach on, and ascribe to the sovereignty of God their want of success, not considering that the fault is in their grossly misrepresenting God and his claims, and the nature of his religion. It were perfectly easy, were this the place to do so, to show that the representations of God, and of his claims, and of religion, which are sometimes made in the pulpit, and through the press, are calculated, in a high degree, to repel and disgust, rather than attract the human mind. When such misrepresentations are complained of, we are told, that the carnal mind will of course repel true representations of the character of God and of religion; and the fact, that disgust is produced, is regarded as evidence that the truth is held forth to the people.

I know it is true, that the carnal or selfish mind is enmity against God. But what does this mean? Why it means, that the carnal heart is selfishness, that the will is committed to self-gratification, which is a state of heart, or an attitude of the will directly opposite to that which God requires. It is also true, that this selfish state of will does often beget emotions of opposition to God, when God is contemplated as opposed to the sinner, on account of his selfishness. But it is also true, that the human intelligence cannot but approve the character and government of God, when they are rightly apprehended; and further, when the true character of God, of his government and religion is properly represented to, and apprehended by the human mind, from a law of necessity, the mind pronounces the character of God to be lovely, and his government and religion infinitely desirable. Such being the nature of the human mind, the Holy Spirit, by thoroughly enlightening the intellect, arouses the desires, and developes the feelings in their relations to God. The desires thus come into harmony with the law of God, and favour the consecration of the will, and the whole man is renewed in the image and favour of God. Men are susceptible of conversion by the truth as presented by the Holy Spirit, upon condition of their nature being such, that a true representation of God rather attracts than repels them. But since I have dwelt so much at large upon this particular, in lectures on depravity and regeneration, I must not enlarge upon it in this place.

It is very plain that when, through mistake or design, God, his government, and religion are so represented as naturally to repel, rather than attract men, this is the most efficient method of opposing the progress of religion, since it prevents desire, which is an essential element of hope, and hope is indispensable to successful effort.

But suppose, that the teachers of religion set themselves to prevent the expectation of becoming religious, or of making progress in religion. Suppose they represent to sinners, that there is no rational ground of hope in their case--that men cannot rationally expect to be saved, or to be converted, however much they may desire it. What must be the effect of such teaching? Every body knows, that in just so far as such teachers had any influence, hell could not desire a more efficient instrumentality to dishonour God and ruin souls. This would be just what the devil would himself inculcate. It would prevent hope, and of course prevent faith, and render salvation impossible, and damnation certain, unless the lie could be contradicted, and the spell of error broken.

Suppose also, that religious teachers should instruct the church that they have no rational ground for the expectation that their prayers will be answered. Suppose they should tell them that present faith has no connexion whatever with future faith, or no such connexion as to render future faith probable; that present faith in any promise is so far from having any certain connexion with its fulfilment, that it affords no ground whatever for rational hope that the promises at present believed will ever be fulfilled. Suppose they are told that prayer for the grace of perseverance, and a present desire and determination to persevere, had no such connexion with the desired end as to afford the least ground of rational hope that they should persevere.

Suppose that ministers should take this course to render expectation, and of course hope and faith impossible, what must be the result? Every one can see. Take any class of promises you please, and let the ministry in general represent it as a dangerous error for Christians to expect or hope to realize their fulfilment, and what must the consequence be? Why, in so far as they had influence, they would exert the very worst influence possible. Apply this principle to the promises of the world's conversion, and what would be done for missions? Apply it to parents in relation to their children, and what would become of family religion?

Now take the class of promises that pledge a victory over sin in this life. Let, for example, ministers explain away 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, you also will do it:" and this whole class of promises; or let them teach, as some of them do, that it is a dangerous error to expect that these promises will be fulfilled to Christians, and what must the result be? This would be just as the devil would have it. "Ha, hath God said, he will sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve you blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Ye shall not surely be so sanctified and kept, and the Lord doth know this, and it is dangerous to trust him."

This surely is the devil's teaching; and when he can get the ministers of Christ to take this course, what more can be done? Suppose the ministers admit, as many of them do, that the blessing we have been considering is fully promised in the Bible; but, at the same time, inculcate that it is promised upon a condition with which it is irrational for us to hope to comply. What must result from such teaching as this? It represents God and his gospel in a most revolting and ridiculous light. The provision, say such teachers, is adequate, and proffered upon conditions with which you might comply, but with which you cannot rationally hope to comply. Well, then, what remains but to regard the gospel as a failure? The fact is, every man and every soul may rationally hope to comply with the conditions of salvation, and with the conditions of the promises, or what are they?

But the point we are now considering is, the tendency of such teaching; the tendency of teaching the church that it is irrational for them to expect to fulfil the conditions of the promises. I care not what class, any class. God has written them, and holds them out to inspire desire and expectation--to beget hope, and faith, and effort, and thus to secure their fulfilment to his people. Now, what an employment for the leaders and instructors of the people, to be engaged in teaching them not to expect the fulfilment of these promises to them, that such an expectation or hope is a dangerous error, that it is irrational for them to hope so to fulfil the conditions of these promises, as to secure the blessings promised, however much they may at present desire to do so. I say again, the devil himself could not do worse than this. Hell itself could not wish for a more efficient opposition to God and religion than this. This is indeed a most sublime employment for the ministers of God, to be zealous in their private and public, in their individual, and in their associated capacities, in season and out of season, in persuading the people, that the grace of God is sufficient for them if they would believe the promises, and appropriate this proffered grace to themselves; but that it is "dangerous error" for them to expect, even by grace divine, so to fulfil the conditions of the promises as to avail themselves of this proffered grace, however willing and desirous they now are to do so. They might be saved, but it is dangerous to expect to be saved. They might obtain answers to prayer, but it is dangerous error to expect them. They might obtain a victory over sin in this world, but it is "dangerous error" to expect to do so, however much they may desire it. This is indeed sublime religious instruction; or rather, it is a most gross contradiction and denial of the grace and truth of God. I will not of course say, nor do I think, that it is intentional, but I must expose its true nature, and its tendency.

Such instruction is, in its very nature, a libel upon the glorious gospel of the blessed God; and it tends as directly and as efficiently as possible to infidelity, and to the ruin of the church of God. Why, in just so far as such teaching is believed, it renders hope and faith impossible.

There are good and sufficient grounds of hope, in the case under consideration, but these grounds are strenuously denied by multitudes of ministers; and pains are taken, in every way, to discourage faith in the class of promises that pledge deliverance from the bondage of sin in this life. Those who plead for God and his promises, and inculcate expectation, and faith, and effort, are branded as heretics, and proscribed and treated as the enemies of religion. Oh, tell it not in Gath! I would on no account say this, were it not already a matter of common knowledge.

Why may not a man as well caricature God and religion, and so represent both, as to render them odious, and thus render desire impossible, as to exclaim against there being any ground of rational hope, that the promises will be fulfilled to us? Why may not a man as well be employed in preventing desire, as in preventing expectation? One certainly is equally as fatal to the interests of religion, and to souls, as the other. I do not complain of designed misrepresentation, in regard to the truth we have been considering; but Oh, what a mistake! What an infinitely ruinous misapprehension of the gospel, and of the grounds of hope! God has endeavoured by every means to inspire desire and expectation, to secure confidence and effort, but alas! alas! how many ministers have fallen into the infinite mistake of laying a stumbling-block before the church! How many are crying, There is no reason to hope; no ground for rational expectation, that you shall so fulfil the conditions of the promises, as to secure their fulfilment. You must expect to live in sin as long as you are in this world; it is dangerous to entertain any other expectation.

Who does not know, that faith is a *sine quà non* of all progress in religion? Nothing can be more fatal to the progress of the gospel, and to its influence over individuals, and over masses of men, than to destroy expectation, and thus render faith impossible. Observe, hope is composed of desire and expectation. The very nature of hope shows beyond controversy its relation to effort and to faith. Expectation is itself intellectual faith, or belief. It is capable of indefinite degrees. In many instances hope, in relation to a desired event, is very weak; we greatly desire it, but our expectation is very slight, so that we can hardly say that we hope, and yet we are aware that we do hope. Now, in this case, hope will increase as expectation increases. If expectation is slight, it is difficult to believe with the heart, that is, to rest confidently in, or confidently to look for the occurrence of the event. It is difficult, when intellectual faith or expectation is but slight, to commit the will, and trust calmly, that the desired object will be obtained. It is a common experience, in regard to objects of desire, to find ourselves unable to rest or trust with the heart, in the confidence that the event will be as we desire. Now, the thing needed in this case is, to have expectation or intellectual faith increased. The mind needs to be more thoroughly convinced; it wants more evidence, or to apprehend more clearly the reasons for rational expectation. Now, if the occurrence of the event depends in any measure upon our hope or faith, as all events do that are dependent upon our diligent attention and use of appropriate effort and instrumentalities, who does not see, that we need encouragement and evidence, instead of discouragement? Discouragement, in such a case, is ruinous to what slight hope we have.

God has made to us exceeding great and precious promises, and held them out to our faith, and said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God." "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." "If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established." But why should I quote passages; every reader of the Bible knows that everywhere the greatest stress is laid upon faith, and that nothing is too hard for God to do, when his people will believe. What must be the influence of a religious teacher who discourages faith? Suppose he explains away the promises to parents in reference to their children. Who has not observed the influence of a teacher that is himself stumbling through unbelief, in regard to that class of promises. You will universally find, that so far as his influence extends, it is death to the expectation, and of course to the faith of parents, in regard to the conversion of their children. Of course their children grow up in sin, and the families of the members of his church are filled with impenitent children. The same will be true in reference to revivals of religion. Let the pastor be himself unbelieving; let him have little or no hope of having religion revived; let him cast the stumbling-block of his own iniquity or unbelief before the church, and the influence is death. It were much better that a church had no minister, than for them to have one who has so much unbelief as to preach unbelief, instead of faith, to the people; who is for ever throwing out discouraging suggestions in regard to the efficacy of prayer and faith in the promises of God. What would be the influence of a minister, who should from year to year hold out to his people the doctrine, that the promises are made upon conditions which they had no rational hope of fulfilling? that they might have a revival, if they would use the appropriate means in the appropriate manner; but it was dangerous error for them to expect to do so? That the children of the members of his church might be converted, if the parents would appropriate to themselves, and rest in, and plead the promises made to parents; but, that these promises were made upon conditions that they had no rational ground for hope that they should fulfil; and that therefore it was a dangerous error to expect to fulfil them, and to have their children converted? Who does not see what the influence of such a pastor must be? It must be death and ruin. He preaches unbelief, instead of faith, to the people.

Precisely the same is true in respect to the doctrine of holiness in this life. Suppose a pastor to read to his congregation such passages as the following:--

2Co 6:16-18 : "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

2Co 7:1 : "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Now, suppose that he explains away, or suggests that these passages are interpolations; or that they are not correctly translated; or affirms that, at any rate, they have no rational ground of hope that these promises will be fulfilled to them; that they might be fulfilled to them if they would believe them, but that they have no reason to expect that they shall believe them; that very few, if any, have in fact believed them; and that many who have thought they believed them, and that they had received the fulfilment of them, have found themselves mistaken; that it is very difficult to get a permanent victory over sin in this world; that they might fall into fanaticism, if they should expect these promises to be fulfilled to them and that such an expectation were dangerous error.

Now I ask, how could a minister more directly serve the devil, than by such teaching as this? He could hardly be more injuriously employed. The fact is, that an unbelieving minister is the greatest of all stumbling-blocks to the church. I have had occasion to witness enough of this to make any man's heart sick. It matters not at all, in what particular form his unbelief developes itself; in that direction all will be ruin. Suppose he loses, or never had any confidence in revivals of religion, and is always letting out his unbelief upon his church. He is the greatest stumbling-block that could be laid before them. Suppose he neither understands nor believes the promises of God made to parents respecting their children, and that in this respect he lets out his ignorance and unbelief, he is the ruin of their children. Suppose he is in the dark, and filled with error or unbelief, in respect to everything where faith and energetic action are concerned, and throws doubt and discouragement in the way: his influence is death.

What! a leader in the host of God's elect disheartening the church of God by his unbelief! It is in vain to say that entire sanctification in this life is not promised; for it really and plainly is, and nothing is more expressly promised in the word of God. These promises, like all others, are conditioned upon faith, and it is as rational to hope to believe them, and to expect them to be fulfilled to us, as it is to hope to believe any other class of promises, and to have them fulfilled to us. We have the same Spirit to help our infirmities, and to make intercession for us in one case as in the other; but the ruin is, that false teaching has forbidden expectation and crippled faith, and therefore the blessing is delayed. It would be just so in regard to everything else whatever. Now suppose that this course should be taken in regard to family religion, and to revivals of religion, until centuries should pass without revivals, and without the faithfulness of God being manifested to parents in the conversion of their children; and then suppose, that the fact, that there had been so few or no revivals, or so few children converted in answer to the parents' prayers, should be urged, as proving that parents had no rational ground for the hope that their children would be converted; or that the church had any rational ground for the hope that religion would be revived; what would be the effect of all this?

The fact is, that nothing can be more disastrous and death-dealing, than for religious teachers to throw discouragements in the way of Christians taking hold of and appropriating the promises. It is ruin and death. God presents promises, and calls the church to believe them at once, and without hesitation to cast themselves upon them, to appropriate them and make them their own, and to lay hold on the blessings promised. But what an employment for a minister to stand before the people and cry out, "It is dangerous error for you to expect these promises to be fulfilled to you." Surely this is the devil's work.

Let facts be searched out, and it will be found to be true, that the influence of a minister is as his confidence in God and in his promises, is. Let search be made, and it will be found, that those ministers who by precept and example encourage the faith of their churches, are producing a healthful influence in proportion as they do so. But on the contrary, when by example and precept they discourage the faith of their churches, the influence is disastrous in proportion as they do so.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXX.

SANCTIFICATION.

FURTHER OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

1. It is objected to the foregoing argument, that the passages adduced to prove Paul's entire sanctification do not sustain the position that he had attained a state of entire, in the sense of permanent, sanctification. To this objection I reply,--

(1.) That an examination of all the passages will, if I mistake not, show that he speaks of his holiness or sanctification as a state, and as an abiding state, as distinguished from a temporary obedience. To me it is quite manifest, that Paul intended that his converts to whom he addressed his epistles, should understand him as professing to have experienced what he enjoined upon them. How could an inspired apostle write the following passage in his letter to the Thessalonians, if he did not know by experience what the state was of which he was speaking, and the truth of the promise or declaration which he appended to his prayers?-- 1Th 5:23-24 :--"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." How could he write, believing it himself, without knowing what he said, by having experienced Christ's preserving grace.

(2.) I was aware when I wrote of the sanctification of Paul, and am now, that the evidence of his permanent sanctification is not such as to render it perfectly certain that he in no instance committed sin of heart or life. Being aware of this, I said then, and I here repeat the remark, that the question of his being entirely, in the sense of permanently sanctified, is not the great question at issue, nor is it essential to the argument in support of the practical attainability of this state. It is only one of the arguments in its support; but in my apprehension, the argument is complete without it.

(3.) The testimony in Paul's case appears to me to be satisfactory, in the absence of all counter evidence.

(i.) It covers at least a large part, if not the whole of his apostolic life.

(ii.) He had frequent occasion to speak of his own attainments by way of encouragement to those to whom he wrote, to prompt them to aspire after the attainments which he recommended to them; and also as an illustration of the provision and meaning of the gospel which he preached.

(iii.) In no instance does he speak as if he were guilty of sin during the period of his apostleship. He publishes in the face of saints and sinners, of friends and enemies, those unqualified assertions and professions which I have quoted, and more than all, he appeals to God for the truth of what he says, and in no instance confesses sin.

(iv.) His language in several instances, as we have seen, seems clearly to imply, that his holiness was permanent or continual, and not intermittent.

(v.) The evidence is such as plainly to throw the burden of proof upon the objector. Such language as plainly implies, that his holiness was continual, and was rather a permanent state than an act or a temporary series of acts, must manifestly change the onus, and throw it upon the objector to prove the contrary, or to show, that no such thing is fairly inferable from his language. It is not pretended, that the permanency of his sanctification is demonstrated by the passages that have been quoted. Nor is demonstration to be expected in a case of this kind. It were to be sure very marvellous, if so humble and so simple-hearted a man as Paul the apostle should make so many unqualified professions of entire holiness of heart and life, without intimating that he at any time had sinned during this period, if he in fact knew that he had done so at least in some instances. One can hardly avoid the conviction, in view of his repeated professions, that if, at any time, he had fallen into sin, candour would have required him to confess it.

(vi.) The rules of evidence and proof when applied to this case, will clearly show where the burden of proof rests. These rules are more rigid in criminal cases than in civil. When a man is accused of a crime, his innocence is assumed until he is proved to be guilty. It is however admitted, that in the case under consideration, the assumption is reversed, and that, since all men are known to be sinners unless they have been sanctified by grace, the assumption is, that every man is a sinner unless he is proved to be otherwise. He therefore who asserts, that any human being is sinless, must prove it, and the burden of proof is upon him. But here it is important to remark, that in making out his proof, he is not held to making out the same kind and degree of proof, as would be required if he had asserted, that a man was guilty of a crime against a human government. He is not in this case arraying a commonwealth against an individual, and leaving it for the commonwealth, by certain individuals of their number, to sit in judgment, in a case in which they are, in a sense, a party. When a man is arrayed before a court and jury of his country, and accused of a crime against the commonwealth, the commonwealth is a party on the record, and the judge and jury are a part of that commonwealth. In this case the rules of proof are properly rigid and inflexible; the commonwealth must fully establish, by the most convincing testimony, the very crime of which they complain. But even in this case, and when the charge is of a capital crime, and one punishable with death, the complainant is not held to make out a demonstration, but only to present such a kind and degree of evidence, as will leave no ground for reasonable doubt, in regard to the guilt of the accused. The kind and degree of evidence are demanded that might be reasonably expected in case the accused is guilty, and nothing more. This throws the burden of proof upon the accused. The case is made out unless the accused can impeach, or explain, or contradict the evidence on the other side. He is called upon to reply to the evidence against him, and in case he fails to meet, and in some way to shake its credibility, he stands convicted.

I know it is said, that this case of Paul is one where a universal proposition is affirmed; and that therefore the case is not made out until it is proved, that he arrived at a point in his religious experience after which he did not sin at all. It is admitted, that in a sense this proposition is universal; but the inquiry is, when is this so proved as to change the onus? Must it be shown by direct and positive evidence, and such as can have no other possible construction, that he arrived at this state? or is it sufficient to change the burden of proof, to show, that the most fair and natural interpretation of the evidence conducts to the conclusion, in support of which the evidence is produced? The latter is undoubtedly the correct rule. If the former were the rule, it were useless to talk or think of a defence, or of making good a charge in one case out of many. If the affirmant must absolutely demonstrate his position, before the onus is in any case changed, why then defence or reply is out of the question; and farther, it is in no case of any use to bring a charge, except where the evidence amounts to a demonstration. If the proof amounts to a demonstration, it is impossible that the demonstrated proposition should not be true, and therefore all answer is out of the question. Therefore in almost no case do courts of law and equity demand this kind and degree of evidence; but, on the contrary, even in cases of the highest importance, they require no more than sufficient evidence in kind and degree, to warrant the reasonable conclusion, that the alleged proposition is true; and then they hold the onus to be changed, and call for the defence. When the evidence is such as to produce, or as should produce conviction, in the absence of counter evidence, they hold the case to be made out, and throw the onus upon the respondent.

Numerous examples might be cited from theological writers, to show what are regarded as correct rules of evidence, and of proof upon theological subjects. For example, in the controversy upon the subject of baptism, the immersing baptists lay down the universal proposition, that *baptizo* means only to immerse. In support of this proposition, they attempt to show from classic usage and from various sources, that immersion is its primary signification, and that it properly means immersion.

This is allowed by theological writers to be sufficient to change the onus, and to call upon the pædo-baptists to rebut this testimony, by showing that immersion is not the only sense, at least, in which the inspired writers use the term baptizo. The whole course of this controversy shows, that theological writers never pretended to hold the immersing baptists to a proving of their universal proposition in *extenso*; for if they had, this controversy must long since have terminated. Indeed, it were impossible for them to prove positively their proposition, because it would amount to proving a negative. It would require them to prove that *baptizo* never means anything else than immersion, to make out which, they must bring forward every instance of its use, and show that it means nothing else in any instance. Instead of this, it is at least practically held to be sufficient for them to prove, that the word is used to signify immersion by numerous writers. This sufficiently establishes their position in the absence of counter evidence. Pædo-baptists are then called upon to reply, and show that immersion is not its universal and only signification. This case and the one under consideration, are parallel in the material point. They are both cases where the *à priori* assumption is against them. The assumption is, that all words have more than one signification. But it is held sufficient for the baptists to make out a general signification, in proof of the assertion of a universal signification. Their making out that *baptizo* generally means immerse, is held to be sufficient, in the absence of counter testimony. The burden of proof is then changed, and the respondent is called upon to produce examples, or an example of contrary usage.

So, in the case under consideration, it is sufficient to prove that Paul lived, at, least habitually, without sin. That is, that in general terms he is said to have lived without sin. This changes the onus, and the assumption then is, that he lived altogether without sin, unless the contrary be shown. Or more strictly, it is sufficient to show, that Paul lived a considerable period, during the latter part of his life, without sin. This throws the burden of proof upon him who would deny that he continued in this state until death.

However, I have repeatedly said, I care not to contend for the sanctification of Paul, or of any other man, in support of the practical attainability of this state. If such cases had been frequent in the early ages of Christianity, they would not in all probability have been recorded, unless it was done after their death. It is the doctrine of practical attainability, and not the fact of actual attainment, for which I contend.

2. Another objection to the doctrine we have been considering has been stated as follows:--

The promises of entire sanctification are conditioned upon faith. We have no right to expect the fulfilment of the promises to us until we believe them. To believe and appropriate them is to believe that they will be fulfilled to us. But of this we have no evidence, until after we have believed that they will be fulfilled to us, which is the condition of their fulfilment. Therefore, we have no reason to expect their fulfilment to us. To this objection I reply,

(1.) That it applies equally to all the promises made to the saints; and if this objection is good, and a bar to rational hope in respect to the promises of entire sanctification, it is equally so in respect to all the promises.

(2.) The objection represents the gospel and its promises as a mere farce. If this objection has any weight, the matter stands thus: God has promised us certain things, upon condition, that we will believe that he will give them to us. But the condition of the promise is such as to render it impossible for us to fulfil it. We really, in this case, have no promise, until after we have believed that we shall receive the thing promised. We must believe that he will give the thing promised to us. But of this we can have no evidence until we have believed this, since this belief is the condition of the promise. This reduces us to the necessity of believing without a promise, that God will give us the promised blessing; for this belief is the condition of the promises in which the blessing is pledged. We must first believe that we shall receive the thing promised, before we have a right to expect to receive, or before we can rationally believe that we shall receive it. Thus the promises are all made upon a condition, that renders them all a mere nullity in the estimation of this objection.

This objection was once stated to me by a celebrated minister of New England, as applicable to the prayer of faith. It has probably occurred to many minds, and deserves a moment's attention. In further remarking upon it, I would say:--

(3.) That the objection is based upon a misapprehension of the condition of the promises. The objection assumes, that the promises are conditioned, not upon confidence in the veracity of God, but upon our believing that he will give to us the thing which he has promised. But he has promised this blessing, upon condition that we believe that he will give it to us; of which we have no promise, until after we have believed that we shall receive it. The objection assumes that God's veracity is not pledged to grant the thing promised in any case, until we have believed that we shall have the thing promised; and so we must believe that God will do what his veracity is not pledged to do, and what we have no evidence that he will do until we truly believe that he will. But we have no right to claim the thing promised, until we have believed that we shall have it, for it is promised only upon this condition. Thus we have no foundation for faith. God's veracity is not pledged to give the blessing, until after we have believed without evidence that he will give it to us. So that we are shut up to believe that he will give it to us, before his veracity is pledged to do so. We must first believe without a promise, as a condition of having a promise, or any rational ground of confidence that we shall receive the thing promised. This view of the subject would render the gospel and its promises a ridiculous tantalizing of the hopes and solicitudes of the people of God. This objection supposes that we have no evidence upon which to rest, but the promises; and the promise affords no evidence that we shall receive the thing promised, until we believe that we shall receive it, for upon this condition the promise is made. I say again, that the objection misapprehends the condition of the promises. The fact is, the promises are all made upon condition that we believe in, or trust in the veracity of God. Of this we have other evidence than that contained in the promises. We can trust in the promise of no being, any further than we have confidence in his veracity. We can have ground for confidence in the promises no further than we have ground for confidence in his veracity. Now, if we had no ground for confidence in the veracity of God, except what we have in the promises themselves, and were they conditioned upon our belief of them, they must all be to us a mere nullity. But the truth is, we have infinitely good reason for confidence in the veracity of God, and consequently, for believing his promises, and for expecting them to be fulfilled to us. We have in the intuitive affirmations of our own reason, in the revelations which God has made of himself, in his works and word, and by his Holy Spirit, the highest evidence of the veracity of God. When we confide in his veracity, we cannot but confide in his promises, so far as we understand them. Confidence in the veracity of God is both the condition of the promises, and a condition of confiding in them, and of expecting to receive the things pledged in them. Confidence in God's universal truthfulness and faithfulness is a condition of our expecting to receive the fulfilment of his promises. We could not rationally expect to receive the things promised, had we no reason for confiding in the universal truthfulness of God. Hence the Holy Spirit is given, to inspire confidence in the veracity of God, and thus enable us to lay hold upon, and appropriate the promises to ourselves. Now if, as the objection we are considering assumes, the promises were made only upon condition that we believe that we shall receive the thing promised, that is, if the thing is promised only upon condition that we first believe that we receive it, then surely the promises were vain; for this would suspend the fulfilment of the promise upon an impossible condition. But, if the promises are conditioned upon our confiding in the veracity of God, then they are made to a certain class of persons, and as soon as we are conscious of exercising this confidence in him, we cannot but expect him to fulfil all his promises. Thus a confidence in his veracity at once fulfills the conditions of the promises, and renders the expectation that we shall receive the things promised, rational and necessary.

We may appropriate the promises and expect their fulfilment, when we are conscious of confidence in the veracity of God; for upon this condition they were made, and upon no other condition is confidence in their fulfilment to us possible. That is, we cannot expect God to fulfil his promises to us, except upon the condition, that we confide in his universal truthfulness. For this confidence we have the best of all reasons, and to secure this confidence the Holy Spirit is given. God requires us to expect to receive the things promised, simply because he has promised to bestow them upon condition of faith in his veracity, and because faith in his veracity implies, and includes, the expectation of receiving the things which we know he has promised, upon condition of this faith. If we have good reason for confidence in the veracity of God, we have good reason for the expectation that he will fulfil to us all his promises; for confidence in his veracity is the condition of them. Confidence in his veracity must imply confidence in his promises, so far as they are known.

God requires faith in his promises only because he requires faith in his universal veracity, and when he conditionates his promises upon our confidence in them, it is only because he conditionates them upon our confidence in his veracity; and because confidence in his veracity implies confidence in his promises, and confidence in his promises implies confidence in his veracity. When therefore he conditionates his promises upon our believing them, and that we shall receive the things promised in them, the spirit and meaning of the condition is, that we confide in his truthfulness, which confidence is implied in the expectation of receiving the things promised. It should be distinctly understood then, that faith in the promises implies faith in the divine veracity, and faith in the divine veracity implies faith in all the known promises. In the order of nature, confidence in the divine veracity precedes confidence in a specific divine promise. But where the latter is there the former must always be. The general condition of all the promises is, confidence in the character and truthfulness of God. This also implies confidence in his promises, and hence the expressed condition is faith in the promise, because faith in his veracity implies confidence in his promises, and confidence in his promises implies confidence in his veracity.

But here it may be asked, does not this reasoning prove too much, and will it not follow from this, that all the promises must be, and are really due and fulfilled to all true saints; for all true saints have true confidence in the veracity of God? If faith in the veracity of God is the true condition of all the promises, it follows, that every true believer has fulfilled the conditions of all the promises; then the veracity of God is pledged for the fulfilment of all of them to every true believer. To this I answer, that the promises are made to believers in Christ, or in other words, to all true saints. Their being true saints is the condition of their right to appropriate them, and claim the fulfilment of them to themselves. True confidence in God is the condition of the promises, in the sense, not that they will all be fulfilled to us, of course, upon the bare condition that we confide in the general and universal veracity of God, without either pleading, appropriating, or using means to secure the fulfilment of certain specific promises to us. But confidence in the veracity of God is the condition of our having a right to appropriate the promises to ourselves, and to expect their fulfilment to ourselves. A consciousness that we confide in the veracity of God gives us the right to consider every promise as made to us which is applicable to our circumstances and wants, and to lay hold upon, and plead it, and expect it to be fulfilled to us. Observe, the promises are not merely conditioned upon confidence in the veracity of God, but also upon our pleading them with entire confidence in the veracity of God, and in the fact that he will fulfil them to us, and also upon the diligent use of means to secure the promised blessing. God says, "I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do these things for them." By trusting the veracity of God, we become personally and individually interested in the promises, and have a title to the things promised, in such a sense as to have a right, through grace, to claim the fulfilment to us of specific promises, upon the further condition of our pleading them with faith in the veracity of God, and using the necessary means to secure their fulfilment to us. Most, not to say all, of the promises of specific blessings have several conditions. An implicit faith or confidence in God as a hearer and answerer of prayer, and as a God of universal sincerity and veracity, as true and faithful to all his word, is the general condition of all the promises.

The promises are made to this class of persons. The promises of particular things are addressed to this class, for their individual use and benefit, as circumstances shall develop their necessities. By the exercise of implicit confidence in God, they have fulfilled the conditions of the promises, in such a sense, as to entitle them to appropriate any specific promise, and claim through grace its fulfilment to them, as their circumstances demand. This laying hold of, and appropriating the promises of specific blessings, and using the means to secure the thing promised, are also conditions of receiving the promised blessing.

The Holy Spirit is given to all who have confidence in the veracity of God, to lead them to a right use and appropriation of the specific promises, and when we are drawn to wrestle for the fulfilment to us of any particular promise, we have the best of reasons to expect its fulfilment to us. What Christian does not know this? And what Christian has not had frequent examples and instances of this in his own experience?

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXI.

SANCTIFICATION.

FURTHER OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

3. I will next consider those passages of scripture which are by some supposed to contradict the doctrine we have been considering.

1Ki 8:46 : "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near," &c. On this passage, I remark,--

(1.) That this sentiment in nearly the same language, is repeated in 2Ch 6:26, and in Ecc 7:20, where the same original word in the same form is used.

(2.) These are the strongest passages I know of in the Old Testament, and the same remarks are applicable to the three.

(3.) I will quote, for the satisfaction of the reader, the note of Dr. Adam Clarke upon this passage, and also that of Barclay, the celebrated and highly spiritual author of "An Apology for the True Christian Divinity." And let me say, that they appear to me to be satisfactory answers to the objection founded upon these passages.

CLARKE: "'If they sin against thee.'--This must refer to some general defection from truth; to some species of false worship, idolatry, or corruption of the truth and ordinances of the Most High; as for it, they are here stated to be delivered into the hands of their enemies, and carried away captive, which was the general punishment of idolatry; and what is called, [verse 47,] acting perversely and committing wickedness.

"'If they sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not.' 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 *ki yechetau lak*, which should be translated, if they shall sin against thee; or should they sin against thee, *ki ein adam asher lo yecheta*; '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 Lev 5:1, and Lev 6:2; 1Sa 2:25; 2Ch 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 strong-hold 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.

"(i.) The text speaks no such doctrine; it only speaks of the *possibility* of every man's sinning; and this must be true of a state of *probation*.

"(ii.) There is not another text in the divine records that is more to the purpose than this.

"(iii.) The doctrine is flatly in opposition to the design of the gospel; for Jesus came to save his people from their sins, and to destroy the works of the devil.

"(iv.) 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."

BARCLAY: "Secondly,--Another objection is from two passages of scripture, much of one signification. The one is 1Ki 8:46 : 'For there is no man that sinneth not.' The other is Ecc 7:20 : 'For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.'

"I answer,--

"(i.) These affirm nothing of a daily and continual sinning, so as never to be redeemed from it; but only that all have sinned, that there is none that doth not sin, though not always so as never to cease to sin; and in this lies the question. Yea, in that place of the Kings he speaks within two verses of the returning of such with all their souls and hearts, which implies a possibility of leaving off sin.

"(ii.) There is a respect to be had to the seasons and dispensations; for if it should be granted that in Solomon's time there were none that sinned not, it will not follow that there are none such now, or that it is a thing not now attainable by the grace of God under the gospel.

"(iii.) And lastly, this whole objection hangs upon a false interpretation; for the original Hebrew word may be read in the potential mood, thus,--There is no man who may not sin, as well as in the indicative; so both the old Latin, Junius, and Tremellius, and Vatablus have it, and the same word is so used, Ps. cxix. 11: 'Thy word have I bid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee'--in the potential mood, and not in the indicative; which being more answerable to the universal scope of the scriptures, the testimony of the truth, and the sense of almost all interpreters, doubtless ought to be so understood, and the other interpretation rejected as spurious."

(iv.) Whatever may be thought of the views of these authors, to me it is a plain and satisfactory answer to the objection founded upon these passages, that the objection might be strictly true under the Old Testament dispensation, and prove nothing in regard to the attainability of a state of entire sanctification under the New. What! does the New Testament dispensation differ nothing from the Old in its advantages for the acquisition of holiness? If it be true, that no one under the comparatively dark dispensation of Judaism, attained a state of permanent sanctification, does that prove such a state is not attainable under the gospel? It is expressly stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "the old covenant made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Under the old covenant, God expressly promised that he would make a new one with the house of Israel, in "writing the law in their hearts," and in "engraving it in their inward parts." And this new covenant was to be made with the house of Israel, under the Christian dispensation. What then do all such passages in the Old Testament prove, in relation to the privileges and holiness of Christians under the new dispensation?

(v.) Whether any of the Old Testament saints did so far receive the new Covenant by way of anticipation, as to enter upon a state of permanent sanctification, it is not my present purpose to inquire. Nor will I inquire, whether, admitting that Solomon said in his day, that "there was not a just man upon the earth that liveth and sinneth not," the same could with equal truth have been asserted of every generation under the Jewish dispensation?

(vi.) It is expressly asserted of Abraham, and multitudes of the Old Testament saints, that they "died in faith, not having received the promises." Now what can this mean? It cannot be, that they did not know the promises; for to them the promises were made. It cannot mean, that they did not receive Christ, for the Bible expressly asserts that they did--that "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day"--that Moses, and indeed all the Old Testament saints, had so much knowledge of Christ as a Saviour to be revealed, as to bring them into a state of salvation. But still they did not receive the promise of the Spirit, as it is poured out under the Christian dispensation. This was the great thing all along promised, first to Abraham, or to his seed, which is Christ. Gal 3:14, Gal 3:16 : "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ;" and afterwards to the Christian church, by all the prophets. Act 2:16-21 : "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy; and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come; and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Act 2:38-39 : "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 3:24, Act 3:26 : "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities;" and lastly, by Christ himself, which he expressly styles "the promise" of the Father. Act 1:4-5 : "And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." They did not receive the light and the glory of the Christian dispensation, nor the fulness of the Holy Spirit. And it is asserted in the Bible, that "they without us," that is, without our privileges, "could not be made perfect."

4. The next objection is founded upon the Lord's Prayer. In this Christ has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Here it is objected, that if a person should become entirely sanctified, he could no longer use this clause of this prayer, which, it is said, was manifestly designed to be used by the church to the end of time. Upon this prayer I remark:--

(1.) Christ has taught us to pray for entire, in the sense of perpetual sanctification. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven."

(2.) He designed, that we should expect this prayer to be answered, or that we should mock him by asking what we do not believe is agreeable to his will, and that too which we know could not consistently be granted; and that we are to repeat this insult to God as often as we pray.

(3.) The petition for forgiveness of our trespasses, it is plain, must apply to past sins, and not to sins we are committing at the time we make the prayer; for it would be absurd and abominable to pray for the forgiveness of a sin which we are then in the act of committing.

(4.) This prayer cannot properly be made in respect to any sin of which we have not repented; for it would be highly abominable in the sight of God, to pray for the forgiveness of a sin of which we did not repent.

(5.) If there be any hour or day in which a man has committed no actual sin, he could not consistently make this prayer in reference to that hour or that day.

(6.) But at the very time, it would be highly proper for him to make this prayer in relation to all his past sins, and that too, although he may have repented of, and confessed them, and prayed for their forgiveness, a thousand times before. This does not imply a doubt whether God has forgiven the sins of which we have repented; but it is only a renewal of our grief and humiliation for our sins, and a fresh acknowledgment of, and casting ourselves upon, his mercy. God may forgive when we repent before we ask him, and while we abhor ourselves so much as to have no heart to ask for forgiveness; but his having forgiven us does not render the petition improper.

(7.) And although his sins may be forgiven, he ought still to confess them, to repent of them, both in this world and in the world to come. And it is perfectly suitable, so long as he lives in the world, to say the least, to continue to repent, and repeat the request for forgiveness. For myself, I am unable to see why this passage should be made a stumbling-block; for if it be improper to pray for the forgiveness of sins of which we have repented, then it is improper to pray for forgiveness at all. And if this prayer cannot be used with propriety in reference to past sins of which we have already repented, it cannot properly be used at all, except upon the absurd supposition, that we are to pray for the forgiveness of sins which we are now committing, and of which we have not repented. And if it be improper to use this form of prayer in reference to all past sins of which we have repented, it is just as improper to use it in reference to sins committed to-day or yesterday, of which we have repented.

5. Another objection is founded on Jam 3:1-2 : "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Upon this passage I remark:

(1.) The term rendered masters here, may be rendered teachers, critics, or censors, and be understood either in a good or bad sense. The Apostle exhorts the brethren not to be many masters, because if they are so, they will incur the greater condemnation; "for," says he, "in many things we offend all." The fact that we all offend is here urged as a reason why we should not be many masters; which shows that the term masters is here used in a bad sense. "Be not many masters," for if we are masters, "we shall receive the greater condemnation," because we are all great offenders. Now I understand this to be the simple meaning of this passage; do not many [or any] of you become censors, or critics, and set yourselves up to judge and condemn others. For inasmuch as you have all sinned yourselves, and we are all great offenders, we shall receive the greater condemnation, if we set ourselves up as censors. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

(2.) It does not appear to me that the apostle designs to affirm anything at all of the present character of himself, or of those to whom he wrote; nor to have had the remotest allusion to the doctrine of entire sanctification, but simply to affirm a well-established truth in its application to a particular sin; that if they became censors, and injuriously condemned others, inasmuch as they had all committed many sins, they should receive the greater condemnation.

(3.) That the apostle did not design to deny the doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification, as maintained in these lectures, seems evident from the fact, that he immediately subjoins, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

6. Another objection is founded upon 1Jo 1:8 : "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Upon this I remark:

(1.) Those who make this passage an objection to the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, assume that the apostle is here speaking of sanctification instead of justification; whereas an honest examination of the passage, if I mistake not, will render it evident that the apostle makes no allusion here to sanctification, but is speaking solely of justification. A little attention to the connexion in which this verse stands will, I think, render this evident. But before I proceed to state what I understand to be the meaning of this passage, let us consider it in the connexion in which it stands, in the sense in which they understand it who quote it for the purpose of opposing the sentiment advocated in these lectures.

They understand the apostle as affirming, that, if we say we are in a state of entire sanctification and do not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Now if this were the apostle's meaning, he involves himself in this connexion in two flat contradictions.

(2.) This verse is immediately preceded by the assertion that the "blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Now it would be very remarkable, if immediately after this assertion the apostle should mean to say, (as they suppose he did,) that it does not cleanse us from all sin, and if we say it does, we deceive ourselves; for he had just asserted, that the blood of Jesus Christ does cleanse us from all sin. If this were his meaning, it involves him in as palpable a contradiction as could be expressed.

(3.) This view of the subject then represents the apostle in the conclusion of the seventh verse, as saying, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin; and in the eighth verse, as saying, that if we suppose ourselves to be cleansed from all sin, we deceive ourselves, thus flatly contradicting what he had just said. And in the ninth verse he goes on to say, that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" that is, the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin; but if we say it does, we deceive ourselves. "But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, all unrighteousness is sin. If we are cleansed from all unrighteousness, we are cleansed from sin. And now suppose a man should confess his sin, and God should in faithfulness and justice forgive his sin, and cleanse him from all unrighteousness, and then he should confess and profess that God had done this; are we to understand, that the apostle would then affirm that he deceives himself, in supposing that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin? But, as I have already said, I do not understand the apostle as affirming anything in respect to the present moral character of any one, but as speaking of the doctrine of justification.

This then appears to me to be the meaning of the whole passage. If we say that we are not sinners, that is, have no sin to need the blood of Christ; that we have never sinned, and consequently need no Saviour, we deceive ourselves. For we have sinned, and nothing but the blood of Christ cleanseth from sin, or procures our pardon and justification. And now, if we will not deny, but confess that we have sinned, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "But if we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and his word is not in us."

7. It has been objected to the view I have given of Jer. xxxi. 31-34, that if that passage is to be considered as a promise of entire sanctification, it proves too much, inasmuch as it is said, "they shall all know the Lord from the least to the greatest;" therefore, says the objector, it would prove that all the Church has been in a state of entire sanctification ever since the commencement of the New Testament dispensation. To this objection I answer:--

(1.) I have already, I trust, shown that this promise is conditioned upon faith, and that the blessing cannot possibly be received but by faith.

(2.) It is doubtless true, that many may have received this covenant in its fulness.

(3.) A promise may be unconditional or absolute, and certain of a fulfilment in relation to the whole church as a body, in some period of its history, which is nevertheless conditional, in relation to its application to any particular individual, or generation of individuals.

(4.) I think it is in entire keeping with the prophecies, to understand this passage as expressly promising to the Church a day, when all her members shall be sanctified, and "Holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses." Indeed, it appears to be abundantly foretold, that the church as a body shall in this world enter into a state of entire sanctification in some period of her history, and that this will be the carrying out of the promises of the New Covenant of which we are speaking. But it is by no means an objection to this view of the subject, that all the church have not yet entered into this state.

It has been maintained, that this promise in Jeremiah has been fulfilled already. This has been argued:--

(i.) From the fact that the promise has no condition, expressed or implied, and the responsibility therefore rests with God.

(ii.) That the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, quotes it as to be fulfilled at the advent of Christ. Now to this I answer:--It might as well be argued, that all the rest of the promises and prophecies relating to the gospel-day were fulfilled, because the time had come when the promise is due. Suppose it were denied, that the world would ever be converted, or that there ever would be any more piety in the world than there has been and is at present; and when the promises and prophecies respecting the latter-day glory and the conversion of the world should be adduced in proof that the world is to be converted, it should be replied, that these promises had already been fulfilled, that they were unconditional, and that the advent of the Messiah was the time when they became due. But suppose, that in answer to this, it should be urged, that nothing has ever yet occurred in the history of this world that seems at all to have come up to the meaning of these promises and prophecies, that the world has never been in the state which seems to be plainly described in these promises and prophecies--and that it cannot be, that anything the world has yet experienced is what is meant by such language as is used in the Bible, in relation to the future state of the world. Now suppose to this it should be replied, that the event has shown what the promises and prophecies really meant; that we are to interpret the language by the fact; that as the promises and prophecies were unconditional, and the gospel day has really come when they were to be fulfilled, we certainly know, whatever their language may be, that they meant nothing more than what the world has already realized? This would be precisely like the reasoning of some persons in relation to Jer. xxxi. 31-34. They say:--

(*a*.) The promises are without condition.

(*b*.) The time has come for their fulfilment. Therefore, the world has realized their fulfilment, and all that was intended by them: that the facts in the case settle the question of construction and interpretation; and we know that they never intended to promise a state of entire sanctification, because, as a matter of fact, no such state has been realized by the church. Indeed! Then the Bible is the most hyperbolical, not to say ridiculous, book in the universe. If what the world has seen in regard to the extension and universal prevalence of the Redeemer's kingdom, is all that the promises relating to these events really mean, then the Bible of all books in the world is the most calculated to deceive mankind. But who, after all, in the exercise of his sober senses, will admit any such reasoning as this? Who does not know, or may not know, if he will use his common sense, that although these promises and prophecies are unconditionally expressed, yet that they are, as a matter of fact, really conditioned upon a right exercise of human agency, and that a time is to come when the world shall be converted; and that the conversion of the world implies in itself a vastly higher state of religious action in the church, than has for centuries, or perhaps ever been witnessed--and that the promise of the New Covenant is still to be fulfilled in a higher sense than it ever has been? If any man doubts this, I must believe that he does not understand his Bible. Faith, then, is an indispensable condition of the fulfilment of all promises of spiritual blessings, the reception of which involves the exercise of our own agency.

Again: it is not a little curious, that those who give this interpretation to these promises, imagine that they see a very close connexion, if not an absolute identity of our views with those of modern Antinomian Perfectionists. Now, it is of importance to remark, that this is one of the leading peculiarities of that sect. They (the Antinomian Perfectionists) insist that these are promises without condition, and that consequently their own watchfulness, prayers, exertions, and the right exercise of their own agency, are not at all to be taken into the account in the matter of their perseverance in holiness--that the responsibility is thrown entirely upon Christ, inasmuch as his promises are without condition. The thing he has promised, say they, is, that without any condition, he will keep them in a state of entire sanctification, that therefore for them to confess sin is to accuse Christ of breaking his promises. For them to make any efforts at perseverance in holiness, is to set aside the gospel, and go back to the law. For them even to fear that they shall sin, is to fear that Christ will tell a lie. These sayings are not found in their Confession of Faith, but they are held at least by many of them, as every one knows who is at all familiar with their views.

The fact is, that this, and their setting aside the moral law, are the two great errors of their whole system. It would be easy to show, that the adoption of this sentiment, that these promises are without condition, expressed or implied, has led to some of their most fanatical and absurd opinions and practices. They take the ground, that no condition is expressed, and that therefore none is implied; overlooking the fact, that the very nature of the thing promised implies that faith is the condition upon which its fulfilment must depend. It is hoped, therefore, that our brethren who charge us with perfectionism, will be led to see that to themselves, and not to us, does this charge belong.

These are the principal passages that occur to my mind, and those I believe upon which the principal stress has been laid, by the opposers of this doctrine. And as I do not wish to protract the discussion, I shall omit the examination of other passages.

There are many objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification, besides those derived from the passages of scripture which I have considered. Some of these objections are doubtless honestly felt, and deserve to be considered. I will therefore proceed to notice such of them as now occur to my mind.

8. It is objected, that the doctrine of entire and permanent sanctification in this life, tends to the errors of modern perfectionism. This objection has been urged by some good men, and I doubt not, honestly urged. But still I cannot believe that they have duly considered the matter. It seems to me, that one fact will set aside this objection. It is well known that the Wesleyan Methodists have, as a denomination, from the earliest period of their history, maintained this doctrine in all its length and breadth. Now if such is the tendency of the doctrine, it is passing strange that this tendency has never developed itself in that denomination. So far as I can learn, the Methodists have been in a great measure, if not entirely, exempt from the errors held by modern perfectionists. Perfectionists, as a body, and I believe with very few exceptions, have arisen out of those denominations that deny the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life.

Now the reason of this is obvious to my mind. When professors of religion, who have been all their life subject to bondage, begin to inquire earnestly for deliverance from their sins, they have found neither sympathy nor instruction, in regard to the prospect of getting rid of them in this life. Then they have gone to the Bible, and there found, in almost every part of it, Christ presented as a Saviour from their sins. But when they proclaim this truth, they are at once treated as heretics and fanatics by their brethren, until, being overcome of evil, they fall into censoriousness; and finding the church so decidedly and utterly wrong, in her opposition to this one great important truth, they lose confidence in their ministers and the church, and being influenced by a wrong spirit, Satan takes the advantage of them, and drives them to the extreme of error and delusion. This I believe to be the true history of many of the most pious members of the Calvinistic churches. On the contrary, the Methodists are very much secured against these errors. They are taught that Jesus Christ is a Saviour from all sin in this world. And when they inquire for deliverance they are pointed to Jesus Christ as a present and all-sufficient Redeemer. Finding sympathy and instruction on this great and agonizing point, their confidence in their ministers and their brethren remains, and they walk quietly with them.

It seems to me impossible that the tendency of this doctrine should be to the peculiar errors of the modern perfectionists, and yet not an instance occur among all the Methodist ministers, or the thousands of their members, for one hundred years.

And here let me say, it is my full conviction, that there are but two ways in which ministers of the present day can prevent members of their churches from becoming perfectionists. One is, to suffer them to live so far from God, that they will not inquire after holiness of heart; and the other is, most fully to inculcate the glorious doctrine of entire consecration; and that it is the high privilege as well as the duty of Christians, to live in a state of entire consecration to God. I have many additional things to say upon the tendency of this doctrine, but at present this must suffice.

By some it is said to be identical with perfectionism; and attempts are made to show in what particulars antinomian perfectionism and our views are the same. On this I remark:--

(1.) It seems to have been a favourite policy of certain controversial writers for a long time, instead of meeting a proposition in the open field of fair and Christian argument, to give it a bad name, and attempt to put it down, not by force of argument, but by showing that it is identical with, or sustains a near relation to Pelagianism, Antinomianism, Calvinism, or some other *ism*, against which certain classes of minds are deeply prejudiced. In the recent controversy between what are called old and new school divines, who has not witnessed with pain the frequent attempts that have been made to put down the new school divinity, as it is called, by calling it Pelagianism, and quoting certain passages from Pelagius and other writers, to show the identity of sentiment that exists between them.

This is a very unsatisfactory method of attacking or defending any doctrine. There are no doubt, many points of agreement between Pelagius and all truly orthodox divines, and so there are many points of disagreement between them. There are also many points of agreement between modern perfectionists and all evangelical Christians, and so there are many points of disagreement between them and the Christian church in general. That there are some points of agreement between their views and my own, is no doubt true. And that we totally disagree in regard to those points that constitute their great peculiarities is, if I understand them, also true.

But did I really agree in all points with Augustine, or Edwards, or Pelagius, or the modern perfectionists, neither the good nor the ill name of any of these would prove my sentiments to be either right or wrong. It would remain, after all, to show that those with whom I agreed were either right or wrong, in order, on the one hand, to establish that for which I contend, or on the other, to overthrow that which I maintain. It is often more convenient to give a doctrine or an argument a bad name, than it is soberly and satisfactorily to reply to it.

(2.) It is not a little curious, that we should be charged with holding the same sentiments with the perfectionists; while yet they seem to be more violently opposed to our views, since they have come to understand them, than almost any other persons whatever. I have been informed by one of their leaders, that he regards me as one of the master-builders of Babylon. And I also understand, that they manifest greater hostility to the Oberlin Evangelist than almost any other class of persons.

(3.) I will not take time, nor is it needful, to go into an investigation or a denial, even of the supposed or alleged points of agreement between us and the perfectionists. But, for the present, it must be sufficient to read and examine for yourselves. You have, at the commencement of these lectures upon this subject, their confession of faith drawn up with care, by their leader, in compliance with a particular request; let a comparison of that with what is here taught, settle the question of our agreement or disagreement with that sect.

With respect to the modern perfectionists, those who have been acquainted with their writings, know that some of them have gone much farther from the truth than others. Some of their leading men, who commenced with them, and adopted their name, stopped far short of adopting some of their most abominable errors; still maintaining the authority and perpetual obligation of the moral law; and thus have been saved from going into many of the most objectionable and destructive notions of the sect. There are many more points of agreement between that class of perfectionists and the orthodox church, than between the church and any other class of them. And there are still a number of important points of difference, as every one knows who is possessed of correct information upon this subject.

I abhor the practice of denouncing whole classes of men for the errors of some of that name. I am well aware, that there are many of those who are termed perfectionists, who as truly abhor the extremes of error into which many of that name have fallen, as perhaps do any persons living.

9. Another objection is, that persons could not live in this world, if they were entirely sanctified. Strange! Does holiness injure a man? Does perfect conformity to all the laws of life and health, both physical and moral, render it impossible for a man to live? If a man break off from rebellion against God, will it kill him? Does there appear to have been anything in Christ's holiness inconsistent with life and health? The fact is, that this objection is founded in a gross mistake, in regard to what constitutes entire sanctification. It is supposed by those who hold this objection, that this state implies a continual and most intense degree of excitement, and many things which are not at all implied in it. I have thought, that it is rather a glorified than a sanctified state, that most men have before their minds, whenever they consider this subject. When Christ was upon earth, he was in a sanctified but not in a glorified state. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." Now, what is there in the moral character of Jesus Christ, as represented in his history, that may not and ought not to be fully copied into the life of every Christian? I speak not of his knowledge, but of his spirit and temper. Ponder well every circumstance of his life that has come down to us, and say, beloved, what is there in it that may not, by the grace of God, be copied into your own? And think you, that a full imitation of him, in all that relates to his moral character, would render it impossible for you to live in the world?

10. Again, it is objected that should we become entirely in the sense of permanently sanctified, we could not know it, and should not be able intelligently to profess it.

I answer: All that a sanctified soul needs to know or profess is, that the grace of God in Christ Jesus is sufficient for him, so that he finds it to be true, as Paul did, that he can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him, and that he does not expect to sin, but that on the contrary, he is enabled through grace "to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." A saint may not know that he shall never sin again; he may expect to sin no more, because of his confidence, not in his own resolutions, or strength, or attainments, but simply in the infinite grace and faithfulness of Christ. He may come to look upon, to regard, account, reckon himself, as being dead in deed and in fact unto sin, and as having done with it, and as being alive unto God, and to expect henceforth to live wholly to God, as much as he expects to live at all; and it may be true that he will thus live, without his being able to say that he knows that he is entirely, in the sense of permanently, sanctified. This he need not know, but this he may believe upon the strength of such promises as 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." It is also true, that a Christian may attain a state in which he will really fall no more into sin, as a matter of fact, while, at the same time, he may not be able to express even a thorough persuasion that he shall never fall again. All he may be able intelligently to say is: "God knoweth I hope to sin no more, but the event will show. May the Lord keep me; I trust that he will."

11. Another objection is, that the doctrine tends to spiritual pride. And is it true, indeed, that to become perfectly humble tends to pride? But entire humility is implied in entire sanctification. Is it true, that you must remain in sin, and of course cherish pride in order to avoid pride? Is your humility more safe in your own hands, and are you more secure against spiritual pride, in refusing to receive Christ as your helper, than you would be in at once embracing him as a full Saviour?

I have seen several remarks in the papers of late, and have heard several suggestions from various quarters, which have but increased the fear which I have for some time entertained, that multitudes of Christians, and indeed many ministers, have radically defective views of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. To the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, as believed and taught by some of us, it has been frequently of late objected, that prayers offered in accordance with this belief, and by a sanctified soul, would savour strongly of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. I have seen this objection stated in its full force of late, in a religious periodical, in the form of a supposed prayer of a sanctified soul--the object of which was manifestly to expose the shocking absurdity, self-righteousness, and spiritual pride of a prayer, or rather thanksgiving, made in accordance with a belief that one is entirely sanctified. Now, I must confess, that that prayer, together with objections and remarks which suggest the same idea, have created in my mind no small degree of alarm. I fear much that many of our divines, in contending for the doctrines of grace, have entirely lost sight of the meaning of the language they use, and have in reality but very little practical understanding of what is intended by salvation by grace, in opposition to salvation by works. If this is not the case, I know not how to account for their feeling, and for their stating such an objection as this to the doctrine of entire sanctification.

Now, if I understand the doctrine of salvation by grace, both sanctification and justification are wrought by the grace of God, and not by any works or merits of our own, irrespective of the grace of Christ through faith. If this is the real doctrine of the Bible, what earthly objection can there be to our confessing, professing, and thanking God for our sanctification, any more than for our justification. It is true, indeed, that in our justification our own agency is not concerned, while in our sanctification it is. Yet I understand the doctrine of the Bible to be, that both are brought about by grace through faith, and that we should no sooner be sanctified without the grace of Christ, than we should be justified without it. Now, who pretends to deny this? And yet if it is true, of what weight is that class of objections to which I have alluded? These objections manifestly turn upon the idea, no doubt latent and deep seated in the mind, that the real holiness of Christians, in whatever degree it exists, is, in some way, to be ascribed to some goodness originating in themselves, and not in the grace of Christ. But do let me ask, how is it possible that men who entertain, really and practically, right views upon this subject, can by any possibility feel, as if it must be proof conclusive of self-righteousness and Pharisaism, to profess and thank God for sanctification? Is it not understood on all hands, that sanctification is by grace, and that the gospel has made abundant provision for the sanctification of all men? This certainly is admitted by those who have stated this objection. Now, if this is so, which is the most honourable to God, to confess and complain that our sins triumph and gain dominion over us, or to be able truly and honestly to thank Him for having given us the victory over our sins? God has said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Now, in view of this and multitudes of kindred promises, suppose we come to God, and say: "O Lord, thou hast made these great and precious promises, but, as a matter of fact, they do not accord with our own experience. For sin does continually have dominion over us. Thy grace is not sufficient for us. We are continually overcome by temptation, notwithstanding thy promise, that in every temptation thou wilt make a way for us to escape. Thou hast said, the truth shall make us free, but we are not free. We are still the slaves of our appetites and lusts."

Now, which, I inquire, is the most honourable to God, to go on with a string of confessions and self-accusations, that are in flat contradiction to the promises of God, and almost, to say the least, a burlesque upon the grace of the gospel, or to be able, through grace, to confess that we have found it true in our own experience, that his grace is sufficient for us--that as our day is so our strength is, and that sin does not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace?

To this I know it will be answered, that in this confessing of our sins we do not impeach the grace or faithfulness of God, inasmuch as all these promises are conditioned upon faith, and consequently, that the reason of our remaining in sin is to be ascribed to our unbelief, and is therefore no disparagement to the grace of Christ. But I beg, that it may be duly considered, that faith itself is of the operation of God--is itself produced by grace; and therefore the fact of our being obliged to confess our unbelief is a dishonour to the grace of Christ. Is it honourable or dishonourable to God, that we should be able to confess that even our unbelief is overcome, and that we are able to testify from our own experience, that the grace of the gospel is sufficient for our present salvation and sanctification? There is no doubt a vast amount of self-righteousness in the church, which, while it talks of grace, really means nothing by it. For a man to go any farther than to hope that he is converted, seems to many minds to savour of self-righteousness. Now, why is this, unless they themselves entertain self-righteous notions in regard to conversion? Many persons would feel shocked to hear a man in prayer unqualifiedly thank God that he had been converted and justified. And they might just as well feel shocked at this, and upon precisely the same principle, as to feel shocked, if he should unqualifiedly thank God that he had been sanctified by his grace.

But again, I say, that the very fact that a man feels shocked to hear a converted or a sanctified soul unqualifiedly thank God for the grace received, shows that down deep in his heart lies concealed a self-righteous view of the way of salvation, and that in his mind all holiness in Christians is a ground of boasting; and that, if persons have become truly and fully sanctified, they really have a ground of boasting before God. I know not how else to account for this wonderful prejudice. For my own part, I do not conceive it to be the least evidence of self-righteousness, when I hear a man sincerely and heartily thank God for converting and justifying him by his grace. Nor should I feel either shocked, horrified, or disgusted, to hear a man thank God, that he had sanctified him wholly by his grace. If in either or both cases I had the corroborative evidence of an apparently holy life, I should bless God, take courage, and feel like, calling on all around to glorify God for such an instance of his glorious and excellent grace.

The feeling seems to be very general, that such a prayer or thanksgiving is similar, in fact, and in the principle upon which it rests, with that of the Pharisee noticed by our Saviour. But what reason is there for this assumption? We are expressly informed, that that was the prayer of a Pharisee. But the Pharisees were self-righteous, and expressly and openly rejected the grace of Christ. The Pharisee then boasted of his own righteousness, originating in, and consummated by, his own goodness, and not in the grace of Christ. Hence he did not thank God, that the grace of Christ has made him unlike other men. Now, this prayer was designed to teach us the abominable folly of any man's putting in a claim to righteousness and true holiness, irrespective of the grace of God by Jesus Christ. But certainly this is an infinitely different thing from the thanksgiving of a soul, who fully recognizes the grace of Christ, and attributes his sanctification entirely to that grace. And I cannot see how a man, who has entirely divested himself of Pharisaical notions in respect to the doctrine of sanctification, can suppose these two prayers to be analogous in their principle and spirit.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXII.

SANCTIFICATION.

FURTHER OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

12. Again it is objected, that many who have embraced this doctrine, really are spiritually proud. To this I answer:

(1.) So have many who believed the doctrine of regeneration been deceived, and amazingly puffed up with the idea that they have been regenerated, when they have not been. But is this a good reason for abandoning the doctrine of regeneration, or any reason why the doctrine should not be preached?

(2.) Let me inquire, whether a simple declaration of what God has done for their souls, has not been assumed as of itself sufficient evidence of spiritual pride, on the part of those who embrace this doctrine, while there was in reality no spiritual pride at all? It seems next to impossible, with the present views of the church, that an individual should really attain this state, and profess to live without known sin in a manner so humble as not, of course, to be suspected of enormous spiritual pride. This consideration has been a snare to some, who have hesitated and even neglected to declare what God had done for their souls, lest they should be accused of spiritual pride. And this has been a serious injury to their piety.

13. But again it is objected, that this doctrine tends to censoriousness. To this I reply:

(1.) It is not denied, that some who have professed to believe this doctrine have become censorious. But this no more condemns this doctrine than it condemns that of regeneration. And that it tends to censoriousness, might just as well be urged against every acknowledged doctrine of the Bible, as against this doctrine.

(2.) Let any Christian do his whole duty to the church and the world in their present state, let him speak to them and of them as they really are, and he would of course incur the charge of censoriousness. It is therefore the most unreasonable thing in the world, to suppose that the church in its present state, would not accuse any perfect Christian of censoriousness. Entire sanctification implies the doing of all our duty. But to do all our duty, we must rebuke sin in high places and in low places. Can this be done with all needed severity, without in many cases giving offence, and incurring the charge of censoriousness? No, it is impossible; and to maintain the contrary, would be to impeach the wisdom and holiness of Jesus Christ himself.

14. It is objected, that the believers in this doctrine lower the standard of holiness to a level with their own experience. To this I reply, that it has been common to set up a false standard, and to overlook the true spirit and meaning of the law, and to represent it as requiring something else than what it does require; but this notion is not confined to those who believe in this doctrine. The moral law requires one and the same thing of all moral agents, namely, that they shall be universally and disinterestedly benevolent; in other words, that they shall love the Lord their God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves. This is all that it does require of any. Whoever has understood the law as requiring less or more than this, has misunderstood it. Love is the fulfilling of the law. But I must refer the reader to what I have said upon this subject when treating of moral government.

The law, as we have seen on a former occasion, levels its claims to us as we are, and a just exposition of it, as I have already said, must take into consideration all the present circumstances of our being. This is indispensable to a right apprehension of what constitutes entire sanctification. There may be, as facts show, danger of misapprehension in regard to the true spirit and meaning of the law, in the sense that, by theorizing and adopting a false philosophy, one may lose sight of the deepest affirmations of his reason in regard to the true spirit and meaning of the law; and I would humbly inquire, whether the error has not been in giving such an interpretation of the law, as naturally to beget the idea so prevalent, that, if a man should become holy, he could not live in this world? In a letter lately received from a beloved, and useful, and venerated minister of the gospel, while the writer expressed the greatest attachment to the doctrine of entire consecration to God, and said that he preached the same doctrine which we hold to his people every Sabbath, but by another name, still he added, that it was revolting to his feelings to hear any mere man set up the claim of obedience to the law of God. Now let me inquire, why should this be revolting to the feelings of piety? Must it not be because the law of God is supposed to require something of human beings in our state, which it does not and cannot require? Why should such a claim be thought extravagant, unless the claims of the living God be thought extravagant? If the law of God really requires no more of men than what is reasonable and possible, why should it be revolting to any mind to hear an individual profess to have attained to entire obedience? I know that the brother to whom I allude, would be almost the last man to deliberately and knowingly give any strained interpretation to the law of God; and yet, I cannot but feel that much of the difficulty that good men have upon this subject, has arisen out of a comparison of the lives of saints with a standard entirely above that which the law of God does or can demand of persons in all respects in our circumstances, or indeed of any moral agent whatever.

15. Another objection is, that, as a matter of fact, the grace of God is not sufficient to secure the entire sanctification of saints in this life. It is maintained, that the question of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life, resolves itself after all into the question, whether Christians are sanctified in this life? The objectors say, that nothing is sufficient grace that does not, as a matter of fact, secure the faith, and obedience, and perfection of the saints; and therefore that the provisions of the gospel are to be measured by the results; and that the experience of the church decides both the meaning of the promises, and the extent of the provisions of grace. Now to this I answer:--If this objection be good for anything in regard to entire sanctification, it is equally true in regard to the spiritual state of every person in the world. If the fact that men are not perfect, proves that no provision is made for their perfection, their being no better than they are proves, that there is no provision for their being any better than they are, or that they might not have aimed at being any better, with any rational hope of success. But who, except a fatalist, will admit any such conclusion as this? And yet I do not see but this conclusion is inevitable from such premises. As well might an impenitent sinner urge, that the grace of the gospel is not, as a matter of fact, sufficient for him, because it does not convert him: as well might he resolve everything into the sovereignty of God, and say, the sovereignty of God must convert me, or I shall not be converted: and since I am not converted, it is because the grace of God has not proved itself sufficient to convert me. But who will excuse the sinner, and admit his plea, that the grace and provisions of the gospel are not sufficient for him?

Let ministers urge upon both saints and sinners the claims of God. Let them insist that sinners may, and can, and ought, immediately to become Christians, and that Christians can, and may, and ought to live wholly to God. Let them urge Christians to live without sin, and hold out the same urgency of command, and the same encouragement that the new school holds out to sinners; and we shall soon find that Christians are entering into the liberty of perfect love, as sinners have found pardon and acceptance. Let ministers hold forth the same gospel to all, and insist that the grace of the gospel is as sufficient to save from all sin as from a part of it; and we shall soon see whether the difficulty has not been, that the gospel has been hid and denied, until the churches have been kept weak through unbelief. The church has been taught not to expect the fulfilment of the promises to them; that it is dangerous error to expect the fulfilment to them, for example, of the promise in 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." When God says he will sanctify us wholly, and preserve us blameless unto the coming of the Lord, masters in Israel tell us that to expect this is dangerous error.

16. Another objection to this doctrine is, that it is contrary to the views of some of the greatest and best men in the church: that such men as Augustine, Calvin, Doddridge, Edwards, &c., were of a different opinion. To this I answer:

(1.) Suppose they were;--we are to call no man father, in such a sense as to yield up to him the determination of our views of Christian doctrine.

(2.) This objection comes with a very ill grace from those who wholly reject the opinions of these divines on some of the most important points of Christian doctrine.

(3.) Those men all held the doctrine of physical moral depravity, which was manifestly the ground of their rejecting the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. Maintaining, as they seem to have done, that the constitutional susceptibilities of body and mind were sinfully depraved, consistency of course led them to reject the idea, that persons could be entirely sanctified while in the body. Now, I would ask, what consistency is there in quoting them as rejecting the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, while the reason of this rejection in their minds, was founded in the doctrine of physical moral depravity, which notion is entirely denied by those who quote their authority?

17. But again: it is objected, that, if we should attain this state of continual consecration or sanctification, we could not know it until the day of judgment; and that to maintain its attainability is vain, inasmuch as no one can know whether he has attained it or not. To this I reply:

(1.) A man's consciousness is the highest and best evidence of the present state of his own mind. I understand consciousness to be the mind's recognition of its own existence and exercises, and that it is the highest possible evidence to our own minds of what passes within us. Consciousness can of course testify only to our present sanctification; but,

(2.) With the law of God before us as our standard, the testimony of consciousness, in regard to whether the mind is conformed to that standard or not, is the highest evidence which the mind can have of a present state of conformity to that rule.

(3.) It is a testimony which we cannot doubt, any more than we can doubt our existence. How do we know that we exist? I answer: by our consciousness. How do I know that I breathe, or love, or hate, or sit, or stand, or lie down, or rise up, that I am joyful or sorrowful? In short, that I exercise any emotion, or violation, or affection of mind? How do I know that I sin, or repent, or believe? I answer: by my own consciousness. No testimony can be "so direct and convincing as this."

Now, in order to know that my repentance is genuine, I must know what genuine repentance is. So if I would know whether my love to God and man, or obedience to the law is genuine, I must have clearly before my mind the real spirit, and meaning, and bearing of the law of God. Having the rule before my mind, my own consciousness affords "the most direct and convincing evidence possible," whether my present state of mind is conformed to the rule. The Spirit of God is never employed in testifying to what my consciousness teaches, but in setting in a strong light before my mind the rule to which I am to conform my life. It is his province to make me understand, to induce me to love and obey the truth; and it is the province of consciousness to testify to my own mind whether I do or do not obey the truth, when I apprehend it. When God so presents the truth, as to give the mind assurance, that it understands his mind and will upon any subject, the mind's consciousness of its own state in view of that truth, is "the highest and most direct possible" evidence of whether it obeys or disobeys.

(4.) If a man cannot be conscious of the character of his own supreme or ultimate choice, in which choice his moral character consists, how can he know when, and of what, he is to repent? If he has committed sin of which he is not conscious, how is he to repent of it? And if he has a holiness of which he is not conscious, how could he feel that he has peace with God?

But it is said, that a man may violate the law, not knowing it, and consequently have no consciousness that he sinned, but that, afterwards, a knowledge of the law may convict him of sin. To this I reply, that if there was absolutely no knowledge that the thing in question was wrong, the doing of that thing was not sin, inasmuch as some degree of knowledge of what is right or wrong is indispensable to the moral character of any act. In such a case, there may be a sinful ignorance, which may involve all the guilt of those actions that were done in consequence of it; but that blame-worthiness lies in that state of heart that has induced this, and not at all in the violation of the rule of which the mind was, at the time, entirely ignorant.

(5.) The Bible everywhere assumes, that we are able to know, and unqualifiedly requires us to know, what the moral state of our mind is. It commands us to examine ourselves, to know and to prove our ourselves. Now, how can this be done, but by bringing our hearts into the light of the law of God, and then taking the testimony of our own consciousness, whether we are, or are not, in a state of conformity to the law? But if we are not to receive the testimony of our own consciousness, in regard to our present sanctification, are we to receive it in respect to our repentance, or any other exercise of our mind whatever? The fact is, that we may deceive ourselves, by neglecting to compare ourselves with the right standard. But when our views of the standard are right, and our consciousness bears witness of a felt, decided, unequivocal state of mind, we cannot be deceived any more than we can be deceived in regard to our own existence.

(6.) But it is said, our consciousness does not teach us what the power and capacities of our minds are, and that therefore if consciousness could teach us in respect to the kind of our exercises, it cannot teach us in regard to their degree, whether they are equal to the present capacity of our mind. To this I reply:--

(i.) Consciousness does as unequivocally testify whether we do or do not love God with all our heart, as it does whether we love him at all. How does a man know that he lifts as much as he can, or runs, or walks as fast as he is able? I answer: By his own consciousness. How does he know that he repents or loves with all his heart? I answer: By his own consciousness. This is the only possible way in which he can know it.

(ii.) The objection implies that God has put within our reach no possible means of knowing whether we obey him or not. The Bible does not directly reveal the fact to any man, whether he obeys God or not. It reveals his duty, but does not reveal the fact whether he obeys. It refers for this testimony to his own consciousness. The Spirit of God sets our duty before us, but does not directly reveal to us whether we do it or not; for this would imply that every man is under constant inspiration.

But it is said, the Bible directs our attention to the fact, whether we outwardly obey or disobey, as evidence whether we are in a right state of mind or not. But I would inquire, How do we know whether we obey or disobey? How do we know anything of our conduct but by our consciousness? Our conduct, as observed by others, is to them evidence of the state of our hearts. But, I repeat it, our consciousness of obedience to God is to us the highest, and indeed the only, evidence of our true character.

(iii.) If a man's own consciousness is not to be a witness, either for or against him, other testimony can never satisfy him of the propriety of God's dealing with him in the final judgment. There are cases of common occurrence, where the witnesses testify to the guilt or innocence of a man, contrary to the testimony of his own consciousness. In all such cases, from the very laws of his being, he rejects all other testimony: and let me add, that he would reject the testimony of God, and from the very laws of his being must reject it, if it contradicted his own consciousness. When God convicts a man of sin, it is not by contradicting his consciousness; but by placing the consciousness which he had at the time, in the clear strong light of his memory, causing him to discover clearly, and to remember distinctly what light he had, what thoughts, what convictions, what intention or design; in other words, what consciousness he had at the time. And this, let me add, is the way, and the only way, in which the Spirit of God can convict a man of sin, thus bringing him to condemn himself. Now, suppose that God should bear testimony against a man, that at such a time he did such a thing, that such and such were all the circumstances of the case; and suppose that at the same time the individual's consciousness unequivocally contradicts him. The testimony of God in this case could not satisfy the man's mind, nor lead him into a state of self-condemnation. The only possible way in which this state of mind could be induced, would be to annihilate his opposing consciousness, and to convict him simply upon the testimony of God.

(7.) Men may overlook what consciousness is. They may mistake the rule of duty, they may confound consciousness with a mere negative state of mind, or that in which a man is not conscious of a state of opposition to the truth. Yet it must for ever remain true that, to our own minds, "consciousness must be the highest possible evidence" of what passes within us. And if a man does not by his own consciousness know whether he does the best that he can, under the circumstance--whether he has a single eye to the glory of God--and whether he is in a state of entire consecration to God--he cannot know it in any way whatever. And no testimony whatever, either of God or man, could, according to the laws of his being, satisfy him either as to conviction of guilt on the one hand, or self-approbation on the other.

(8.) Let me ask, how those who make this objection know that they are not in a sanctified state? Has God revealed it to them? Has he revealed it in the Bible? Does the Bible say to A. B., by name, You are not in a sanctified state? Or does it lay down a rule, in the light of which his own consciousness bears this testimony against him? Has God revealed directly by his Spirit, that he is not in a sanctified state, or does he hold the rule of duty strongly before the mind, and thus awaken the testimony of consciousness that he is not in this state? Now just in the same way consciousness testifies of those that are sanctified, that they are in this state. Neither the Bible nor the Spirit of God makes any new or particular revelation to them by name. But the Spirit of God bears witness to their spirits by setting the rule in a strong light before them. He induces that state of mind which conscience pronounces to be conformity to the rule. This is as far as possible from setting aside the judgment of God in the case; for conscience, under these circumstances, is the testimony of God, and the way in which he convinces of sin on the one hand, and of entire consecration on the other; and the decision of conscience is given to us in consciousness.

By some it is still objected, that consciousness alone is not evidence even to ourselves of our being, or not being in a state of entire sanctification, that the judgment of the mind is also employed in deciding the true intent and meaning of the law, and is therefore as absolutely a witness in the case as consciousness is. "Consciousness," it is said, "gives us the exercises of our own mind, and the judgment decides whether these exercises are in accordance with the law of God." So then it is the judgment rather than the consciousness, that decides whether we are, or are not, in a state of entire sanctification; and therefore if, in our judgment of the law, we happen to be mistaken, than which nothing is more common, in such case we are utterly deceived if we think ourselves in a state of entire sanctification. To this I answer:--

(i.) It is indeed our judgment that decides upon the intent and meaning of the law.

(ii.) We may be mistaken in regard to its true application in certain cases, as it respects outward conduct, but let it be remembered, that neither sin nor holiness is to be found in the outward act. They both belong only to the ultimate intention. No man, as was formerly shown, can mistake his real duty. Every one knows, and cannot but know, that disinterested benevolence is his duty. This is, and nothing else is his duty. This he can know, and about this he need not mistake. And sure it is, that if man can be certain of anything, he can be certain in respect to the end for which he lives, or in respect to his supreme ultimate intention.

(iii.) I deny that it is the judgment which is to us the witness, in respect to the state of our own minds. There are several powers of the mind called into exercise, in deciding upon the meaning of, and in obeying, the law of God; but it is consciousness alone that gives us these exercises. Nothing but consciousness can possibly give us any exercise of our own minds; that is, we have no knowledge of any exercise but by our own consciousness. Suppose then the judgment is exercised, the will is exercised, and all the involuntary powers are exercised. These exercises are revealed to us only and simply by consciousness; so that it remains an invariable truth, that consciousness is to us the only possible witness of what our exercises are, and consequently of the state of our own minds. When, therefore, I say, that by consciousness a man may know whether he is in a state of sanctification, I mean, that consciousness is the real and only evidence that we can have of being in this state.

Again: the objection that consciousness cannot decide in regard to the strength of our powers, and whether we really serve God with all our strength, seems to be based upon the false supposition, that the law of God requires every power of body and mind to be excited at every moment, in its full strength; and that, too, without any regard to the nature of the subject, about which our powers, for the time being, are employed. On a former occasion I endeavoured to show, and trust I did show, that perfect obedience to the law of God requires no such thing. Sanctification is consecration. Entire consecration is obedience to the law of God; and all that the law requires is, that our whole being be consecrated to God; and the amount of strength to be expended in his service at any one moment of time, must depend upon the nature of the subject about which the powers are for the time being employed. And nothing is farther from the truth than that, obedience to the law of God requires every power of body and mind to be constantly on the strain, and in the highest possible degree of excitement and activity. Such an interpretation of the law of God as this, would be utterly inconsistent with life and health, and would write MENE TEKEL upon the life and conduct of Jesus Christ himself; for his whole history shows, that he was not in a state of constant excitement, to the full extent of his powers.

This objection is based upon a misapprehension of that which constitutes entire or continued sanctification. It consists, as has been shown, in abiding consecration to God, and not as the objection assumes, in involuntary affections and feelings. When it is considered, that entire sanctification consists in an abiding good will to God and to being in general, in living to one end, what real impossibility can there be in knowing whether we are supremely devoted to this end, or supremely devoted to our own interest?

18. Again: it is objected, that if this state were attained in this life, it would be the end of our probation. To this I reply, that probation since the fall of Adam, or those points on which we are in a state of probation or trial, are--

(1.) Whether we will repent and believe the gospel.

(2.) Whether we will persevere in holiness to the end of life.

Some suppose, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints sets aside the idea of being at all in a state of probation after conversion. They reason thus: If it is certain that the saints will persevere, then their probation is ended; because the question is already settled, not only that they are converted, but that they will persevere to the end; and the contingency, in regard to the event, is indispensable to the idea of probation. To this I reply: That a thing may be contingent with man that is not at all so with God. With God, there is not, and never was any contingency, in the sense of uncertainty, with regard to the final destiny of any being. But with men almost all things are contingent. God knows with absolute certainty whether a man will be converted, and whether he will persevere. A man may know that he is converted, and may believe that by the grace of God he shall persevere. He may have an assurance of this in proportion to the strength of his faith. But the knowledge of this fact is not at all inconsistent with his idea of his continuance in a state of trial till the day of his death, inasmuch as his perseverance depends upon the exercise of his own voluntary agency; and also, because his perseverance is the condition of his final salvation.

In the same way some say, that if we have attained a state of entire or permanent sanctification, we can no longer be in a state of probation. I answer, that perseverance in this depends upon the promises and grace of God, just as the final perseverance of the saints does. In neither case can we have any other assurance of our perseverance, than that of faith in the promise and grace of God: nor any other knowledge that we shall continue in this state, than that which arises out of a belief in the testimony of God, that he will preserve us blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this be inconsistent with our probation, I see not why the doctrine of the saint's perseverance is not equally inconsistent with it. If any one is disposed to maintain, that for us to have any judgment or belief grounded on the promises of God, in regard to our final perseverance, is inconsistent with a state of probation, all I can say is, that his views of probation are very different from my own, and so far as I understand, from those of the church of God.

Again: there is a very high and important sense in which every moral being will remain on probation to all eternity. While under the moral government of God, obedience must for ever remain a condition of the favour of God. And continued obedience will for ever depend on the faithfulness and grace of God; and the only confidence we can ever have, either in heaven or on earth, that we shall continue to obey, must be founded upon the faithfulness and truth of God.

Again: if it were true, that entering upon a state of permanent sanctification in this life, were, in some sense, an end of our probation, that would be no objection to the doctrine; for there is a sense in which probation often ends long before the termination of this life. Where, for example, for any cause God has left sinners to fill up the measure of their iniquity, withdrawing for ever his Holy Spirit from them, and sealing them over to eternal death; this, in a very important sense, is the end of their probation, and they are as sure of hell as if they were already there. So on the other hand, when a person has received, after believing, the sealing of the Spirit unto the day of redemption, as an earnest of his inheritance, he may regard, and is bound to regard this as a solemn pledge on the part of God, of his final perseverance and salvation, and as no longer leaving the final question of his destiny in doubt.

Now it should be remembered, that in both these cases the result depends upon the exercise of the agency of the creature. In the case of the sinner given up of God, it is certain that he will not repent, though his impenitence is voluntary, and by no means a thing naturally necessary. So, on the other hand, the perseverance of the saints is certain, though not necessary. If in either case there should be a radical change of character, the result would differ accordingly.

19. Again: while it is admitted by some, that entire sanctification in this life is attainable, yet it is denied, that there is any certainty that it will be attained by any one before death; for, it is said, that as all the promises of entire sanctification are conditioned upon faith, they therefore secure the entire sanctification of no one. To this I reply: That all the promises of salvation in the Bible are conditioned upon faith and repentance; and therefore it does not follow on this principle, that any person ever will be saved. What does all this arguing prove? The fact is, that while the promises of both salvation and sanctification, are conditioned upon faith, yet the promises that God will convert and sanctify the elect, spirit, soul and body, and preserve and save them, must be fulfilled, and will be fulfilled, by free grace drawing and securing the concurrence of free-will. With respect to the salvation of sinners, it is promised that Christ shall have a seed to serve him, and the Bible abounds with promises to Christ that secure the salvation of great multitudes of sinners. So the promises, that the church, as a body, at some period of her earthly history, shall be entirely sanctified, are, as it regards the church, unconditional, in the sense that they will assuredly be accomplished. But, as I have already shown, as it respects individuals, the fulfilment of these promises must depend upon the exercise of faith. Both in respect to the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of Christians, God is abundantly pledged to bring about the salvation of the one and the sanctification of the other, to the extent of his promise to Christ.

20. It is also objected, that the sanctification of the saints depends upon the sovereignty of God. To this I reply, that both the sanctification of the saints and the conversion of sinners is, in some sense, dependent upon the sovereign grace of God. But who except an antinomian would, for this reason, hesitate to urge it upon sinners to repent immediately and believe the gospel? Would any one think of objecting to the doctrine or the fact of repentance, that repentance and the conversion of sinners were dependent upon the sovereignty of God?

And yet, if the sovereignty of God can be justly urged as a bar to the doctrine of entire sanctification, it may, for ought I see, with equal propriety be urged as a bar to the doctrine and fact of repentance. We have no controversy with any one upon the subject of entire sanctification, who will as fully and as firmly hold out the duty and the possibility, and the practical attainability, of entire sanctification, as of repentance and salvation. Let them both be put where the Bible puts them, upon the same ground, so far as the duty and the practicability of both are concerned.

Suppose any one should assert, that it were irrational and dangerous for sinners to hope or expect to be converted, and sanctified, and saved, because all this depends upon the sovereignty of God, and they do not know what God will do. Who would say this? But why not as well say it, as make the objection to sanctification which we are now considering?

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

REMARKS.

1. THERE is an importance to be attached to the sanctification of the *body*, of which very few persons appear to be aware. Indeed, unless the bodily appetites and powers be consecrated to the service of God--unless we learn to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wake, and labour, and rest, for the glory of God, permanent sanctification as a practical thing is out of the question. It is plain, that very few persons are aware of the great influence which their bodies have over their minds, and of the indispensable necessity of bringing their bodies under, and keeping them in subjection.

Few people seem to keep the fact steadily in view, that unless their bodies be rightly managed, they will be so fierce and over-powering a source of temptation to the mind, as inevitably to lead it into sin. If they indulge themselves in a stimulating diet, and in the use of those condiments that irritate and rasp the nervous system, their bodies will be, of course and of necessity, the source of powerful and incessant temptation to evil tempers and vile affections. If persons were aware of the great influence which the body has over the mind, they would realize, that they cannot be too careful to preserve the nervous system from the influence of every improper article of food or drink, and preserve that system as they would the apple of their eye, from every influence that could impair its functions.

No one who has opportunity to acquire information in regard to the laws of life and health, and the best means of sanctifying the whole spirit, soul, and body, can be guiltless if he neglects these means of knowledge. Every man is bound to make the structure and laws of both body and mind the subject of as thorough investigation as his circumstances will permit, to inform himself in regard to what are the true principles of perfect temperance, and in what way the most can be made of all his powers of body and mind for the glory of God.

2. From what has been said in these lectures, the reason why the church has not been entirely sanctified is very obvious. As a body the church has not believed that such a state was attainable until near the close of life. And this is a sufficient reason, and indeed the most weighty of all reasons, for her not having attained it.

3. From what has been said, it is easy to see, that the true question in regard to entire sanctification in this life is: Is it attainable as a matter of fact? Some have thought the proper question to be: Are Christians entirely sanctified in this life? Now certainly this is not the question that needs to be discussed. Suppose it to be fully granted that they are not; this fact is sufficiently accounted for, by the consideration that they do not know or believe it to be attainable until the close of life. If they believed it to be attainable, it might no longer be true that they do not attain it. But if provision really is made for this attainment, it amounts to nothing, unless it be recognized and believed. The thing needed then is, to bring the church to see and believe, that this is her high privilege and her duty. It is not enough, as has been shown, to say that it is attainable, simply on the ground of natural ability. This is as true of the devil, and the lost in hell, as of men in this world. But unless grace has put this attainment so within our reach, as that it may be aimed at with the reasonable prospect of success, there is, as a matter of fact, no more provision for our entire sanctification in this life, than for the devil's. As has been said, it seems to be trifling with mankind, merely to maintain the attainability of this state, on the ground of natural ability only, and at the same time to tell them, that they certainly never will exercise this ability unless disposed to do so by the grace of God; and furthermore, that it is a dangerous error for us to expect to receive grace from God to secure this result; that we might by natural possibility make this attainment, but it is irrational and dangerous error to expect or hope to make it, or hope to receive sufficient grace to secure it.

The real question is, Has grace brought this attainment so within our reach, that we may reasonably expect, by aiming at it, to experience it in this life? It is admitted, that on the ground of natural ability, both wicked men and devils have the power to be entirely holy. But it is also admitted that their indisposition to use this power aright is so complete, that as a matter of fact, they never will, unless influenced to do so by the grace of God. I insist therefore that the real question is, whether the provisions of the gospel are such, that did the church fully understand and lay hold upon the proffered grace, she might attain this state? Are we so fully authorized to offer this grace to Christians, as we are the grace of repentance and pardon to the sinners? May we as consistently urge Christians to lay hold on sanctifying grace sufficient to keep them from all sin, as to urge sinners to lay hold of Christ for justification? May we insist upon the one as really and as honestly as the other?

4. We see how irrelevant and absurd the objection is, that as a matter of fact the church has not attained this state, and therefore it is not attainable. Why, if they have not understood it to be attainable, it no more disproves its attainableness, than the fact that the heathen have not embraced the gospel, proves that they will not when they know it. Within my memory it was thought to be dangerous to call sinners to repent and believe the gospel; and on the contrary, they were told by Calvinists, that they could not repent, that they must wait God's time; and it was regarded as a dangerous error for a sinner to think that he could repent. But who does not know, that the thorough inculcation of an opposite doctrine has brought scores of thousands to repentance? Now the same course needs to be pursued with Christians. Instead of being told, that it is dangerous to expect to be entirely sanctified in this life, they ought to be taught to believe at once, and take hold on the promises of perfect love and faith.

5. You see the necessity of fully preaching and insisting upon this doctrine, and of calling it by its true scriptural name. It is astonishing to see to what an extent there is a tendency among men to avoid the use of scriptural language, and to cleave to the language of such men as Edwards, and other great and good divines. They object to the terms perfection and entire sanctification, and prefer to use the terms entire consecration, and such other terms as have been common in the church.

Now, I would by no means contend about the use of words; but still it does appear to me to be of great importance, that we use scripture language, and insist upon men being "perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect," and being "sanctified wholly, body, soul and spirit." This appears to me to be the more important for this reason, that if we use the language to which the church has been accustomed upon this subject, she will, as she has done, misunderstand us, and will not get before her mind that which we really mean. That this is so, is manifest from the fact, that the great mass of the church will express alarm at the use of the terms perfection and entire sanctification, who will neither express nor feel any such alarm, if we speak of entire consecration. This demonstrates, that they do not by any means understand these terms as meaning the same thing. And although I understand them as meaning precisely the same thing, yet I find myself obliged to use the terms perfection and entire sanctification to possess their minds of their real meaning. This is Bible language. It is unobjectionable language. And inasmuch as the church understands entire consecration to mean something less than entire sanctification or Christian perfection, it does seem to me of great importance, that ministers should use a phraseology which will call the attention of the church to the real doctrine of the Bible upon this subject. With great humility, I would submit the question to my beloved brethren in the ministry, whether they are not aware, that Christians have entirely too low an idea of what is implied in entire consecration, and whether it is not useful and best to adopt a phraseology in addressing them, that shall call their attention to the real meaning of the words which they use?

6. Young converts have not been allowed so much as to indulge the thought that they could live even for a day wholly without sin. They have as a general thing no more been taught to expect to live even for a day without sin, than they have been taught to expect immediate translation, soul and body, to heaven. Of course, they have not known that there was any other way than to go on in sin; and however shocking and distressing the necessity has appeared to them, in the ardour of their first love, still they have looked upon it as an unalterable fact, that to be in a great measure in bondage to sin is a thing of course while they live in this world. Now, with such an orthodoxy as this, with the conviction in the church and ministry so ripe, settled and universal, that the utmost that the grace of God can do for men in this world is to bring them to repentance, and to leave them to live and die in a state of sinning and repenting, is it at all wonderful, that the state of religion should be as it really has been?

In looking over the results to Christians, of preaching the doctrine in question, I feel compelled to say, that so far as all observation can go, I have the same evidence that it is truth, and as such is owned and blessed of God to the elevation of the holiness of Christians, as I have, that those are truths which I have so often preached to sinners, and which have been blessed of God to their conversion. This doctrine seems as naturally calculated to elevate the piety of Christians, and as actually to result in the elevation of their piety, under the blessing of God, as those truths that I have preached to sinners were to their conversion.

7. Christ has been in a great measure lost sight of in some of his most important relations to mankind. He has been known and preached as a pardoning and justifying Saviour; but as an actually indwelling and reigning Saviour in the heart, he has been but little known. I was struck with a remark a few years since, of a brother whom I have from that time greatly loved, who had been for a time in a desponding state of mind, borne down with a great sense of his own vileness, but seeing no way of escape. At an evening meeting the Lord so revealed himself to him, as entirely to overcome the strength of his body, and his brethren were obliged to carry him home. The next time I saw him, he exclaimed to me with a pathos I shall never forget, "Brother Finney, the church have buried the Saviour." Now it is no doubt true, that the church have become awfully alienated from Christ--have in a great measure lost a knowledge of what he is, and ought to be, to her, and a great many of her members, I have good reason to know, in different parts of the country, are saying with deep and overpowering emotion, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

8. With all her orthodoxy, the church has been for a long time much nearer to unitarianism than she has imagined. This remark may shock some of my readers, and you may think it savours of censoriousness. But, beloved, I am sure it is said in no such spirit. These are "the words of truth and soberness." So little has been known of Christ, that, if I am not entirely mistaken, there are multitudes in the orthodox churches, who do not know Christ, and who at heart are Unitarians, while in theory they are orthodox. They have never known Christ, in the sense of which I have spoken of him in these lectures.

I have been, for some years deeply impressed with the fact, that so many professors of religion are coming to the ripe conviction that they have never known Christ. There have been in this place almost continual developements of this fact; and I doubt, whether there is a minister in the land who will present Christ as the gospel presents him, in all the fulness of his official relations to mankind, who will not be struck and agonized with developements that will assure him, that the great mass of professors of religion do not know the Saviour. It has been to my mind a painful and a serious question, what I ought to think of the spiritual state of those who know so little of the blessed Jesus. That none of them have been converted, I dare not say. And yet, that they have been converted, I am afraid to say. I would not for the world "quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed," or say anything to stumble, or weaken the feeblest lamb of Christ; and yet my heart is sore pained, my soul is sick; my bowels of compassion yearn over the church of the blessed God. O, the dear church of Christ! What does she in her present state know of gospel rest, of that "great and perfect peace" which they have whose minds are stayed on God? The church in this place is composed, to a great extent, of professors of religion from different parts of the world, who have come hither for educational purposes, and from religious considerations. And as I said, I have sometimes been appalled at the disclosures which the Spirit of God has made of the real spiritual state of many who have come here, and were considered by others before they came, and by themselves, as truly converted to God.

9. If I am not mistaken, there is an extensive feeling among Christians and ministers, that much that ought to be known and may be known of the Saviour, is not known. Many are beginning to find that the Saviour is to them "as a root out of a dry ground, having neither form nor comeliness;" that the gospel which they preach or hear is not to them "the power of God unto salvation" from sin; that it is not to them "glad tidings of great joy;" that it is not to them a peace-giving gospel; and many are feeling that if Christ has done for them all that his grace is able to do in this life, the plan of salvation is sadly defective; that Christ is not after all a Saviour suited to their necessities; that the religion which they have is not suited to the world in which they live; that it does not, cannot make them free, but leaves them in a state of perpetual bondage. Their souls are agonized, and tossed to and fro without a resting-place. Multitudes also are beginning to see, that there are many passages, both in the Old and New Testament, which they do not understand; that the promises seem to mean much more than they have ever realized; and that the gospel and the plan of salvation, as a whole, must be something very different from that which they have as yet apprehended. There are, if I mistake not, great multitudes all over the country, who are inquiring more earnestly than ever before, after a knowledge of that Jesus who is to save his people from their sins.

A fact was related in my hearing, some time since, that illustrates in an affecting manner the agonizing state of mind in which many Christians are, in regard to the present state of many of the ministers of Christ. I had the statement from the brother himself, who was the subject of his narrative. A sister in the church to which he preached became so sensible that he did not know Christ as he ought to know him, that she was full of unutterable agony; and on one occasion, after he had been preaching, fell down at his feet with tears and strong beseechings that he would exercise faith in Christ. At another time, she was so impressed with a sense of his deficiency in this respect as a minister, that she addressed him in the deepest anguish of her soul, crying out, "O, I shall die, I shall certainly die, unless you will receive Christ as a full Saviour:" and attempting to approach him, she sunk down helpless, overcome with agony and travail of soul, at his feet.

There is manifestly a great struggle in the minds of multitudes, that the Saviour may be more fully revealed to the church, that the present ministry especially may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death.

10. If the doctrine of these lectures is true, you see the immense importance of preaching it clearly and fully, in revivals of religion. When the hearts of converts are warm with their first love, then is the time to make them fully acquainted with their Saviour, to hold him up in all his offices and relations, so as to break the power of every sin--to lead them to break off for ever from all self-dependence, and to receive Christ as a present, perfect, everlasting Saviour, so far as this can possibly be done with their limited experience.

11. Unless this course be taken, their backsliding is inevitable. You might as well expect to roll back the waters of Niagara with your hand, as to stay the tide of their former habitudes of mind, surrounded as they are with temptation, without a deep, and thorough, and experimental acquaintance with the Saviour. And if they are thrown upon their own watchfulness and resources, for strength against temptation, instead of being directed to the Saviour, they are certain to become discouraged, and fall into dismal bondage.

12. But, before I conclude these remarks, I must not omit to notice the indispensable necessity of a willingness to do the will of God, in order rightly to understand this doctrine. If a man is unwilling to give up his sins, to deny himself all ungodliness and every worldly lust, if he is unwilling to be set apart wholly and forever to the service of the Lord, he will either reject this doctrine altogether, or only intellectually admit it, without receiving it into his heart. It is an eminently dangerous state of mind to assent to this, or any other doctrine of the gospel, and not reduce it to practice.

13. Much evil has been done by those who have professedly embraced this doctrine in theory; and rejected it in practice. Their spirit and temper have been such as to lead those who saw them to infer, that the tendency of the doctrine itself was bad. And it is not to be doubted, that some who have professed to have experienced the power of this doctrine in their hearts, have greatly disgraced religion, by exhibiting a very different spirit from that of an entirely sanctified one. But why in a Christian land should this be a stumbling block? When the heathen see persons from Christian nations who professedly adopt the Christian system, exhibit on their shores, and in their countries, the spirit which many of them do, they infer that this is the tendency of the Christian religion. To this our missionaries reply, that they are only nominal Christians, only speculative, not real believers. Should thousands of our church members go among them, they would have the same reason to complain; and might reply to the missionaries, these are not only nominal believers, but profess to have experienced the Christian religion in their own hearts. Now what would the missionaries reply? Why, to be sure, that they were professors of religion; but that they really did not know Christ, that they were deceiving themselves with a name to live, while in fact they were dead in trespasses and sins.

It has often been a matter of astonishment to me, that in a Christian land, it should be a stumbling block to any, that some, or if you please, a majority of those who profess to receive and to have experienced the truth of this doctrine, should exhibit an unchristian spirit. What if the same objection should be brought against the Christian religion; against any and every doctrine of the gospel, that the great majority of all the professed believers and receivers of those doctrines were proud, worldly, selfish, and exhibited anything but a right spirit? This objection might be made with truth to the professed Christian church. But would the conclusiveness of such an objection be admitted in Christian lands? Who does not know the ready answer to all such objections as these, that the doctrines of Christianity do not sanction such conduct, and that it is not the real belief of them that begets any such spirit or conduct; that the Christian religion abhors all these objectionable things. And now suppose it should be replied to this, that a tree is known by its fruits, and that so great a majority of the professors of religion could not exhibit such a spirit, unless it were the tendency of Christianity itself to beget it. Who would not reply to this, that this state of mind and course of conduct of which they complain, is the natural state of man uninfluenced by the gospel of Christ; that, in these instances, on account of unbelief, the gospel has failed to correct what was already wrong, and that it needed not the influence of any corrupt doctrine to produce that state of mind? It appears to me, that these objectors against this doctrine, on account of the fact that some and perhaps many who have professed to receive it, have exhibited a wrong spirit, take it for granted that the doctrine itself produces this spirit, instead of considering that a wrong spirit is natural to men, and that the difficulty is that, through unbelief, the gospel has failed to correct what was before wrong. They reason as if they supposed the human heart needed something to beget within it a bad spirit, and as if they supposed, that a belief in this doctrine had made men wicked; instead of recognizing the fact, that they were before wicked, and that through unbelief, the gospel has failed to make them holy.

14. But let it not be understood, that I suppose or admit, that the great mass who have professed to have received this doctrine into their hearts, have exhibited a bad spirit. I must say, that it has been eminently otherwise, so far as my own observation extends. And I am fully convinced, that if I have ever seen Christianity and the spirit of Christ in the world, it has been exhibited by those, as a general thing, who have professed to receive this doctrine into their hearts.

15. How amazingly important it is, that the ministry and the church should come fully to a right understanding and embracing of this doctrine. O, it will be like life from the dead! The proclamation of it is now regarded by multitudes as "good tidings of great joy." From every quarter, we get the gladsome intelligence, that souls are entering into the deep rest and peace of the gospel, that they are awaking to a life of faith and love--and that instead of sinking down into antinomianism, they are eminently more benevolent, active, holy, and useful than ever before; that they are eminently more prayerful, watchful, diligent, meek, sober-minded, and heavenly in all their lives. This is the character of those, to a very great extent at least, with whom I have been acquainted, who have embraced this doctrine, and professed to have experienced its power. I say this for no other reason, than to relieve the anxieties of those who have heard very strange reports, and whose honest fears have been awakened in regard to the tendency of this doctrine.

16. Much pains have been taken to demonstrate, that our views of this subject are wrong. But in all the arguing to this end hitherto, there has been one grand defect. None of the opponents of this doctrine have yet showed us "a more excellent way, and told us what is right." It is certainly impossible to ascertain what is wrong, on any moral subject, unless we have before us the standard of right. The mind must certainly be acquainted with the rule of right, before it can reasonably pronounce anything wrong; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is therefore certainly absurd, for the opponents of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, to pronounce this doctrine wrong without being able to show us what is right. To what purpose, then, I pray, do they argue, who insist upon this view of the subject as wrong, while they do not so much as attempt to tell us what is right? It cannot be pretended, that the scriptures teach nothing upon this subject. And the question is, what do they teach? We therefore call upon the denouncers of this doctrine, and we think the demand reasonable, to inform us definitely, how holy Christians may be, and are expected to be in this life. And it should be distinctly understood, that until they bring forward the rule laid down in the scripture upon this subject, it is but arrogance to pronounce anything wrong; just as if they should pronounce anything to be sin without comparing it with the standard of right. Until they inform us what the scriptures do teach, we must beg leave to be excused from supposing ourselves obliged to believe, that what is taught in these lectures is wrong, or contrary to the language and spirit of inspiration. This is certainly a question that ought not to be thrown loosely aside, without being settled. The thing at which we aim is, to establish a definite rule, or to explain what we suppose to be the real and explicit teachings of the Bible upon this point. And we do think it absurd, that the opponents of this view should attempt to convince us of error, without so much as attempting to show what the truth upon this subject is. As if we could easily enough decide what is contrary to right, without possessing any knowledge of right. We therefore beseech our brethren, in discussing this subject, to show us what is right. And if this is not the truth, to show us a more excellent way, and convince us that we are wrong, by showing us what is right. For we have no hope of ever seeing that we are wrong, until we can see that something else than what is advocated in this discussion, is right.

17. But before I close my remarks upon this subject, I must not fail to state what I regard as the present duty of Christians. It is to hold their will in a state of consecration to God, and to lay hold on the promises for the blessing promised in such passages as 1Th 5:23-24 :--"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." This is present duty. Let them wait on the Lord in faith, for that cleansing of the whole being which they need, to confirm, strengthen, settle them. All they can do, and all that God requires them to do, is to obey him from moment to moment, and to lay hold of him for the blessing of which we have been speaking; and to be assured, that God will bring forth the answer in the best time and in the best manner. If you believe, the anointing that abideth will surely be secured in due time.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXIV.

ELECTION.

In discussing this subject,

I. I SHALL NOTICE SOME POINTS IN WHICH THERE IS A GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG ALL DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS RESPECTING THE NATURAL AND MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

II. WHAT THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION IS NOT.

III. WHAT IT IS.

IV. I SHALL PROVE THE DOCTRINE TO BE TRUE.

V. SHOW WHAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE REASONS FOR ELECTION.

VI. WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN THE REASON.

VII. WHEN THE ELECTION WAS MADE.

VIII. ELECTION DOES NOT RENDER MEANS FOR THE SALVATION OF THE ELECT UNNECESSARY.

IX. ELECTION IS THE ONLY GROUND OF HOPE IN THE SUCCESS OF MEANS TO SAVE THE SOULS OF MEN.

X. ELECTION DOES NOT OPPOSE ANY OBSTACLE TO THE SALVATION OF THE NON-ELECT.

XI. THERE IS NO INJUSTICE IN ELECTION.

XII. THIS IS THE BEST THAT COULD BE DONE FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THIS WORLD.

XIII. HOW WE MAY ASCERTAIN OUR OWN ELECTION.

I. *I shall notice some points in which there is a general agreement among all denominations of Christians respecting the natural and moral attributes of God.*

1. It is agreed that eternity is a natural attribute of God in the sense that he grows no older. He was just as old before the world or universe was made, as he is now, or as he will be at the day of judgment.

2. It is agreed that omniscience is an attribute of God, in the sense that he knows from a necessity of his infinite nature all things that are objects of knowledge.

3. That he has necessarily and eternally possessed this knowledge, so that he never has, and never can have, any accession to his knowledge. Every possible thing that ever was, or will be, or can be an object of knowledge, has been necessarily and eternally known to God. If this were not true, God would be neither infinite nor omniscient.

4. It is agreed also that God exercises an universal providence, embracing all events that ever did or ever will occur in all worlds. Some of these events he secures by his own agency, and others occur under his providence, in the sense that he permits or suffers them to occur rather than interpose to prevent them. They may be truly said to occur under his providence, because his plan of government in some sense embraces them all. He made provision to secure those that are good, that is, the holy intentions of moral agents, and to overrule for good those that are evil, that is, the selfish intentions of moral agents. These intentions are events, and may be said to occur under Divine Providence, because all events that do, or ever will, occur, are and must be foreseen results of God's own agency, or of the work of creation.

5. It is agreed that infinite benevolence is the sum of the moral attributes of God.

6. That God is both naturally and morally immutable; that in his natural attributes he is necessarily so, and in his moral attributes he is certainly so.

7. It is agreed that all who are converted, sanctified and saved, are converted, sanctified, and saved by God's own agency; that is, God saves them by securing, by his own agency, their personal and individual holiness.

II. *What the Bible doctrine of election is not.*

1. Not, as Huntington maintained, that all men are chosen to salvation through the atonement of Christ. This gentleman, who was a congregational minister of New England, left a treatise for publication after his death, (which was accordingly published,) in which he maintained the usual orthodox creed, with the exception of extending the doctrine of election to the whole human race. He took the old school view of the atonement, that it was the literal payment of the debt of the elect; that Christ suffered what and as much as they deserved to suffer, and thus literally purchased their salvation. Assuming that such was the nature of the atonement, he sets himself to inquire into the extent of the atonement, or for whom it was made. Finding that Christ tasted death for every man, that he died for the world, he came to the conclusion that all were elected to salvation, and that all will therefore be saved. I have never seen the work of which I speak, but such is the account I have had of it from those who know. But this is not the Bible doctrine of election, as we shall see.

2. The Bible doctrine of election is not that any are chosen to salvation, in such a sense, that they will or can be saved without repentance, faith, and sanctification.

3. Nor is it that some are chosen to salvation, in such a sense, that they will be saved irrespective of their being regenerated, and persevering in holiness to the end of life. The Bible most plainly teaches, that these are naturally indispensable conditions of salvation, and of course election cannot dispense with them.

4. Nor is it that any are chosen to salvation for, or on account of their own foreseen merits, or good works. 2Ti 1:9 : "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The foreseen fact, that by the wisest governmental arrangement God could convert and sanctify and fit them for heaven, must have been a condition in the sense of a *sine quà non*, of their election to salvation, but could not have been the fundamental reason for it, as we shall see. God did not elect them to salvation for, or on account of their foreseen good works, but upon condition of their foreseen repentance, faith and perseverance.

5. The Bible doctrine of election is not that God elected some to salvation, upon such conditions that it is really uncertain whether they will comply with those conditions, and be finally saved. The Bible does not leave the question of the final salvation of the elect as a matter of real uncertainty. This we shall see in its place. The elect were chosen to salvation, upon condition that God foresaw that he could secure their repentance, faith, and final perseverance.

III. *What the Bible doctrine of election is.*

It is, that all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end--their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end. The election of some individuals and nations to certain privileges, and to do certain things, is not the kind of election of which I treat at this time; but I am to consider the doctrine of election as it respects election unto salvation, as just explained.

IV. *I am to prove the doctrine as I have stated it to be true.*

It is plainly implied in the teaching of the Bible: the Bible everywhere assumes and implies the truth of this doctrine, just as might be expected, since it so irresistibly follows from the known and admitted attributes of God. Instead of formally revealing it as a truth unknown to, or unknowable by, the human reason, the scriptures in a great variety of ways speak of the elect, of election, &c., as a truth known by irresistible inference from his known attributes. To deny it involves a denial of the attributes of God. I have been surprised at the laboured and learned efforts to show that this doctrine is not expressly taught in the Bible. Suppose it were not, what then? Other truths are taught, and reason irresistibly affirms truths, from which the doctrine of election, as I have stated it, must follow. It is common for the inspired writers to treat truths of this class in the same manner in which this is, for the most part, treated. Suppose it were possible so to explain every passage of scripture as that no one of them should unequivocally assert the doctrine in question, this would be to no purpose; the doctrine would still be irresistibly inferrible from the attributes of God. It would still be true, that the Bible assumes the truth of the doctrine, and incidentally speaks of it, and introduces it as a truth of reason, and as following of course from the attributes of God. It is thus treated throughout the entire scriptures. The Bible as really assumes the truth of this doctrine, as it does the existence of God. It asserts it just as it does the attributes of God. The learned and laboured efforts to show that this doctrine is not expressly asserted in the Bible, are of no value, since it would follow as a certain truth from the attributes of God, and from the revealed facts that some will be saved, and that God will save them, even had the Bible been silent on the subject.

I shall therefore only introduce a few passages for the purpose of showing that the inspired writers repeatedly recognize the truth of this doctrine, and thus preserve their own consistency. But I shall not attempt by laboured criticism to prove it from scripture, for reasons just mentioned.

Mat 20:16 : "So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many be called, but few chosen."

Mat 24:22 : "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Joh 13:18 : "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen."

Joh 15:16, Joh 15:19 : "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Act 13:48 : "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Rom 8:28-29 : "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

Rom 9:10-15 : "And not only this, but when Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Rom 11:5, Rom 11:7 : "Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Eph 1:4, Eph 1:11 : "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. 11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

1Th 1:4 : "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

1Th 5:9 : "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

2Th 2:13 : "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

1Pe 1:2 : "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Rev 17:8 : "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." This doctrine is expressly asserted, or indirectly assumed and implied in every part of the Bible, and in ways and instances too numerous to be quoted in these lectures. The above are only specimens of the scripture treatment of this subject.

2. It is plainly the doctrine of reason.

(1.) It is admitted that God by his own agency secures the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of all that ever were or will be saved.

(2.) Whatever volitions or actions God puts forth to convert and save men, he puts forth designing to secure that end; that is, he does it in accordance with a previous design to do as and what he does.

(3.) He does it with the certain knowledge, that he shall succeed in accomplishing the end at which he aims.

(4.) He does it for the purpose of securing this end.

(5.) This must be an universal truth, to wit, that whatever God does for the salvation of men, he does with the design to secure the salvation of all who ever will be saved, or of all whose salvation he foresees that he can secure, and with the certain knowledge that he shall secure their salvation. He also does much for the non-elect, in the sense of using such means with them as might secure, and ought to secure, their salvation. But as he knows he shall not succeed in securing their salvation, on account of their voluntary and persevering wickedness, it cannot be truly said, that he uses these means with design to save them, but for other, and good, and wise reasons. Although he foresees, that he cannot secure their salvation, because of their wilful and persevering unbelief, yet he sees it important under his government to manifest a readiness to save them, and to use such means as he wisely can to save them, and such as will ultimately be seen to leave them wholly without excuse.

But with respect to those whom he foresees that he can and shall save, it must be true, since he is a good being, that he uses means for their salvation with the design to save them. And since, as we have seen, he is an omniscient being, he must use these means, not only with a design to save them, but also with the certainty that he shall save them. With respect to them, he uses these means for the sake of this end; that is, for the sake of their salvation. But with respect to the non-elect, he does not use means for the sake of, or expecting to accomplish, their salvation, but for other purposes, such as to leave them without excuse, &c.

(6.) But if God ever chooses to save any human beings, he must always have chosen to do so, or else he has changed. If he now has, or ever will have, any design about it, he must always have had this design; for he never has, and never can have, any new design. If he ever does, or will, elect any human being to salvation, he must always have chosen or elected him, or he has, or will, form some new purpose, which is inconsistent with his moral immutability.

(7.) If he will ever know who will be saved, he must always have known it, or he will obtain some new knowledge, which is contrary to his omniscience.

(8.) We are told by Christ, that at the day of judgment he will say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" that is, from eternity.

Now, has the judge at that time any new knowledge or design respecting those individuals? Certainly not!

(9.) Since God of necessity eternally knew all about the elect that will ever be true, he must of necessity have chosen something in respect to them; for it is naturally impossible, that he should have had no choice about, or in respect to, them and their salvation.

(10.) Since God must of necessity from eternity have had some choice in respect to their salvation, it follows, that he must have chosen that they should be saved, or that he would not use such means as he foresaw would save them. If he chose not to use those means that he foresaw would save them, but afterwards saves them, he has changed, which is contrary to his immutability. If he always chose that they should be saved, this is the very thing for which we are contending.

(11.) It must therefore be true, that all whom God will ever save were from eternity chosen to salvation by him; and since he saves them by means of sanctification, and does this designedly, it must be that this also was eternally designed or intended by him.

To deny the doctrine of election, therefore, involves a denial of the attributes of God.

(12.) It must also be true, that God foreknew all that ever will be true of the non-elect, and must have eternally had some design respecting their final destiny. And also that he has from eternity had the same, and the only design that he ever will have in respect to them. But this will come up for consideration in its place.

V. *What could not have been the reasons for election.*

1. It is admitted that God is infinitely benevolent and wise. It must follow that election is founded in some reason or reasons; and that these reasons are good and sufficient; reasons that rendered it obligatory upon God to choose just as he did, in election. Assuming, as we must, that God is wise and good, we are safe in affirming that he could have had none but benevolent reasons for his election of some to eternal life, in preference to others. Hence we are bound to affirm, that election was not based upon, nor does it imply partiality in God, in any bad sense of that term. Partiality in any being, consists in preferring one to another without any good or sufficient reason, or in opposition to good and sufficient reasons. It being admitted that God is infinitely wise and good, it follows, that he cannot be partial; that he cannot have elected some to eternal salvation and passed others by, without some good and sufficient reason. That is, he cannot have done it arbitrarily. The great objection that is felt and urged by opposers of this doctrine is, that it implies partiality in God, and represents him as deciding the eternal destiny of moral agents by an arbitrary sovereignty. But this objection is a sheer and altogether unwarrantable assumption. It assumes, that God could have had no good and sufficient reasons for the election. It has been settled, that good is the end upon which God set his heart; that is, the highest well being of himself and the universe of creatures. This end must be accomplished by means. If God is infinitely wise and good, he must have chosen the best practicable means. But he has chosen the best means for that end, and there can be no partiality in that.

In support of the assumption, that election implies partiality, and the exercise of an arbitrary sovereignty in God, it has been affirmed, that there might have been divers systems of means for securing the same end in every respect equal to each other; that is, that no reason existed for preferring any one, to many others; that therefore in choosing the present, God must have been partial, or must have exercised an arbitrary sovereignty. To this I answer:

(1.) There is no ground for the assumption, that there are or can be divers systems of means of precisely equal value in all respects, in such a sense, that there could have been no good reason for preferring one to the other.

(2.) I reply, that if there were divers such systems, choosing the one, and not any other, would not imply preference. Choice of any one in such case must have proceeded upon the following ground; to wit, the value of the end demanded, that one should be chosen. There being no difference between the various systems of means, God chooses one without reference to the other, and makes no choice respecting it, any more than if it did not exist. He must choose one, he has no reason for preference, and consequently he cannot prefer one to the other. His benevolence leads him to choose one because the end demands it. He therefore takes any one of many exact equals, indifferently, without preferring it to any of the others. This implies no partiality in God in any bad sense of the term. For upon the supposition, he was shut up to the necessity of choosing one among many exact equals. If he is partial in choosing the one he does, he would have been equally so had he chosen any other. If this is partiality, it is a partiality arising out of the necessity of the case, and cannot imply anything objectionable in God.

That there is no preference in this case is plain, because there is no ground or reason for preference whatever, according to the supposition. But there can be no choice or preference, when there is absolutely no reason for the choice or preference. We have seen on a former occasion, that the reason that determines choice, or the reason in view of which, or in obedience to which, or for the sake of which, the mind chooses, and the object or end chosen, are identical. When there is absolutely no reason for a choice, there is absolutely no object of choice, nothing to choose, and of course there will be no choice. Choice must have an object; that is, choice must terminate upon something. If choice exists, something must be chosen. If there are divers systems of means, between which there is no possible ground of preference, there can absolutely be no such thing as preferring one to the other, for this would be the same as to choose without any object of choice, or without choosing anything, which is a contradiction.

If it be said, that there may be absolutely no difference in the system of means, so far as the accomplishment of the end is concerned, but that one may be preferred or preferable to another, on some other account, I ask on what other account? According to the supposition, it is only valued or regarded as an object of choice at all, because of its relation to the end. God can absolutely choose it only as a means, a condition, or an end; for all choice must respect these. The inquiry now respects means. Now, if as a means, there is absolutely no difference between diverse systems in their relation to the end, and the value of the end is the sole reason for choosing them, it follows, that to prefer one to another is a natural impossibility. But one must be chosen for the sake of the end, it matters not which; any one is taken indifferently so far as others are concerned. This is no partiality, and no exercise of arbitrary sovereignty in any objectionable sense.

But as I said, there is no ground for the assumption, that there are various systems of means for accomplishing the great end of benevolence in all respects equal. There must have been a best way, a best system, and if God is infinitely wise and good, he must have chosen that for that reason; and this is as far as possible from partiality. Neither we, nor any other creature may be able now to discover any good reasons for preferring the present to any other system, or for electing those who are elected, in preference to any other. Nevertheless, such reasons must have been apparent to the Divine mind, or no such election could have taken place.

2. Election was not an exercise of arbitrary sovereignty. By arbitrary sovereignty is intended the choosing and acting from mere will, without consulting moral obligation or the public good. It is admitted that God is infinitely wise and good. It is therefore impossible that he should choose or act arbitrarily in any case whatever. He must have good and sufficient reasons for every choice and every act.

Some seem to have represented God, in the purpose or act of election, as electing some and not others, merely because he could or would, or in other words, to exhibit his own sovereignty, without any other reason than because so he would have it.

But it is impossible for God to act arbitrarily, or from any but a good and sufficient reason; that is, it is impossible for him to do so, and continue to be benevolent. We have said that God has one, and but one end in view; that is, he does, and says, and suffers all for one and the same reason, namely, to promote the highest good of being. He has but one ultimate end, and all his volitions are only efforts to secure that end. The highest well being of the universe, including his own, is the end on which his supreme and ultimate choice terminates. All his volitions are designed to secure this end, and in all things he is and must be directed by his infinite intelligence, in respect not only to his ultimate end, but also in the choice and use of the means of accomplishing this end. It is impossible that this should not be true, if he is good. In election then he cannot possibly have exercised any arbitrary sovereignty, but must have had the best of reasons for the election. His intelligence must have had good reasons for the choice of some and not of others to salvation, and have affirmed his obligation in view of those reasons to elect just as and whom he did. So good must the reasons have been, that to have done otherwise, would have been sin in him; that is, to have done otherwise would not have been wise and good.

3. Election was not based on a foreseen difference in the moral character of the elect and the non-elect, previous to regeneration. The Bible everywhere affirms, that, previous to regeneration, all men have precisely the same character, and possess one common heart or disposition, that this character is that of total moral depravity. God did not choose some to salvation because he foresaw that they would be less depraved and guilty previous to regeneration, than the non-elect. Paul was one of the elect, yet he affirms himself to have been the chief of sinners. We often see, and this has been common in every age, the most outwardly abandoned and profligate converted and saved.

The reason of election is not found in the fact, that God foresaw that some would be more readily converted than others. We often see those who are converted hold out for a long time in great obstinacy and rebellion, while God brings to bear upon them a great variety of means and influences, and takes much more apparent pains to convert them than he does to convert many others who are, as well as those who are not, converted. There is reason to believe, that if the same means were used with those who are not converted that are used with those who are, many who are not converted would be. It may not be wise in God to use the same means for the non-elect that he does for the elect, and if he should, they might, or might not be saved by them. God often uses means that to us seem more powerful to convert the non-elect than are used to convert many of the elect. This is fully implied in Matt. xi. 20-24. The fact is, he must have some reason aside from their characters for stubbornness or otherwise, for electing them to salvation.

VI. *What must have been the reasons for election.*

1. We have seen that God is infinitely wise and good. It follows that he must have had some reason, for to choose without a reason is impossible, as in that case there would be, as we have just seen, no object of choice.

2. From the wisdom and goodness of God, it follows, that he must have chosen some good end, and must have had some plan, or system of means, to secure it. The end we know, is the good of being. The means we know, from reason and revelation, include election in the sense explained. It follows, that the fundamental reason for election was the highest good of the universe. That is, the best system of means for securing the great end of benevolence, included the election of just those who were elected, and no others. This has been done by the wisdom and benevolence of God. It follows, that the highest good demanded it. All choice must respect ends, or conditions and means. God has, and can have, but one ultimate end. All other choices or volitions must respect means. The choice or election of certain persons to eternal salvation, &c., must have been founded in the reason, that the great end of benevolence demanded it.

3. It is very easy to see, that under a moral government, it might be impossible so to administer law, as to secure the perpetual and universal obedience of all.

It is also easy to see, that under a remedial system, or system of grace, it might be impossible to secure the repentance and salvation of all. God must have foreseen all possible and actual results. He must have foreseen how many, and whom, he could save by the wisest and best possible arrangement, all things considered. The perfect wisdom and benevolence of God being granted, it follows, that we are bound to regard the present system of means as the best, all things considered, that he could adopt for the promotion of the great end of his government, or the great end of benevolence. The fact, that the wisest and best system of government would secure the salvation of those who are elected, must have been a *condition* of their being elected. As God does everything for the same ultimate reason, it follows, that the intrinsic value of their salvation was his ultimate end, and that their salvation in particular must have been of greater relative value in promoting the highest good of the universe at large, and the glory of God, than would have been that of others; so that the intrinsic value of the salvation of those elected in particular, the fact that by the wisest arrangement he could save them in particular, and the paramount good to be promoted by it, must have been the reasons for election.

VII. *When the election was made.*

1. Not when the elect are converted. It is admitted, that God is omniscient, and has known all things from eternity as really and as perfectly as he ever will. It is also admitted, God is unchangeable, and consequently has no new plans, designs, or choices. He must have had all the reasons he ever will have for election, from eternity, because he always has had all the knowledge of all events that he ever will have; consequently he always or from eternity chose in respect to all events just as he always will. There never can be any reason for change in the divine mind, for he never will have any new views of any subject. The choice which constitutes election, then, must be an eternal choice.

2. Thus the scriptures represent it.

Eph 1:4. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Eph 2:10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

2Ti 1:9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Rev 17:8. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

This language means from eternity, beyond question.

3. But the question will arise, was election in the order of nature subsequent to, or did it precede the Divine foreknowledge? The answer to this plainly is, that in the order of nature what could be wisely done must have been foreseen before it was determined what should be done. And what should be done must, in the order of nature, have preceded the knowledge of what would be done. So that in the order of nature, foreknowledge of what could be wisely done preceded election, and foreknowledge of what would be done, followed or was subsequent to election.* In other words, God must have known whom he could wisely save, prior, in the order of nature, to his determination to save them. But his knowing who would be saved must have been, in the order of nature, subsequent to his election or determination to save them, and dependent upon that determination.

*I say, in the order of nature. With God all duration or time is present. In the order of time, therefore, all the divine ideas and purposes are contemporaneous. But the divine ideas must sustain to each other a logical relation. In the above paragraph I have stated what must have been the logical order of the Divine ideas in regard to election. By the order of nature, is intended that connection and relation of ideas that must result from the nature of intellect.

VIII. *Election does not render means for the salvation of the elect unnecessary.*

We have seen that the elect are chosen to salvation through the use of means. Since they are chosen to be saved by means, they cannot be saved in any other way or without them.

IX. *Election is the only ground of hope in the success of means.*

1. No means are of any avail unless God gives them efficiency.

2. If God gives them efficiency in any case, it is, and will be, in accordance with, and in execution of, his election.

3. It follows that election is the only ground of rational hope in the use of means to effect the salvation of any.

X. *Election does not pose any obstacle to the salvation of the non-elect.*

1. God has taken care to bring salvation within the reach of all, and to make it possible to all.

2. He sincerely offers to save all, and does all to save all that he wisely can.

3. His saving some is no discouragement to others, but should rather encourage them to lay hold on eternal life.

4. The election of some is no bar to the salvation of others.

5. Those who are not elected may be saved, if they will but comply with the conditions, which they are able to do.

6. God sincerely calls, and ministers may sincerely call on the non-elect to lay hold on salvation.

7. There is no injury or injustice done to the non-elect by the election of others. Has not God "a right to do what he will with his own?" If he offers salvation to all upon terms the most reasonable, and if he does all he wisely can for the salvation of all, shall some complain if God in doing for all what he wisely can, secures the salvation of some and not of others?

XI. *There is no injustice in election.*

God was under obligation to no one--he might in perfect justice have sent all mankind to hell. The doctrine of election will damn no one: by treating the non-elect according to their deserts, he does them no injustice; and surely his exercising grace in, the salvation of the elect, is no act of injustice to the non-elect; and especially will this appear to be true, if we take into consideration the fact, that the only reason why the non-elect will not be saved is, because they pertinaciously refuse salvation. He offers mercy to all. The atonement is sufficient for all. All may come, and are under an obligation to be saved. He strongly desires their salvation, and does all that he wisely can to save them. Why then should the doctrine of election be thought unjust?*

*To this paragraph it has been objected as follows:--"Can it be said, that the only reason why the non-elect are not saved is their rejection of salvation, &c.? Is there not a reason back of this? God does not give that gracious influence in their case, which he does in the case of the elect. If the only reason why the non-elect are not saved is their pertinacious refusal, then it would follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is their acceptance of salvation. If these two points are so, then why all this discussion about election to salvation, and the means to that end, and God's reason for electing? The whole matter would resolve itself into free will, and God would stand quite independent of the issue in every case. Then would there be no such thing as election."

The objection contains a *non sequitur*.

I say, the only reason why the non-elect are not saved, is because they pertinaciously refuse salvation. But if this is true, he says, "it will follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is their acceptance of salvation." But this does not follow. The non-elect fail of salvation only because they resist all the grace that God can wisely bestow upon them. This grace they resist, and fail of salvation. It is no more reasonable to say, that God's not giving them more divine influence to convert them "is a reason back of this," than it would be to say that his not having by a gracious influence, restrained them from sin altogether, is "a reason back of" their pertinacious resistance of grace. If the non-elect are lost, or fail of salvation only because they resist all the grace that God can wisely bestow, it would not follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is because they accept, or yield to the same measure of gracious influence as that bestowed upon the non-elect, for it may be, and in many cases the fact is, that God does bestow more gracious influence on the elect, than on the non-elect, because he can wisely do so. Here then is a plain *non sequitur*. Observe, I am writing in the paragraph in question upon the justice of the divine proceeding. I say, that so far as this is concerned, he fails of salvation, not because God withholds the grace that he could wisely bestow, but only because he rejects the grace proffered, and all that can be wisely proffered.

If I understand this objector, there is another *non sequitur* in his objection. I understand him to say, that upon the supposition that the elect and the non-elect have the same measure of gracious influence, and that the reason why the elect are saved, and the non-elect not saved is, that the elect yield to, and the non-elect resist this influence: the whole question resolves into free will, and there is no election about it. If this is his meaning, as I think it must be, it is a plain *non sequitur*. Suppose God foresaw that this would be so, and in view of this foreseen fact elected those who he foresaw would yield both to the privileges and gracious influence to which he foresaw they would yield, and to salvation as a consequence of this influence and yielding. And suppose he foresaw that the non-elect, although ordained or elected to enjoy the same measure of gracious influence, would resist and reject salvation, and for this cause rejected or reprobated them in his eternal purpose. Would not this be election? To be sure, in this case the different results would turn upon the fact that the elect yielded, and the non-elect did not yield, to the same measure of gracious influence. But there would be an election of the one to eternal life, and a rejection of the other. I cannot see how this objector can say, that in this case there could be no election, unless in his idea of election there is the exercise of an *arbitrary* sovereignty. I suppose that God bestows on men unequal measures of gracious influence, but that in this there is nothing arbitrary; that, on the contrary, he sees the wisest and best reasons for this; that being in justice under obligation to *none*, he exercises his own benevolent discretion, in bestowing on all as much gracious influence as he sees to be upon the whole wise and good, and enough to throw the entire responsibility of their damnation upon them if they are lost. But upon some he foresaw that he could wisely bestow a sufficient measure of gracious influence to secure their voluntary yielding, and upon others he could not bestow enough in fact to secure this result. In accordance with this foreknowledge, he chose the elect to both the gracious influence and its results, eternal life. In all this there was nothing arbitrary or unjust. He does all for all that he wisely can. He does enough for all to leave them without excuse. If the non-elect would yield to that measure of gracious influence which he can and does bestow upon them, which is the best he can do without acting unwisely, and of course wickedly, they would be saved. To this they might yield. To this they ought to yield. God has no right to do more than he does for them, all things considered; and there is no reason of which they can justly complain why they are not saved. They can with no more reason complain of his not giving them more gracious influence than that he created them, or that he made them free agents, or that he did not restrain them from sin altogether, or do anything else which it had been unwise, and therefore wrong to have done. Nor is the fact that God does not bestow on them sufficient grace to secure their yielding and salvation, a "reason back of their obstinacy to which their not being saved is to be ascribed," any more than any one of the above-named things is such a reason.

This objection proceeds upon the assumption, that election must be unconditional to be election at all. That election must be so defined, as to be the *cause* of the difference in the eternal state of the elect and non-elect. But I see not why election may not be conditionated upon the foreseen fact, that the wisest possible administration of moral government would secure the free concurrence of some, and not of others. What could be wisely done being foreseen, the purpose that so it should be done would be election. No man has a right to define the terms election and reprobation in such a sense, as to exclude all conditions, and then insist that conditional election is no election at all.

XII. *This is the best that could be done for the inhabitants of this world.*

It is reasonable to infer from the infinite benevolence of God, that his present government will secure a greater amount of good than could have been secured under any other mode of administration. This is as certain as that infinite benevolence must prefer a greater to a less good. To suppose that God would prefer a mode of administration that would secure a less good than could have been secured under some other mode, would manifestly be to accuse him of a want of benevolence. It is doubtless true that he could so vary the course of events as to save other individuals than those he does; to convert more in one particular neighbourhood, or family, or nation, or at one particular time; or it may be a greater number upon the whole than he does. It would not follow that he does not secure the greater good upon the whole.

Suppose there is a man in this town, who has so strongly intrenched himself in error, that there is but one man in all the land who is so acquainted with his refuge of lies as to be able to answer has objections, and drive him from his hiding-places. Now, it is possible, that if this individual could be brought in contact with him, he might be converted; yet if he is employed in some distant part of the vineyard, his removal from that field of labour to this town, might not, upon the whole, be most for the glory of God's kingdom; and more might fail of salvation through his removal here, than would be converted by such removal. God has in view the good of his whole kingdom. He works upon a vast and comprehensive scale. He has no partialities for individuals, but moves forward in the administration of his government with his eye upon the general good, designing to secure the greatest amount of happiness within his kingdom, that can be secured by the wisest possible arrangement, and administration of his government.

XIII. *How we may ascertain our own election.*

Those of the elect that are already converted, are known by their character and conduct. They have evidence of their election in their obedience to God. Those that are unconverted may settle the question each one for himself, whether he is elected or not, so as to have the most satisfactory evidence whether he is of that happy number. If you will now submit yourselves to God, you may have evidence that you are elected. But every hour you put off submission, increases the evidence, that you are not elected.

Every sinner under the gospel has it within his power to accept or reject salvation. The elect can know their election only by accepting the offered gift. The non-elect can know their non-election only by the consciousness of a voluntary rejection of offered life. If any one fears that he is one of the non-elect, let him at once renounce his unbelief, and cease to reject salvation, and the ground of fear and complaint instantly falls away.

I quote some remarks from a former discourse upon this subject.

INFERENCES AND REMARKS.

1. Foreknowledge and election are not inconsistent with free agency. The elect were chosen to eternal life, upon condition that God foresaw that in the perfect exercise of their freedom, they could be induced to repent and embrace the gospel.*

*An objector has said, "You say that the elect were chosen upon condition that God foresaw," &c.; this is certainly inconsistent with your previous statement, that election includes all the means to secure its end; that is, it is independent of any conditions foreseen, because it includes efficient grace to gain its end.

What does this objection mean? What if election does include efficient grace to gain its end, does it follow that the elect would have been chosen, if it had been foreseen that these means would not have secured the consent of their free will? Why, these means could not have been efficient but upon condition of their consent. I say, in the above paragraph, that the elect were chosen upon condition that God foresaw that, by certain means, he could secure the consent of their free will. The objector says, that this was electing them without reference to their consent, or that their foreseen consent was no condition of their election, because the means, as well as the result, were included in election. But I can see no possible force or pertinency in this objection: it is a plain *non sequitur*.

2. You see why many persons are opposed to the doctrine of election, and try to explain it away; 1st., they misunderstand it, and 2nd. they deduce unwarrantable inferences from it. They suppose it to mean, that the elect will be saved at all events, whatever their conduct may be; and again, they infer from the doctrine that there is no possibility of the salvation of the non-elect. The doctrine, as they understand it, would be an encouragement to the elect to persevere in sin, knowing that their salvation was sure, and their inference would drive the non-elect to desperation, on the ground that for them to make efforts to be saved would be of no avail. But both the doctrine, as they understand it, and the inference, are false. For election does not secure the salvation of the elect irrespective of their character and conduct; nor, as we have seen, does it throw any obstacle in the way of the salvation of the non-elect.

3. This view of the subject affords no ground for presumption on the one hand, nor for despair upon the other. No one can justly say, if I am to be saved I shall be saved, do what I will. Nor can any one say, if I am to be damned I shall be damned, do what I will. But the question is left, so far as they are concerned, as a matter of entire contingency. Sinners, your salvation or damnation is as absolutely suspended upon your own choice, as if God neither knew nor designed anything about it.

4. This doctrine lays no foundation for a controversy with God. But on the other hand, it does lay a broad foundation for gratitude, both on the part of the elect and non-elect. The elect certainly have great reason for thankfulness, that they are thus distinguished. Oh, what a thought, to have your name written in the book of life, to be chosen of God an heir of eternal salvation, to be adopted into his family, to be destined to enjoy his presence, and to bathe your soul in the boundless ocean of his love for ever and ever. Nor are the non-elect without obligations of thankfulness. You ought to be grateful, if any of your brethren of the human family are saved. If all were lost, God would be just. And if any of this dying world receive the gift of eternal life, you ought to be grateful, and render everlasting thanks to God.

5. The non-elect often enjoy as great or greater privileges than the elect. Many men have lived and died under the sound of the gospel, have enjoyed all the means of salvation during a long life, and have at last died in their sins, while others have been converted upon their first hearing the gospel of God. Nor is this difference owing to the fact, that the elect always have more of the strivings of the Spirit than the non-elect. Many who die in their sins, appear to have had conviction for a great part of their lives; have often been deeply impressed with a strong sense of their sins and the value of their souls, but have strongly intrenched themselves under refuges of lies, have loved the world and hated God, and fought their way through all the obstacles that were thrown around them to hedge up their way to death, and have literally forced their passage to the gates of hell. Sin was their voluntary choice.

6. Why should the doctrine of election be made a stumbling-block in the way of sinners? In nothing else do they make the same use of the purposes and designs of God, as they do on the subject of religion; and yet in everything else, God's purposes and designs are as much settled, and have as absolute an influence. God has as certainly designed the day and circumstances of your death, as whether your soul shall be saved. It is not only expressly declared in the Bible, but is plainly the doctrine of reason. What would you say if you should be called in to see a neighbour who was sick; and, on inquiry, you should find he would neither eat nor drink, and that he was verily starving himself to death. On expostulating with him upon his conduct, suppose he should calmly reply, that he believed in the sovereignty of God, in foreknowledge, election, and decrees; that his days were numbered, that the time and circumstances of his death were settled, that he could not die before his time, and that all efforts he could make would not enable him to live a moment beyond his time. If you attempted to remonstrate against his inference, and such an abuse and perversion of the doctrine of degrees, he should accuse you of being a heretic, of not believing in divine sovereignty. Now, should you see a man on worldly subjects reasoning and acting thus, you would pronounce him insane. Should farmers, mechanics, and merchants, reason in this way in regard to their worldly business, they would be considered fit subjects for bedlam.

7. How forcibly the perversion and abuse of this doctrine illustrates the madness of the human heart, and its utter opposition to the terms of salvation. The fact that God foreknows, and has designs in regard to every other event, is not made an excuse for remaining idle, or worse than idle, on these subjects. But where men's duty to God is concerned, and here alone, they seize these scriptures, and wrest them to their own destruction. How impressively does this fact bring out the demonstration, that sinners want an excuse for disobeying God; that they desire an apology for living in sin; that they seek an occasion for making war upon their Maker.

8. I have said, that the question is as much open for your decision, that you are left as perfectly to the exercise of your freedom, as if God neither knew nor designed anything in regard to your salvation. Suppose there was a great famine in New York city, and that John Jacob Astor alone had provisions in great abundance; that he was a benevolent and liberal-minded man, and willing to supply the whole city with provisions, free of expense; and suppose there existed a universal and most unreasonable prejudice against him, insomuch that when he advertised in the daily papers that his store-houses were open, that whosoever would, might come and receive provisions, without money and without price, they all, with one accord, began to make excuse, and obstinately refused to accept the offers. Now, suppose that he should employ all the cartmen to carry provisions around the city, and stop at every door. But still they strengthened each other's hands, and would rather die than be indebted to him for food. Many had said so much against him, that they were utterly ashamed to feel and acknowledge their dependence upon him. Others were so much under their influence as to be unwilling to offend them; and so strong was the tide of public sentiment, that no one had the moral courage to break loose from the multitude and accept of life. Now, suppose that Mr. Astor knew beforehand the state of the public mind, and that all the citizens hated him, and had rather die than be indebted to him for food. Suppose he also knew, from the beginning, that there were certain arguments that he could bring to bear upon certain individuals, that would change their minds, and that he should proceed to press them with these considerations, until they had given up their opposition, had most thankfully accepted his provisions, and were saved from death. Suppose he used all the arguments and means that he wisely could to persuade the rest, but that, notwithstanding all his benevolent efforts, they adhered to the resolution, and preferred death to submission to his proposals. Suppose, further, he had perfect knowledge from the beginning, of the issue of this whole matter, would not the question of life and death be as entirely open for the decision of every individual as if he knew nothing about it?

9. Some may ask, Why does God use means with the non-elect, which he is certain they will not accept? I answer, because he designs that they shall be without excuse. He will demonstrate his willingness and their obstinacy, before the universe. He will stop their mouths effectually in judgment by a full offer of salvation; and although he knows that their rejection of the offer will only enhance their guilt, and aggravate their deep damnation, still he will make the offer, as there is no other way in which to illustrate his infinite willingness to save them, and their perverse, rejection of his grace.

10. Lastly, God requires you to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. In choosing his elect, you must understand that he has thrown the responsibility of their being saved upon them; that the whole is suspended upon their consent to the terms; you are all perfectly able to give your consent, and this moment to lay hold on eternal life. Irrespective of your own choice, no election could save you, and no reprobation can damn you. The "Spirit and the Bride say, Come: let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The responsibility is yours. God does all that he wisely can, and challenges you to show what more he could do that he has not done. If you go to hell, you must go stained with your own blood. God is clear, angels are clear. To your own Master you stand or fall; mercy waits; the Spirit strives; Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Do not then pervert this doctrine, and make it an occasion of stumbling, till you are in the depths of hell.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXV.

REPROBATION.

In discussing this subject I shall endeavour to show,

I. WHAT THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF REPROBATION IS NOT.

II. WHAT IT IS.

III. THAT IT IS A DOCTRINE OF REASON.

IV. THAT IT IS THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION.

V. SHOW THE GROUND OR REASON OF THE DOCTRINE.

VI. WHEN MEN ARE REPROBATED.

VII. REPROBATION IS JUST.

VIII. REPROBATION IS BENEVOLENT.

IX. REPROBATION IS THE BEST THING THAT CAN BE DONE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

X. HOW IT MAY BE KNOWN WHO ARE REPROBATES.

XI. ANSWER OBJECTIONS.

I. *What the true doctrine of reprobation is not.*

1. It is not that the ultimate end of God in the creation of any was their damnation. Neither reason nor revelation confirms, but both contradict the assumption, that God has created or can create any being for the purpose of rendering him miserable as an ultimate end. God is love, or he is benevolent, and cannot therefore will the misery of any being as an ultimate end, or for its own sake. It is little less than blasphemy to represent God as creating any being for the sake of rendering him miserable, as an ultimate end of his creation.

2. The doctrine is not that any will be lost or miserable to all eternity, do what they can to be saved, or in spite of themselves. It is not only a libel upon the character of God, but a gross misrepresentation of the true doctrine of reprobation, to exhibit God as deciding to send sinners to hell in spite of themselves, or notwithstanding their endeavours to please God and obtain salvation.

3. Nor is this the true doctrine of reprobation, to wit: that the purpose or decree of reprobation is the procuring cause of the destruction of reprobates. God may design to destroy a soul because of its foreseen wickedness; but his design to destroy him for this reason does not cause his wickedness, and consequently does not prove his destruction.

4. The doctrine is not, that any decree or purpose of reprobation throws any obstacle in the way of the salvation of any one. It is not that God has purposed the damnation of any one in such sense as that the decree opposes any obstacle to the salvation of any soul under heaven.

5. Nor is it that any one is sent to hell, except for his own voluntary wickedness and ill-desert.

6. Nor is it that any one will be lost who can be induced, by all the means that can be wisely used, to accept salvation, or to repent and believe the gospel.

7. Nor is it, nor does it imply, that all the reprobates might not be saved, if they would but comply with the indispensable conditions of salvation.

8. Nor does it imply, that the decree of reprobation presents or opposes any obstacle to their compliance with the necessary conditions of salvation.

9. Nor does it imply, that anything hinders or prevents the salvation of the reprobate, but their perverse perseverance in sin and rebellion against God, and their wilfull resistance of all the means that can be wisely used for their salvation.

II. *What the true doctrine of reprobation is.*

The term reprobation, both in the Old and New Testament, signifies refuse, cast away. Jer 6:30 : "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." The doctrine is, that certain individuals of mankind are, in the fixed purpose of God, cast away, rejected and finally lost.

III. *This is a doctrine of reason.*

By this is intended, that since the Bible reveals the fact, that some will be finally cast away and lost, reason affirms that if God casts them off, it must be in accordance with a fixed purpose on his part to do so, for their foreseen wickedness. If, as a matter of fact, they will be cast away and lost, it must be that God both knows and designs it. That is, he both knows that they will be cast away, and designs to cast them off for their foreseen wickedness. God can certainly never possess any new knowledge respecting their character and deserts, and since he is unchangeable, he can never have any new purpose respecting them.

Again, it follows from the doctrine of election. If God designs to save the elect, and the elect only, as has been shown, not for the reason, but upon condition of their foreseen repentance and faith in Christ, it must be that he designs, or purposes to cast away the wicked, for their foreseen wickedness. He purposes to do something with those whom he foresees will finally be impenitent. He certainly does not purpose to save them. What he will ever do with them he now knows that he shall do with them. What he will intend to do with them he now intends to do with them, or he were not unchangeable. But we have seen that immutability or unchangeableness is an attribute of God. Therefore the present reprobation of those who will be finally cast away or lost, is a doctrine of reason.

The doctrine of reprobation is not the election of a part of mankind to damnation, in the same sense that the elect unto salvation are elected to be saved. The latter are chosen or elected, not only to salvation, but to holiness. Election with those who are saved, extends not only to the end, salvation, but also to the condition or means; to wit, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth. This has been shown. God has not only chosen them to salvation, but to be conformed to the image of his Son. Accordingly, he uses means with them, with the design to sanctify and save them. But he has not elected the reprobate to wickedness, and does not use means to make them wicked, with the ultimate design to destroy them. He knows, indeed, that his creating them, together with his providential dispensations, will be the occasion, not the cause, of their sin and consequent destruction. But their sin and consequent destruction are not the ultimate end God had in view in their creation, and in the train of providences that thus result. His ultimate end must in all cases be benevolent, or must be the promotion of good. Their sin and damnation are only an incidental result, and not a thing intended as an end, or for its own sake. God can have no pleasure, in either their sin or consequent misery for its own sake; but on the contrary, he must regard both as in themselves evils of enormous magnitude. He does not, and cannot therefore elect the reprobate to sin and damnation, in the same sense in which he elects the saints to holiness and salvation. The elect unto salvation he chooses to this end, from regard to, or delight in the end. But the reprobate he chooses to destroy, not for the sake of their destruction as an end, or from delight in it for its own sake; but he has determined to destroy them for the public good, since their foreseen sinfulness demanded it. He does not use means to make them sinful, or with this design; but his providence is directed to another end, which end is good; and the destruction of the reprobate is, as has been said, only an incidental and an unavoidable result. That is, God cannot wisely prevent this result.

IV. *This is the doctrine of revelation.*

That this view of the subject is sustained by divine revelation, will appear from a consideration of the following passages:--

Exo 9:16 : "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

Pro 16:5 : "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."

Mar 4:11-12 : "And he said unto them, unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

Rom 9:17, Rom 9:22-24 : "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 22. What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. 24. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

2Co 13:5-6 : "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates."

2Pe 2:12 : "But these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption."

Eze 18:23, Eze 18:32 : "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye?"

Eze 33:11 : "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

2Pe 3:9 : "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

These passages when duly considered are seen to teach:

1. That some men are reprobates, in the sense that God does not design to save, but to destroy them and:--

2. That he does not delight in their destruction for its own sake; but would prefer their salvation, if under the circumstances in which his wisdom has placed them, they could be induced to obey him.

3. But that he regards their destruction as a less evil to the universe, than would be such a change in the administration and arrangements of his government as would secure their salvation. Therefore, for their foreseen wickedness and perseverance in rebellion, under circumstances the most favourable to their virtue and salvation, in which he can wisely place them, he is resolved upon their destruction; and has already in purpose cast them off for ever.

V. *Why sinners are reprobated or rejected.*

This has been already substantially answered. But to avoid misapprehension upon a subject so open to cavil, I repeat:

1. That the reprobation and destruction of the sinner is not an end, in the sense that God delights in misery, and destroys sinners to gratify a thirst for destruction. Since God is benevolent, it is impossible that this should be.

2. It is not because of any partiality in God, or because he loves the elect, and hates the reprobate, in any sense implying partiality. His benevolence is disinterested, and cannot of course be partial.

3. It is not from any want of interest in, and desire to save them, on the part of God. This he often affirms, and abundantly attests by his dealings with them, and the provision he has made for their salvation.

4. But the reprobates are reprobated for their foreseen iniquities:--

Rom 1:28 : "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

Rom 2:6-11 : "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath; Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."

Eze 18:4, Eze 18:19-20 : "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

2Co 5:10 : "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Gal 6:7 : "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Eph 6:8 : "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

Col 3:24 : "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Rev 22:12 : "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Jer 6:30 : "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

These passages show the teachings of inspiration on this subject. Be it remembered, then, that the reason why any are reprobated, is because they are unwilling to be saved; that is, they are unwilling to be saved on the terms upon which alone God can consistently save them. Ask sinners whether they are willing to be saved, and they all say, yes; and with perfect sincerity they may say this, if they can be saved upon their own terms. But when you propose to them the terms of salvation upon which the gospel proposes to save them; when they are required to repent and believe the gospel, to forsake their sins, and give themselves up to the service of God, they will with one consent begin to make excuse. Now, to accept these terms, is heartily and practically to consent to them. For them to say, that they are willing to accept salvation, while they actually do not accept it, is either to deceive themselves, or to utter an infamous falsehood. To be willing is to accept it; and the fact, that they do not heartily consent to, and embrace the terms of salvation, is demonstration absolute, that they are unwilling. Yes, sinners, the only terms on which you can possibly be saved, you reject. Is it not then an insult to God for you to pretend that you are willing? The only true reason why all of you are not Christians, is that you are unwilling. You are not made unwilling by any act of God, or because you are a reprobate; but if you are a reprobate, it is because you are unwilling.

But do any of you object and say, why does not God make us willing? Is it not because he has reprobated us, that he does not change our hearts and make us willing? No, sinner, it is not because he has reprobated you; but because you are so obstinate that he cannot, wisely, and in consistency with the public good, take such measures as will convert you. Here you are waiting for God to make you willing to go to heaven, and all the while you are diligently using the means to get to hell; yes, exerting yourself with greater diligence to get to hell, than it would cost to insure your salvation, if applied with equal zeal in the service of your God. You tempt God, and then turn round and ask him why he does not make you willing? Now, sinner, let me ask you, do you think you are a reprobate? If so, what do you think the reason is that has led the infinitely benevolent God to reprobate you? There must be some reason; what do you suppose it is? Did you ever seriously ask yourself, what is the reason that a wise and infinitely benevolent God has never made me willing to accept salvation? It must be for one of the following reasons: either--

(1.) He is a malevolent being, and wills your damnation for its own sake; or--

(2.) He cannot make you willing if he would; or--

(3.) You behave in such a manner in the circumstances in which you are, that, to his infinitely benevolent mind it appears unwise to take such a course as would bring you to repentance. Such a change in the administration of his government as would make you willing, would not, upon the whole, be wise.

Now, which of these do you think it is? You will not probably take the ground that he is malevolent, and desires your damnation because he delights in misery; nor will you, I suppose, take the ground that he could not convert you if he would, that is, if he thought it wise to do so.

The other, then, must be the reason, to wit: that your heart, and conduct, and stubbornness, are so abominable in his sight, that, every thing considered, he sees that to use such further means with you as to secure your conversion, would, on the whole, do more hurt than good to his kingdom. I have not time at present to agitate the question whether you, as a moral agent, could not resist any possible amount of moral influence that could be brought to bear upon you, consistently with your moral freedom.

Do you ask how I know that the reason why God does not make you willing is, that he sees that it would be unwise in him to do so? I answer, that it is an irresistible inference, from these two facts, that he is infinitely benevolent, and that he does not actually make you willing. I do not believe that God would neglect anything that he saw to be wise and benevolent, in the great matter of man's salvation. Who can believe that he could give his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for sinners, and then neglect any wise and benevolent means for their salvation? No, sinner, if you are a reprobate, it is because God foresaw that you would do just as you are doing; that you would be so wicked as to defeat all the efforts that he could wisely, make for your salvation. What a variety of means he has used with you. At one time he has thrown you into the furnace of affliction; and when this has not softened you, he has turned round and loaded you with favours. He has sent you his word, he has striven by his Spirit, he has allured you by the cross; he has tried to melt you by the groanings of Calvary; and tried to drive you back from the way to death, by rolling in your ears the thunders of damnation. At one time clouds and darkness have been round about you; the heavens have thundered over your head; divine vengeance has hung out, all around your horizon, the portentous clouds of coming wrath. At another time mercy has smiled upon you from above like the noon-day sun, breaking through an ocean of storms. He urges every motive; he lays heaven, earth and hell, under perpetual contributions for considerations to move your stony heart. But you deafen your ears, and close your eyes, and harden your heart, and say, "Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us." And what is the inference from all this? How must all this end? "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord has rejected them."

VI. *When sinners are reprobated.*

1. In respect to the act of casting them off, they are cast away only when, and not until, the cup of their iniquity is full.

2. In respect to the purpose of reprobation, they are in the purpose of God reprobated or rejected from eternity. This follows irresistibly from the omniscience and immutability of God. He has certainly and necessarily had from eternity all the knowledge he ever can or will have of the character of all men, and must have designed from all eternity all things respecting them which he ever will design. This follows from his unchangeableness. If he ever does cast off sinners, he must do it designedly or undesignedly. He cannot do it without any design. He must therefore do it designedly. But if he does it designedly, it must be either that he eternally entertained this design, or that he has changed. But change of purpose or design is inconsistent with the moral immutability of God. Therefore the purpose of reprobation is eternal; or the reprobates were in the fixed purpose of God cast off and rejected from eternity.

VII. *Reprobation is just.*

Is it not just in God to let men have their own choice, especially when the highest possible motives are held out to them as inducements to choose eternal life. What! is it not just to reprobate men when they obstinately refuse salvation--when every thing has been done that is consistent with infinite wisdom and benevolence to save them? Shall not men be willing to be either saved or lost? What shall God do with you? You are unwilling to be saved; why then should you object to being damned? If reprobation under these circumstances is not just, I challenge you, sinner, to tell what is just.

VIII. *Reprobation is benevolent.*

It was benevolent in God to create men, though he foresaw that they would sin and become reprobate. If he foresaw that, upon the whole, he could secure such an amount of virtue and happiness by means of moral government, as to more than counterbalance the sin and misery of those who would be lost, then certainly it was a dictate of benevolence to create them. The question was, whether moral beings should be created, and moral government established, when it was foreseen that a great evil would be the incidental consequence. Whether this would be benevolent or not, must turn upon the question, whether a good might be secured that would more than counterbalance the evil. If the virtue and happiness that could be secured by the administration of moral government, would greatly out-measure the incidental evils arising out of a defection of a part of the subjects of this government, it is manifest that a truly benevolent mind would choose to establish the government, the attendant evils to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, if those who are lost deserve their misery, and bring it upon themselves by their own choice, when they might have been saved, then certainly in their damnation there can be nothing inconsistent with justice or benevolence. God must have a moral government, or there can be no such thing as holiness in the created universe. For holiness in a creature is nothing else than a voluntary conformity to the government of God.

Doubtless God views the loss of the soul as a great evil, and he always will look upon it as such, and would gladly avoid the loss of any soul, if it were consistent with the wisest administration of his government. How slanderous, injurious, and offensive to God it must be, then, to say, that he created sinners on purpose to damn them. He pours forth all the tender yearnings of a father over those whom he is obliged to destroy--"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And now, sinner, can you find it in your heart to accuse the blessed God of a want of benevolence? "O ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! how can you escape the damnation of hell?"

IX. *Reprobation is the best thing that can be done, all things considered.*

Since the penalty of the law, although infinite, under the wisest possible administration of moral government, could not secure universal obedience; and since multitudes of sinners will not be reclaimed and saved by the gospel, one of three things must be done; either moral government must be given up; or the wicked must be annihilated, or they must be reprobated and sent to hell. Now, that moral government should be given up, will not be pretended; annihilation would not be just, inasmuch as it would not be an adequate expression of the abhorrence with which the divine ruler regards the violation of his law, and consequently it would not meet the demands of public justice. Now, as sinners really deserve eternal death, and as their punishment may be of real value to the universe, in creating a respect for the authority of God, and thus strengthening his government, it is plain that their reprobation and damnation is for the general good, making the best use of the wicked that can be made.

There is a difference between evidence and proof. To prove is to establish. We prove by evidence. Every design of evidence is not proof. There is *prima facie* evidence, probable evidence, and every degree of evidence, from possible to demonstration, or intuition. There may be much evidence that a thing is true, when in fact it is not true. There may be much evidence, or many reasons to fear, or to believe that one is a reprobate, when in fact he is not.

X. *How it may be known who are reprobates.*

It may be difficult for us to ascertain with certainty in this world, who are reprobates; but there are so many marks of reprobation given in the Bible, that by a sober and judicious investigation, we may form a pretty correct opinion, whether we or those around us are reprobates or not.

1. One evidence of reprobation, is a long course of prosperity in sin. The Psalmist lays it down as such in Psa 92:7 : "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." God often gives the wicked their portion in this world, and lets them prosper and wax fat like a stalled ox, and then brings them forth to the slaughter. "The wicked are reserved unto the day of wrath." When therefore you see an individual for a long time prospering in his sins, there is great reason to fear that man is a reprobate. In this passage inspiration assumes the truth of the distinction between evidence and proof. The Psalmist does not mean to be understood as affirming a universal truth. He did not intend, that prosperity in sin was proof conclusive that the prosperous sinner is a reprobate. But the least that could have been intended was, that such prosperity in sin affords alarming evidence of reprobation. It may be called presumptive evidence. Those who deny the distinction between evidence and proof, as some have done, must either deny the truth of this assertion of the Psalmist, or maintain that prosperity in sin does in all cases render it certain, that the prosperous sinner is a reprobate.

2. Habitual neglect of the means of grace is a mark of reprobation. If men are to be saved at all, it is through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; and it will probably be found to be true, that not one in ten thousand is saved of those who habitually absent themselves from places where God presents his claims. Sometimes, I know, a tract, or the conversation or prayer of some friend, may awaken an individual, and lead him to the house of God; but, as a general fact, if a man stays away from the means of grace, and neglects his Bible, it is a fearful sign of reprobation, and that he will die in his sins. He is voluntary in it, and he does not neglect the means of grace because he is reprobated, but was reprobated because God foresaw that he would take this course. Suppose a pestilence were prevailing, that was certain to prove fatal in every instance where the appropriate remedy was not applied. Now, if you wish to know whose days were numbered and finished, and who among the sick were certain to die with the disease, if you found any among them neglecting and despising the only appropriate remedy, you would know that they were the persons.

All this was known to God as certainly beforehand as afterward. Now, if you wish to know who are reprobates in any town or village, look abroad upon the multitude of sabbath-breakers, swearers, drinkers, and whoremongers; upon the young men that "assemble in troops in harlots' houses;" or the boys and young men that you may see assembled on the sabbath before grog shops, or at the corners of the streets, with their cigars, their bloated cheeks, and swollen, blood-shot eyes. Look through the length and breadth of the land, and see the thousands of young men who are utterly neglecting and despising eternal salvation. O horrible! poor, dying young men! not one in a thousand of them is likely to be saved; perhaps some of them came from a family given to prayer, where they used to kneel morning and evening around the domestic altar. And now where are they? And where are they going? They are already within the sweep of that mighty whirlpool, whose circling waters are drawing them nearer and nearer the roaring vortex. They dance, and trifle, and sport themselves. They heed not the voice that cries from heaven, nor the wail that comes up from hell, but nearer and nearer, with accelerated motion, they circle round and round, till they are swallowed up and lost in the abyss of damnation.

3. Where persons are entirely destitute of the strivings of the Spirit. I speak not of those who never heard the gospel; but in gospel lands it is doubtful whether any, except they are given up of God, live without more or less of the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Where therefore it is found that his strivings have entirely ceased with any mind, that soul has solemn and alarming evidence that it is given up of God. God says, "Yea, also, woe unto them when I depart from them."

4. Where persons have passed through a revival, and are not converted it affords evidence that they are reprobates; I mean here, not conclusive, but presumptive evidence; and this presumption grows stronger and stronger every time an individual passes such a season without conversion. It is common for persons in seasons of revival, to have more or less conviction, but to grieve away the Spirit. Some such persons are perhaps here, and dreaming away one more offer of eternal salvation. If you have once resisted the Spirit until he is quenched, I have but little hope that anything I can say will do you any good. The great probability is that you will be lost, unless you now repent and believe in Jesus.

5. Those who have grown old in sin, are probably reprobates. It is a solemn and alarming fact, that a vast majority of those who give evidence of piety, are converted under twenty-five years of age. Look at the history of revivals, and see, even in those that have manifested the greatest power, how few aged persons have been converted. The men who are set upon the attainment of some worldly object, and determined to secure that before they will attend to religion, and yield to the claims of their Maker, expecting afterwards to be converted, are almost always disappointed. Such a cold calculation is odious in the sight of God. What! take advantage of his forbearance, and say, that because he is merciful you will venture to continue in sin, till you have secured your worldly objects, and worn yourself out in the service of the devil, and thus turn your Maker off with the jaded remnant of your abused mortality! You need not expect God to set his seal of approbation upon such a calculation as this, and suffer you at last to triumph, and say, that you had served the devil as long as you pleased, and got to heaven at last.

You see such a man passing on from twenty years old and upwards, and the probabilities of his conversion fearfully diminishing every year. Sinner, are you forty years old? Now look over the list of conversions in the last revival; how few among them are of your age? Perhaps some of you are fifty or sixty! how seldom can you find one of your age converted. There is only here and there one; they are few and far between, like beacons on distant mountain tops, scattered sparsely along, just to keep old sinners from absolute despair. Aged sinner, there are more than fifty chances to one that you are a reprobate.

6. Absence of chastisements is a sign of reprobation. God says in the epistle to the Hebrews: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not; but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

7. When men are chastened and not reformed by it, it is a mark of reprobation. A poet has said, "When pain can't bless, heaven quits us in despair." God says of such, "Why should ye be stricken any more; ye will revolt more and more." When your afflictions are unsanctified, when you harden yourselves under his stripes, why should he not leave you to fill up the measure of your iniquity?

8. Embracing damnable heresies, is another mark of reprobation. Where persons seem to be given up to believe a lie, there is solemn reason for fearing that they are among that number upon whom God sends strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and be damned, because they obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. Where you see persons giving themselves up to such delusions, the more certainly they believe them, the greater reason there is for believing that they are reprobates. The truth is so plain, that with the Bible in your hands, it is next to impossible to believe a fundamental heresy, without being given up to the judicial curse of God. It is so hard to believe a lie, with the truth of the Bible before you, that the devil cannot do it. If therefore you reject your Bible, and embrace a fundamental falsehood, you are more stupid and benighted than the devil is. When a man professes to believe a lie, almost the only hope of his salvation that remains, is, that he does not cordially believe it. Sinner, beware how you trifle with God's truth. How often have individuals begun to argue in favour of heresy, for the sake of argument, and because they loved debate, until they have finally come to believe their own lie, and are lost for ever.

XI. *Objections,*

1. To the idea that God rejected the reprobate for their foreseen wickedness, it is replied that, Pro 16:4 : "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," teaches another doctrine; that this passage teaches, that God made the reprobates for the day of evil, or for the purpose of destroying them.

To this I reply, that if he did create them to destroy them, or with a design when he created them to destroy them, it does not follow that their destruction was an ultimate end, or a thing in which he delighted for its own sake. It must be true, as has been said, that he designed from eternity to destroy them, in view, and in consequence, of their foreseen wickedness; and of course, he designed their destruction when he created them. In one sense then, it was true, that he created them for the day of evil, that is, in the sense that he knew how they would behave, and designed as a consequence to destroy them when, and before, he created them. But this is not the same as his creating them for the sake of their destruction as an ultimate end. He had another and a higher ultimate end, which end was a benevolent one. He says, "I have created all things for myself, even the wicked for the day of evil;" that is, he had some great and good end to accomplish by them, and by their destruction. He foresaw that he could use them for some good purpose, notwithstanding their foreseen wickedness; and even that he could overrule their sin and destruction to manifest his justice, and thus show forth his glory, and thereby strengthen his government. He must have foreseen that the good that might thus, from his overruling providence, result to himself and to the universe, would more than compensate for the evil of their rebellion and destruction; and therefore, and upon this condition, he created them, knowing that he should destroy, and intending to destroy them. That destruction was not the ultimate end of their creation, must follow from such scriptures as the following:--

Eze 33:11 : "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Eze 18:23 : "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

2Pe 3:9 : "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

1Jo 4:8, 1Jo 4:16 : "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. 16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Heb 2:9 : "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

2. Another objection to the doctrine of this lecture is founded on Rom 9:20-23 : "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

From this passage it has been inferred, that God creates the character and disposes of the destinies of both saints and sinners with as absolute and as irresistible a sovereignty as that exercised by the potter over his clay; that he creates the elect for salvation, and the reprobate for damnation; and forms the character of both so as to fit them for their respective destinies, with an absolutely irresistible and efficient sovereignty; that his ultimate end was in both cases his own glory, and that the value of the end justifies the use of the means, that is, of such means. To this I reply:

(1.) That it is absurd and nonsensical, as we have abundantly seen, to talk of creating moral character, either good or bad, by an irresistible efficient sovereignty. This is naturally impossible, as it implies a contradiction. Moral character must be the result of proper, voluntary action, and the moral character of the vessels of wrath or of mercy neither is, nor can be, formed by any irresistible influence whatever.

(2.) It is not said nor implied in the passage under consideration, that the character of the vessels of wrath was created, or that God had any such agency in procuring their character, as he has in forming the character of the vessels of mercy. Of the vessels of wrath it is only said they are "fitted to destruction," that is, that their characters are adapted for hell; while of the vessels of mercy it is said "which he had afore prepared unto glory." The vessels of wrath are fitted, or had fitted themselves to destruction, under the light and influence that should have made them holy. The vessels of mercy God had, by the special grace and influence of the Holy Spirit, engaging and directing their voluntary agency, afore prepared for glory.

(3.) But the lump spoken of in the text contemplates, not the original creation of man, nor the forming or creating in them of a wicked character. But it manifestly contemplates them as already existing as the potter's clay exists; and not only as existing, but also as being sinners. God may reasonably proceed to form out of this lump vessels of wrath or of mercy, as seems wise and good unto him. He may appoint one portion to honour and another to dishonour, as is seen by him to be demanded by the highest good.

(4.) The passage under consideration cannot, in any event, be pressed into the service of those who would insist, that the destruction of the reprobate is chosen for its own sake, and therefore implies malevolence in God. Hear what it says: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Here it appears, that he designed to show and make known his attributes. This cannot have been an ultimate, but must have been a proximate, end. The ultimate end must have been the highest glory of himself, and the highest good of the universe, as a whole. If God willed thus to make known his holiness and his mercy, for the purpose of securing the highest good of the universe, who has a right to say, What doest thou? Or why doest thou thus?

3. Another objection is, if God knew that they would be reprobate or lost, why did he create them? If he knew that such would be the result, and yet created them, it follows that he created them to destroy them. I reply:

This objection has been already answered, but for the sake of perspicuity I choose here to answer it again.

From the admitted fact, that God knew when he created them just what their destiny would be, it does not follow that their destruction was the end for which he created them. He created them, not for their sin and destruction as an ultimate end, but for another and a good end, notwithstanding his fore-knowledge of their sin and ultimate ruin.

4. It is further objected, that if God designed to make known his attributes, in the salvation of the vessels of mercy, and in the destruction of the vessels of wrath, he must have designed their characters as well as their end, inasmuch as their characters are indispensable conditions of this result.

I reply, that it is true, that the characters of both the vessels of wrath and of mercy must have been in some sense purposed or designed by God. But it does not follow that he designed them both in the same sense. The character of the righteous he designed to beget, or induce by his own agency; the character of the wicked he designed to suffer him to form for himself. He doubtless designed to suffer the one rather than to interfere, in such manner and form as would prevent sin, seeing as he did, that hateful as it was in itself, it could be overruled for good. The other he designed to produce, or rather induce, both on account of the pleasure he has in holiness, and also for the sake of its bearings on the subject of it, and upon the universe.

5. To the doctrine of this lecture it is further objected, that if one is a reprobate it is of no use for him to try to be saved. If God knows what he will be in character, and designs his destruction, it is impossible that it should be otherwise than as God knows and designs, and therefore one may as well give up in despair first as last.

(1.) To such an objector I would say, you do not know that you are a reprobate, and therefore you need not despair.

(2.) If God designs to cast you off, though you cannot know this, it is only because he foresees that you will not repent and believe the gospel; or in other words, for your voluntary wickedness. He foreknows that you will be wicked simply because you will be, and not because his foreknowledge makes you so. Neither his foreknowledge respecting your character, nor his design to cast you off, in consequence of your character, has any agency in making you wicked. You are therefore perfectly free to obey and be saved, and the fact that you will not, is no reason why you should not.

(3.) You might just as reasonably make the same objection to every thing that takes place in the universe. Everything that did, or will, or can occur, is as infallibly known to God, as the fact of your wickedness and destruction is. He also has a fixed and eternal design about everything that ever did or will occur. He knows how long you will live, where you will live, and when and where you will die. His purposes respecting these and all other events are fixed, eternal, and unchangeable. Why, then, do you not live without food and say, I cannot make one hair black or white; I cannot die before my time, nor can I prolong my days beyond the appointed time, do what I will; therefore, I will take no care of my health? No; this would be unreasonable.

Why not also apply this objection to everything, and settle down in despair of ever doing or being anything, but what an irresistible fate makes you? The fact is, that the true doctrine, whether of election or reprobation, affords not the least countenance to such a conclusion. The foreknowledge and designs of God respecting our conduct or our destiny, do not in the least degree interfere with our free agency. We, in every case, act just as freely as if God neither knew nor designed anything about our conduct. Suppose the farmer should make the same objection to sowing his seed, and to doing anything to secure a crop; what would be thought of him? And yet he might with as much reason, since he can plead the foreknowledge and designs of God, as an excuse for doing nothing to secure his salvation. God as really knows now whether you will sow and whether you will have a crop, and has from eternity known this, as perfectly as he ever will. He has either designed that you shall, or that you shall not, have a crop this year, from all eternity; and it will infallibly come to pass just as he has foreseen and designed. Yet you are really just as free to raise a crop, or to neglect to do so, as if he neither knew nor designed anything about it.

The man who will stumble either at the doctrine of election or reprobation, as defined and maintained in these lectures, should, to be consistent, stumble at everything that takes place, and never try to accomplish any thing whatever; because the designs and the foreknowledge of God extend equally to everything; and unless he has expressly revealed how it will be, we are left in the dark, in respect to any event, and are left to use means to accomplish what we desire, or to prevent what we dread, as if God knew and designed nothing about it.

6. But it is objected, that this is a discouraging doctrine, and liable to be a stumbling-block, and therefore should not be inculcated. I answer--

(1.) It is taught in the Bible, and plainly follows also from the attributes of God, as revealed in the reason. The scriptures that teach it are not less likely to be a snare and a stumbling-block, than are the definition and explanation of the doctrine.

(2.) The proper statement, explanation, and defence of the doctrines of election and reprobation, are important to a proper understanding of the nature and attributes of God.

(3.) The scriptures that teach these doctrines are often subjects of cavil, and sometimes of real difficulty. Religious teachers should, therefore, state these doctrines and explain them, so as to aid the inquirer after truth, and stop the mouths of gainsayers.

(4.) Again, these doctrines have often been so mis-stated and perverted as to make them amount to an iron system of fatalism. Many souls have heard or read these perversions, and greatly need to be enlightened upon the subject. It is therefore all the more important, that these truths should find a place in religious instruction. Let them be understood, properly stated, explained, and defended, and they can no more be a stumbling-block, than the fact of God's omniscience can be so.

REMARKS.

1. The salvation of reprobates is impossible only because they make it so by their own wicked conduct.

2. God will turn the damnation of the reprobate to good account. In establishing his government, he foresaw that great evils would be incidental to it; that multitudes would sin, and persevere in rebellion, until they were lost, notwithstanding all that could consistently be done to save them. Yet he foresaw, that a vastly greater good would result from the virtue and happiness of holy beings, and that he also could make a good use even of the punishment of the wicked. Here is an instance of the divine economy in turning everything to the best account. I do not mean that the damnation of the wicked results in greater good than their salvation would, if they would repent. If their salvation could be secured by any means that would consist with the highest good of the universe, it would be greatly to be preferred. But as this cannot be, God will do the best that the nature of the case admits. When he cannot save them, he will, by their punishment, erect a monument to his justice, and lay its foundation deep in hell, and build it up to heaven, that being seen afar off, in the smoke of their torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever, it may ever stand as an affecting memento of the hatefulness and desert of sin.

3. It is very wicked and blasphemous to complain of God when he has done the best that infinite wisdom, benevolence, and power could do. Who should complain? Surely not the elect; they have no reason to complain. Shall the reprobate complain, when they have actually forced upon God the necessity of either giving up his government, or of sending them to hell?

4. Reprobates are bound to praise God. He has created and given you many blessings, sinner, and offers you eternal life; and will you refuse to praise him?

5. God has every reason to complain of you, sinner. How much good you might do! See how much good individuals have often done! Now, of all the good you might do, you rob God. While eternity rolls its everlasting rounds, on how many errands of love you might go, diffusing happiness to the utmost bounds of Jehovah's empire? But you refuse to obey him; you are in league with hell, and prefer to scatter firebrands, arrows, and death, to destroy your own soul, and lead others to perdition with you. You drive on in your career, and help to set in motion all the elements of rebellion in earth and hell. Will you complain of God? He has reason to complain of you. He is the injured party. He has created you, has held you in his hand, and fanned your heaving lungs; and in return, you have breathed out your breath in rebellion, and blasphemy, and contempt of God, and compelled him to pronounce you reprobate.

6. There is reason to believe, that there are many reprobates in the church. This is the probable history of many professors of religion. They had convictions of sin, and after a while their distress more or less suddenly abated. If their distress had been considerable, if the Spirit left them, their minds would naturally have gone toward the opposite extreme. When their convictions left them, they thought, perhaps, this was conversion; this very *perhaps* created a sensation of pleasure, and the thought that this felt pleasure was evidence that they were converted, would naturally increase their confidence. As their confidence increased, their joy at the thought of being saved would be increased. This selfish joy has been the foundation upon which they have built their hopes for eternity; and now you see them in the church, transacting business upon worldly principles, pleading for sin, and finding a thousand apologies for conformity to the world. They live on in sin, perhaps not openly vicious, but negligent of duty, cold and formal reprobates, and go down to hell from the bosom of the church.

7. Reprobates live to fill up the measure of their iniquity.

We are informed that the Amorites were spared, not because there was any hope of their reformation, but because their cup of iniquity was not yet full. Christ said to the Jews, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers;" and God said unto Pharaoh, "For this purpose have I sustained thee, that I might show in thee my mighty power." Oh, dreadful thought! live to fill up the measure of your sins! The cup of trembling and of wrath is also filling up, which shall soon be poured out to you without mixture, when there shall be none to deliver you. "Your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not."

8. Saints should not envy prosperous sinners.

The Psalmist once had this trial. He says, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart; but as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." How can a saint envy them, standing upon a slippery steep, with fiery billows rolling beneath them! "Their feet shall slide in due time." Christians, do not envy the wicked, though they enjoy the wealth of the world; do not envy them; poor creatures! their time is short, they have had almost all their good things.

Perhaps, reader, you have not been in the least benefited by anything I have said, or could say. You have set yourself to oppose God, and have taken such an attitude, that truth never reaches you to do you good. Now, sinner, if you do this, and close this book in this state of mind, you will have additional evidence that God has given you up, and that you are a reprobate. Now, will you go on in your sins, under these circumstances? Do not talk of the doctrine of election or reprobation as being in your way. No man is ever reprobated for any other reason, than that he is an obstinate sinner.

Have you not been reading to find something in this lecture that you can stumble over? Take care! if you wish to cavil, you can always find occasions enough. Sinners have stumbled over every other doctrine of the Bible into hell, and you may stumble over this. What would you say of any man that should cut his throat, and say he did it because God foreknew that he would do it, and by creating him with this foreknowledge, designed that he should do it? Would saying that excuse him? No. Yet he is under just as much necessity of doing it as you are of closing this book, and going away in your sins.

You only show that you are determined to harden your hearts, and resist God, and thus compel the holy Lord God to reject you. There is no doctrine of the Bible that can save you, if you persevere in sin, and none that can damn you, if you repent and believe the gospel. The blood of Christ flows freely. The fountain is open. Sinner, what say you? Will you have eternal life? Will you have it now, or will you reject it? Will you trample the law under foot, and stumble over the gospel to the depths of hell?

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXVI.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

In this discussion I shall endeavour to show,--

I. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE TERM SOVEREIGNTY, WHEN APPLIED TO GOD.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY IT.

III. THAT GOD IS, AND OUGHT TO BE, AN ABSOLUTE AND UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGN.

I. *What is not intended by the term "sovereignty" when applied to God.*

It is not intended, at least by me, that God, in any instance, wills or acts arbitrarily, or without good reasons; reasons so good and so weighty, that he could in no case act otherwise than he does, without violating the law of his own intelligence and conscience, and consequently without sin. Any view of divine sovereignty that implies arbitrariness on the part of the divine will, is not only contrary to scripture, but is revolting to reason, and blasphemous. God cannot act arbitrarily, in the sense of unreasonably, without infinite wickedness. For him to be arbitrary, in the sense of unreasonable, would be a wickedness as much greater than any creature is capable of committing, as his reason or knowledge is greater than theirs. This must be self-evident. God should therefore never be represented as a sovereign, in the sense that implies that he is actuated by self or arbitrary will, rather than by his infinite intelligence.

Many seem to me to represent the sovereignty of God as consisting in a perfectly arbitrary disposal of events. They seem to conceive of God as being wholly above and without, any law or rule of action guiding his will by his infinite reason and conscience. They appear shocked at the idea of God himself being the subject of moral law, and are ready to inquire, Who gives law to God? They seem never to have considered that God is, and must be, a law unto himself; that he is necessarily omniscient, and that the divine reason must impose law on, or prescribe law to, the divine will. They seem to regard God as living wholly above law, and as disposed to have his own will at any rate, reasonable or unreasonable; to set up his own arbitrary pleasure as his only rule of action, and to impose this rule upon all his subjects. This sovereignty they seem to conceive of as controlling and disposing of all events, with an iron or adamantine fatality, inflexible, irresistible, omnipotent. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." This text they dwell much upon, as teaching that God disposes all events absolutely, not according to his own infinite wisdom and discretion, but simply according to his own will; and, as their language would often seem to imply, without reference at all to the universal law of benevolence. I will not say, that such is the view as it lies in their own mind; but only that from the language they use, such would seem to be their idea of divine sovereignty. Such, however, is not the view of this subject which I shall state and defend on the present occasion.

II. *What is intended by divine sovereignty.*

The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting only his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge. God consults no one in respect to what shall be done by him. He asks no leave to do and require what his own wisdom dictates. He consults only himself; that is, his own infinite intelligence. So far is he from being arbitrary in his sovereignty, in the sense of unreasonable, that he is invariably guided by infinite reason. He consults his own intelligence only, not from any arbitrary disposition, but because his knowledge is perfect and infinite, and therefore it is safe and wise to take counsel nowhere else. It were infinitely unreasonable, and weak, and wicked in God to ask leave of any being to act in conformity with his own judgment. He must make his own reason his rule of action. God is a sovereign, not in the sense that he is not under law, or that he is above all law, but in the sense that he is a law to himself; that he knows no law but what is given him by his own reason. In other words still, the sovereignty of God consists in such a disposal of all things and events, as to meet the ideas of his own reason, or the demands of his own intelligence. "He works all things after the counsel of his own will," in the sense that he formed and executes his own designs independently; in the sense that he consults only his own infinite discretion; that is, he acts according to his own views of propriety and fitness. This he does, be it distinctly understood, without at all setting aside the freedom of moral agents. His infinite knowledge enabled him to select an end and means, that should consist with and include the perfect freedom of moral agents. The subjects of his moral government are free to obey or disobey, and take the consequences. But foreseeing precisely in all cases how they would act, he has laid his plan accordingly, so as to bring out the contemplated and desired results. In all his plans he consulted none but himself. But this leads me to say--

III. *That God is and ought to be an absolute and a universal sovereign.*

By absolute, I mean, that his expressed will, in obedience to his reason, is law. It is not law because it proceeds from his arbitrary will, but because it is the revelation or declaration of the affirmations and demands of his infinite reason. His expressed will is law, because it is an infallible declaration of what is intrinsically fit, suitable, right. His will does not make the things that he commands, right, fit, proper, obligatory, in the sense, that should he require it, the opposite of what he now requires would he fit, proper, suitable, obligatory; but in the sense that we need no other evidence of what is in itself intrinsically proper, fit, obligatory, than the expression of his will. Our reason affirms, that what he wills must be right; not because he wills it, but that he wills it because it is right, or obligatory in the nature of things; that is, our reason affirms that he wills as he does, only upon condition, that his infinite intelligence affirms that such willing is intrinsically right, and therefore he ought to will or command just what he does.

He is a sovereign in the sense that his will is law, whether we are able to see the reason for his commands or not, because our reason affirms that he has and must have good and sufficient reasons for every command; so good and sufficient, that he could not do otherwise than require what he does, under the circumstances, without violating the law of his own intelligence. We therefore need no other reason for affirming our obligation to will and to do, than that God requires it; because we always and necessarily assume, as a first truth of reason, that what God requires must be right, not because he arbitrarily wills it, but because he does not arbitrarily will it: on the contrary that he has, and must have in every instance, infinitely good and wise reasons for every requirement.

Some persons represent God as a sovereign, in the sense, that his arbitrary will is the foundation of obligation. But if this is so, he could in every instance render the directly opposite course from what he now requires, obligatory. But this is absurd. The persons just mentioned seem to think, that unless it be admitted that God's will is the foundation of obligation, it will follow that it does not impose obligation, unless he discloses the reasons for his requirements. But this is a great mistake. Our own reason affirms that God's expressed will is always law, in the sense that it invariably declares the law of nature, or discloses the decisions of his own reason.

God must and ought to be an absolute sovereign in the sense just defined. This will appear if we consider:--

1. That his end was chosen and the means decided upon, when no being but himself existed, and of course, there was no one to consult but himself.

2. Creation and providence are only the results, and the carrying out of his plans settled from eternity.

3. The law of benevolence, as it existed in the divine reason, must have eternally demanded of him the very course he has taken.

4. His highest glory and the highest good of universal being demand, that he should consult his own discretion, and exercise an absolute and a universal sovereignty, in the sense explained. Infinite wisdom and goodness ought of course to act independently in the promotion of their end. If infinite wisdom or knowledge is not to give law, what or who shall? If infinite benevolence shall not declare and enforce law, what or who shall? God's attributes and relations render it obligatory upon him to exercise just that holy sovereignty we have ascribed to him.

(1.) This sovereignty, and no other, he claims for himself.

Job 23:13 : "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth."

Job 33:13 : "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters."

Psa 115:3 : "But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

Psa 135:6 : "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

Isa 55:10-11 : "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Dan 4:35 : "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Mat 11:25-26 : "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mat 20:12-16 : "Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen."

Rom 9:15-18 : "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Eph 1:11 : "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Phi 2:13 : "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

(2.) Again: God claims for himself all the prerogatives of an absolute and a universal sovereign, in the sense already explained. For example, he claims to be the rightful and sole proprietor of the universe.

1Ch 29:11 : "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."

Psa 50:10-12 : "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."

Psa 95:5-7 : "The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker: For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

Psa 100:3 : "Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

Eze 18:4 : "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die."

Rom 14:8 : "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

(3.) Again: God claims to have established the natural or physical laws of the universe.

Job 38:33 : "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Psa 119:90-91 : "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations, thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants."

Pro 3:19-20 : "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

Jer 31:35 : "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name."

Jer 33:25-26 : "Thus saith the Lord, if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them."

(4.) God claims the right to exercise supreme authority.

Exo 20:23 : "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."

1Ch 29:11 : "Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."

Psa 47:7 : "For God is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding."

Pro 23:26 : "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

Isa 33:22 : "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us."

Mat 4:10 : "Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Mat 22:37 : "Jesus saith unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

(5.) God claims the right to exercise his own discretion in using such means, and in exerting such an agency as will secure the regeneration of men, or not, as it appears wise to him.

Deu 29:4 : "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."

Jer 5:14 : "Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."

Mat 13:10-11 : "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou to them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

Mat 20:15-16 : "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

Mar 4:11-12 : "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

Rom 9:22-23 : "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

2Ti 2:25 : "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

(6.) God claims the right to try his creatures by means of temptation.

Deu 13:1-3 : "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

1Ki 22:20-22 : "And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth, and do so."

Job 2:3, Job 2:7 : "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 7. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Mat 4:1 : "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

(7.) God also claims the right to exercise his own discretion in so arranging the affairs of his government as to control the hearts of men, not necessarily, but through the exercise of their own liberty.

1Sa 26:19 : "Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods."

Psa 33:14-15 : "From the place of his habitation he looked upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works."

Isa 45:9 : "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"

Rom 9:20-21 : "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour."

(8.) God also claims the right to use all creatures, and to dispose of all creatures and events, so as to fulfil his own designs.

2Sa 7:14 : "I will be his father, and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."

2Ki 5:1 : "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper."

1Ch 6:15 : "And Jehozadak went into captivity, when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar."

Job 1:15, Job 1:17 : "And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I am escaped alone to tell thee. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three hands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away; yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped to tell thee. And Job said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Psa 17:13 : "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord."

Isa 10:5-7, Isa 10:12, Isa 10:15 : "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation: 6. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood."

Jer 27:8 : "And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand."

Eze 25:14 : "And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God."

Hab 1:6, Hab 1:12 : "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. 12. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die, O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction."

(9.) God claims the right to take the life of his sinful subjects at his own discretion.

Gen 22:2 : "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of."

Deu 20:16-18 : "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebuzites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God."

1Sa 15:3 : "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

(10.) God also claims the right to employ wicked rulers and instruments as his own rod, and scourge, to chastise individuals and nations for their wickedness.

1Ki 19:15 : "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria."

2Ki 8:12 : "And Hazael said, Why weepeth, my Lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child."

Eze 20:24-26 : "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord."

Dan 4:17 : "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

Hos 13:11 : "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

(11.) God furthermore claims the sole prerogative of executing vengeance on the wicked.

Psa 94:1 : "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself."

Rom 12:19 : "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Deu 32:35-36, Deu 32:39-43 : "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their feet shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. 36. For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. 39. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. 40. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. 41. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. 42. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain, and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. 43. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

(12.) God declares that he will maintain his own sovereignty.

Isa 42:8 : "I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Isa 48:11 : "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."

These passages will disclose the general tenour of scripture upon this subject.

REMARKS.

1. The Sovereignty of God is an infinitely amiable, sweet, holy, and desirable sovereignty. Some seem to conceive of it as if it were revolting and tyrannical. But it is the infinite opposite of this, and is the perfection of all that is reasonable, kind and good.

Isa 57:15-19 : "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him."

2. Many seem afraid to think or speak of God's sovereignty, and even pass over, with a very slight reading, those passages of scripture that so fully declare it. They think it unwise and dangerous to preach upon the subject, especially unless it be to deny or explain away the sovereignty of God. This fear in pious minds has no doubt originated in a misconception of the nature of this sovereignty. They have been led either by false teaching, or in some way, to conceive of the divine sovereignty as an iron and unreasonable despotism. That is, they have understood the doctrine of divine sovereignty to so represent God. They therefore fear and reject it. But let it be remembered and for ever understood, to the eternal joy and unspeakable consolation of all holy beings, that God's sovereignty is nothing else than infinite love directed by infinite knowledge, in such a disposal of events as to secure the highest well-being of the universe; that, in the whole details of creation, providence and grace, there is not a solitary measure of his that is not infinitely wise and good.

3. A proper understanding of God's universal agency and sovereignty, of the perfect wisdom and benevolence of every measure of his government, providential and moral, is essential to the best improvement of all his dispensations toward us, and to those around us. When it is understood, that God's hand is directly or indirectly in everything that occurs, and that he is infinitely wise and good, and equally wise and good in every single dispensation--that he has one end steadily and always in view--that he does all for one and the same ultimate end--and that this end is the highest good of himself and of universal being;--I say, when these things are understood and considered, there is a divine sweetness in all his dispensations. There is then a divine reasonableness, and amiableness, and kindness, thrown like a broad mantle of infinite love over all his character, works and ways. The soul, in contemplating such a sacred, universal, holy sovereignty, takes on a sweet smile of delightful complacency, and feels secure, and reposes in perfect peace, surrounded and supported by the everlasting arms.

4. Many entertain most ruinous conceptions of divine sovereignty. They manifestly conceive of it as proceeding wholly independent of law, and of second causes, or means. They often are heard to use language that implies this. They say, "if it is God's will you cannot hinder it. If God has begun the work, he will accomplish it." In fact, their language means nothing, unless they assume that in the dispensation of grace all is miracle. They often represent a thing as manifestly from God, or as providential, because it was, or appeared to be, so disconnected with appropriate means and instrumentalities. In other words it was quite miraculous.

Now, I suppose, that God's sovereignty manifests itself through and by means, or second causes, and appropriate instrumentalities. God is as much a sovereign in the kingdom of nature as of grace. Suppose farmers, mechanics, and shopkeepers should adopt, in practice, this absurd view of divine sovereignty of which I am speaking? Why, they would succeed about as well in raising crops and in transacting business, as those Christians and ministers who apply their views of sovereignty to spiritual matters, do in saving souls.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXVII.

PURPOSES OF GOD.

In discussing this subject I shall endeavour to show,

I. WHAT I UNDERSTAND BY THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

II. NOTICE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PURPOSE AND DECREE.

III. SHOW THAT IN SOME SENSE THE PURPOSES OF GOD MUST EXTEND TO ALL EVENTS.

IV. STATE DIFFERENT SENSES IN WHICH GOD PURPOSES DIFFERENT EVENTS.

V. THAT GOD'S REVEALED WILL IS NEVER INCONSISTENT WITH HIS SECRET WILL OR PURPOSE.

VI. NOTICE THE WISDOM AND BENEVOLENCE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES.

VII. SHOW THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES.

VIII. THAT THE PURPOSES OF GOD ARE A GROUND OF ETERNAL AND JOYFUL CONFIDENCE.

IX. CONSIDER THE RELATION OF THE PURPOSES TO THE PRESCIENCE OR FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

X. SHOW THAT GOD'S PURPOSES ARE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH, BUT DEMAND THE USE OF MEANS, BOTH ON THE PART OF GOD AND ON OUR PART TO ACCOMPLISH THEM.

I. *What I understand by the purposes of God.*

Purposes, in this discussion, I shall use as synonymous with design, intention. The purposes of God must be ultimate and proximate. That is, God has and must have an ultimate end. He must purpose to accomplish something by his works and providence, which he regards as a good in itself, or as valuable to himself, and to being in general. This I call his ultimate end. That God has such an end or purpose, follows from the already established facts, that God is a moral agent, and that he is infinitely wise and good. For surely he could not be justly considered as either wise or good, had he no intrinsically valuable end which he aims to realize, by his works of creation and providence. His purpose to secure his great and ultimate end, I call his ultimate purpose. His proximate purposes respect the means by which he aims to secure his end. If he purposes to realize an end, he must of course purpose the necessary means for its accomplishment. The purposes that respect the means are what I call in this discussion, his proximate purposes.

II. *Distinction between purpose and decree.*

Purpose has just been defined, and the definition need not be repeated. The term decree is used in a variety of senses. It is much used in legal and governmental proceedings. When used in judicial or equitable proceedings, it is synonymous--

1. With judgment, decision, determination; and--

2. With order, direction, command.

When used in legislative proceedings, it is synonymous with ordinance, law, statute, enactment, command. The term is used in the Bible as synonymous--

(1.) With fore-ordination or determination, appointment.

Job 28:9, Job 28:26 : "He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder."

Psa 2:7 : "I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee."

Psa 148:6. "He hath also established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass."

Pro 8:29. "When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth."

Jer 5:22. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it, and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

Dan 4:24. "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king."

(2.) It is used as synonymous with ordinance, statute, law.

Dan 6:7-8, Dan 6:26 : "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 26. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end."

This term has been generally used by theological writers as synonymous with fore-ordination, appointment. To decree, with these writers, is to appoint, ordain, establish, settle, fix, render certain. This class of writers also often confound decree with purpose, and use the word as meaning the same thing. They seldom, so far as I recollect, use the term decree as synonymous with law, enactment, command, &c.

I see no objection to using the term decree, in respect to a certain class of physical events, as synonymous with appointment, fore-ordination, fixing, rendering certain. But I think this use of it, applied, as it has been, to the actions of moral agents, is highly objectionable, and calculated to countenance the idea of fatality and necessity, in respect to the actions of men. It seems inadmissible to speak of God's decreeing the free actions of moral agents, in the sense of fixing, settling, determining, fore-ordaining them as he fixes, settles, renders certain all physical events. The latter he has fixed or rendered certain by a law of necessity. The former, that is, free acts, although they may be, and are certain, yet they are not rendered so by a law of fate or necessity; or by an ordinance or decree that fixes them so, that it is not possible they should be otherwise.

In respect to the government of God, I prefer to use the term purpose, as I have said, to signify the design of God, both in respect to the end at which he aims, and the means he intends or purposes to use to accomplish it. The term decree I use as synonymous with command, law, or ordinance. The former I use as expressive of what God purposes or designs to do himself, and by his own agency, and also what he purposes or designs to accomplish by others. The latter I use as expressive of God's will, command, or law. He regulates his own conduct and agency in accordance with the former, that is, with his purposes. He requires his creatures to conform to the latter, that is, to his decrees or laws. We shall see, in its proper place, that both his purposes and his actions are conformed to the spirit of his decrees, or laws; that is, that he is benevolent in his purposes and conduct, as he requires his creatures to be. I distinguish what God purposes or designs to accomplish by others, and what they design. God's end or purpose is always benevolent. He always designs good. His creatures are often selfish, and their designs are often the direct opposite to the purpose of God, even in the same events. For example, see the following cases:--

Gen 45:4-6 : "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me I pray you; and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest."

Gen 50:19-20 : "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not; for I am in the place of God. But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Isa 10:5-7, Isa 10:12 : "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

Mar 15:9-10 : "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews? (For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy)."

Joh 3:16 : "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Act 2:23 : "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

III. *There must be some sense in which God's purposes extend to all events.*

1. This is evident from reason. His plan must, in some sense, include all actual events. He must foreknow all events by a law of necessity. This is implied in his omniscience. He must have matured and adopted his plan in view of, and with reference to, all events. He must have had some purpose or design respecting all events that he foresaw. All events transpire in consequence of his own creating agency; that is, they all result in some way directly or indirectly, either by his design or sufferance, from his own agency. He either designedly brings them to pass, or suffers them to come to pass without interposing to prevent them. He must have known that they would occur. He must have either positively designed that they should, or, knowing that they would result from the mistakes or selfishness of his creatures, negatively designed not to prevent them, or, he had no purpose or design about them. The last hypothesis is plainly impossible. He cannot be indifferent to any event. He knows all events, and must have some purpose or design respecting them.

2. The Bible abundantly represents God's purposes as in some sense extending to all events. For example:

(1.) He is represented as perfectly wise in his works, and ways, and plan of creation and government:

Deu 32:4 : "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

Psa 104:24 : "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

Ecc 3:14 : "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."

If God is infinitely wise, he must have had a universal plan.

(2.) The Bible represents his purposes as universal and particular.

Job 14:5 : "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

Isa 14:26 : "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations."

Act 17:26 : "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."

Eph 1:11 : "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

(3.) It represents his purposes as in some sense extending both to natural evil, and to sin or moral evil.

Act 2:23 : "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Act 4:27-28 : "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Act 13:29 : "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre."

1Pe 2:8 : "And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

Jud 1:4 : "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God, into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev 17:17 : "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

(4.) It represents God's purposes as both ultimate and proximate, or including means and ends.

Act 27:22-24, Act 27:30-31 : "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. 23. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve. 24. Saying, Fear not Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 30. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, 31. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

2Th 2:13 : "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

1Pe 1:2 : "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

(5.) The Bible represents God's providence and agency as extending in some sense to all events; from which also we must infer the universality of his purposes:--

Psa 147:8-9, Psa 147:15-18 : "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9. He giveth to the beast his food, and to young ravens which cry. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly. 16. He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. 17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold? 18. He sendeth out his word and melteth them, he causeth his winds to blow, and the waters flow."

Isa 26:12 : "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works in us."

Isa 45:7 : "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."

Dan 4:35 : "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Amo 3:6 : "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

Mat 10:29 : "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

Rom 11:36 : "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."

Eph 1:11 : "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Phi 2:13 : "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Heb 13:20-21 : "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

Psa 104:14-15, Psa 104:21, Psa 104:27-28 : "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15. And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. 21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 27. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28. That thou givest them they gather, thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."

Mat 5:45 : "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Mat 6:26, Mat 6:28-30 : "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. 29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. 30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

(6.) The Bible also represents all creatures as dependent on the providence, and of course on the purposes of God.

Job 12:10 : "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."

Psa 87:7 : "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee."

Jer 10:23 : "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Jer 18:6 : "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

Joh 15:5 : "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Act 17:26-28 : "And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. That they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we also are his offspring."

2Co 3:5 : "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

(7.) The Bible also represents all creatures as preserved by the providence of God, from which also we must infer, that his purposes extend to them.

Neh 9:6 : "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

Job 7:20 : "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?"

Job 10:12 : "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

Job 34:14-15 : "If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."

Psa 36:6 : "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast."

Psa 63:8 : "My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me."

Psa 66:8-9 : "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

Psa 121:7 : "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul."

Heb 1:3 : "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

(8.) The Bible also represents the Lord, as, in some sense, and in some manner, influencing the hearts of men.

From this also we must infer, that his purposes, in some sense, extend to the moral actions of men.

Ezr 7:27 : "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem."

Pro 16:1, Pro 16:9 : "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. 9. A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps."

Pro 21:1 : "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Isa 64:8 : "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

Zec 12:1 : "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."

Act 16:14 : "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

Rom 9:20-21 : "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

(9.) The Bible represents God as often, at least, controlling public sentiment.

Gen 39:21 : "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."

Exo 3:21 : "And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians."

Dan 1:9 : "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

Act 7:9-10 : "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him. And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house."

From these passages we must infer, that the purposes of God extend to these events.

(10.) The Bible also represents the providence of God as extending to moral evils and delusions; from which again we must infer, that his purposes in some sense extend to them.

Exo 7:3 : "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt."

Exo 9:7 : "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go."

Exo 10:1 : "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these my signs before him."

Exo 14:8, Exo 14:17 : "And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel. 17. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians."

Deu 2:30 : "But Sihon king of Heshbon, would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day."

Jos 11:19-20 : "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses."

Jdg 7:22 : "And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host."

2Sa 24:1 : "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."

1Ki 22:23 : "Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."

Job 17:4 : "For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them."

Psa 105:25 : "He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants."

Psa 141:4 : "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties."

Isa 19:14 : "The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit."

Isa 29:10 : "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered."

Isa 44:18 : "They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand."

Isa 45:7 : "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

Isa 63:17 : "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return, for thy servant's sake, the tribes of thine inheritance."

Eze 14:9 : "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel."

Zec 8:10 : "For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour."

Luk 10:21 : "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Joh 12:39-41 : "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

Rom 9:18 : "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Rom 11:7-8 : "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear), unto this day."

2Th 2:10-12 : "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Rev 17:17 : "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

These passages will show the general tenor of scripture upon this subject.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXVIII.

PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

In discussing this subject, I will,

I. CALL ATTENTION TO THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CERTAINTY THAT MAY BE PREDICATED OF DIFFERENT THINGS.

II. STATE WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS, AS I HOLD THE DOCTRINE.

III. SHOW WHAT IS INTENDED BY IT.

IV. PRESENT THE PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF IT.

V. NOTICE THE OBJECTIONS TO THIS DOCTRINE.

I. *I am to notice the different kinds of certainty.*

Everything must be certain with some kind of certainty. There is a way in which all things and events either have been, are, or will be. All events that ever did or will occur, were and are as really certain before as after their occurrence. To an omniscient mind their real certainty might and must have been known, as really before as after their occurrence. All future events, for example, will occur in some way, and there is no real uncertainty in fact, nor can there be any real uncertainty in the knowledge of God respecting them. They are really as certain before they come to pass as they will ever be, and they are as truly and perfectly known as certain by God as they ever will be. They are as truly present to the Divine fore-knowledge as they ever will be. Whatever of contingency and uncertainty there may be respecting them in some respects, yet, in point of fact, all events are certain, and there is no real uncertainty in respect to any event that ever did or will occur. This would be equally true, whether God or any other being knew how they would be or not. The fore-knowledge of God does not make them certain. He knows them to be certain simply because they are so. Omniscience is the necessary knowledge of all objects of knowledge, past, present, and future. But omniscience does not create objects of knowledge. It does not render events certain, but only knows how they certainly will be, because it is certain, not only that they will be, but how and when they will be. All the free actions of moral agents are as really certain before they occur, as they ever will be. And God must as truly know how they will be before they occur, as he does after they have occurred.

1. The first kind of certainty that I shall notice, is that of absolute necessity; that is, a certainty depending on no conditions whatever. This is the highest kind of certainty. It belongs to the absolute and the infinite, to the existence of space, duration, and to the existence of God; and in short to everything that is self-existent, infinite, and immutable in a natural sense; that is, to everything infinite that does not imply voluntariness. The natural attributes of God are certain by this kind of certainty, but his moral attributes, consisting as they do in a voluntary state of mind, though infinite and eternal, do not belong to this class.

2. A second kind of certainty is that of physical, but conditional necessity. To this class belong all those events that come to pass under the operation of physical law. These belong properly to the chain of cause and effect. The cause existing, the effect must exist. The event is rendered certain and necessary by the existence of its cause. Its certainty is conditionated upon its cause. The cause existing, the event must follow by a law of necessity, and the events would not occur of course, did not their causes exist. The causes being what they are, the events must be what they are. This class of events are as really certain as the foregoing class. By speaking of one of them as certain in a higher sense than the other, it is not intended, that one class is any more certain than the other, but only that the certainty is of a different kind. For example, the first class are certain by a kind of certainty that does not, and never did depend on the will of any being whatever. There never was any possibility that these things should be otherwise than they are. This, it will be seen, must be true of space and duration, and of the existence and the natural attributes of God.

But all other things except the self-existent, the naturally immutable and eternal, are certain only as they are conditionated directly or indirectly upon the will of some being. For example, all the events of the physical universe were rendered certain by creation, and the establishing and upholding of those physical and necessary laws that cause these events. These are, therefore, certain by a conditioned, though physical necessity. There is no freedom or liberty in the events themselves; they occur necessarily, when their causes or conditions are supplied.

3. A third kind of certainty is that of a moral certainty. I call it a moral certainty, not because the class of events which belong to it are less certain than the foregoing, but because they consist in, or are conditioned upon, the free actions of moral agents. This class do not occur under the operation of a law of necessity, though they occur with certainty. There is no contingency predicable of the absolutely certain in the sense of absolute certainty above defined. The second class of certainties are contingent only in respect to their causes. Upon condition that the causes are certain, the events depending upon them are certain, without or beyond any contingency. This third class, though no less certain than the former two, are nevertheless contingent in the highest sense, in which anything can be contingent. They occur under the operation of free will, and consequently there is not one of them that might not by natural possibility fail, or be otherwise than it is or will in fact be. This kind of certainty I call a moral certainty, as opposed to a physical certainty, that is, it is not a certainty of necessity in any sense; it is only a mere certainty, or a voluntary certainty, a free certainty, a certainty that might, by natural possibility in every case, be no certainty at all. But, on the contrary, the opposite might in every instance be certain by a natural possibility. God in every instance, knows how these events will be, as really as if they occurred by necessity; but his foreknowledge does not affect their certainty one way or the other. They might in every instance by natural possibility be no certainties at all, or be the opposite of what they are or will be, God's foreknowledge in anywise notwithstanding. God knows them to be certain, not because his knowledge has any influence of itself to necessitate them, but because they are certain in themselves. Because it is certain in itself that they will be, God knows that they will be. To this class of events belong all the free actions of moral agents. All events may be traced ultimately to the action of God's free will; that is, God's free actions gave existence to the universe, with all its physical agencies and laws, so that all physical events are in some sense owing to, and result from, the actions of free will. But physical events occur nevertheless under the immediate operation of a law of necessity. The class now under consideration depend not upon the operation of physical law as their cause. They are caused by the free agent himself. They find the occasions of their occurrence in the providential events with which moral agents are surrounded, and therefore may be traced indirectly, and more or less remotely to the actions of the Divine will.

Concerning this class of events, I would further remark, that they are not only contingent, in such a sense, that they might in every case by natural possibility be other than they are, but there may be, humanly speaking, the utmost danger that they will be otherwise than they really will be; that is, there may be danger, and the utmost danger, in the only sense in which there can be in fact any danger, that any event will be otherwise than what it turns out to be. All events being really certain, there is in fact no danger that any event whatever will turn out differently from what it does, in the sense that it is not certain how it will be. But since all acts of free will, and all events dependent on those acts, are contingent in the highest sense in which any event can in the nature of things be contingent; and in the sense that, humanly speaking, there may be millions of chances to one that they will be otherwise than they will in fact turn out to be,--we say of all this class of events, that there is danger that they may or may not occur.

Again: I remark, in respect to this class of events, that God may foresee that so intricate is the labyrinth, and so complicated are the occasions of failure, that nothing but the utmost watchfulness and diligent use of means on his part, and on our part, can secure the occurrence of the event. Everything revealed in the Bible concerning the perseverance and final salvation of the saints, and everything that is true, and that God knows of the free actions and destinies of the saints, may be of this class. These events are nevertheless certain, and are known to God as certainties. Not one of them will, in fact, turn out differently from what he foresees that they will; and yet by natural possibility, they might every one of them turn out differently; and there may, in the only sense in which danger is predicable of anything, be the utmost danger that some or all of them will turn out differently from what they in fact will. These events are contingent in such a sense, that should the means fail to be used, or should any event in the whole chain of influences connected with their occurrence, be otherwise than it is, the end or event resulting, would or might be otherwise, than in fact it will be. They are, nevertheless, certain, every one of them, together with all the influences upon which each free act depends. Nothing is uncertain in respect to whether it will occur or not; and yet no free act, or event depending upon a free act, is certain, in the sense that it cannot by natural possibility be otherwise, nor in the sense that there may not be great danger, or, humanly speaking, a probability that it will be otherwise, and that, humanly speaking, there may not be many chances to one that it will be otherwise.

When I say, that any event may, by natural possibility, be otherwise than what it will in fact be, I mean, that the free agent has natural power in every instance to choose otherwise than he does or actually will choose.

As an illustration of both the contingency and the certainty of this class of events, suppose a man about to attempt to cross Lake Erie on a wire, or to pass down the falls of Niagara in a bark canoe. The result of this attempt is really certain. God must know how it will be. But this result, though certain, is conditionated upon a multitude of things, each of which the agent has natural power to make otherwise than in fact he will. To secure his safe crossing, every volition must be just what and as it will be; but there is not one among them that might not, by natural possibility, be the opposite of what it will be.

Again, the case may be such, and the danger of failure so great, that nothing could secure the safe crossing, but a revelation from God that would inspire confidence, that the adventurer should in fact cross the lake, or venture down the falls safely: I say, this revelation of God might be indispensable to his safe crossing. Suppose it were revealed to a man under such circumstances, that he should actually arrive in safety; but the revelation was accompanied with the emphatic assurance, that the end depended upon the most diligent, cautious, and persevering use of means on his part, and that any failure in these would defeat the end. Both the revelation of the certainty of success, and the emphatic warning, might be indispensable to the securing of the end. Now, if the adventurer had confidence in the promise of success, he would have confidence in the caution not to neglect the necessary means, and his confidence in both might secure the desired result. But take an example from scripture:--

Act 27:21-31 : "But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul! thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the ship-men were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Here the end was foreknown and expressly foretold at first, without any condition expressed, though they plainly understood that the end was to be secured by means. Paul afterwards informs them, that if they neglected the means, the end would fail. Both the means and the end were certain in fact, and God therefore expressly revealed the certainty of the result, and afterwards by a subsequent revelation secured the use of the necessary means. Here was no uncertainty, in the sense that the thing might, in fact, turn out otherwise than it did, and yet it was uncertain in the sense that, by natural possibility, both the means and the end might fail.

I remark, again, in respect to events that are morally certain, that if they are greatly desired, they are not the more, but all the less, in danger of failing, by how much stronger the confidence is that they will occur, provided it be understood, that they are certain only by a moral certainty; that is, provided it be understood, that the event is conditioned upon the free acts of the agent himself.

Again: it is generally admitted, that hope is a condition of success in any enterprise; and if this is so, assurance of success, upon the proper conditions, cannot tend to defeat the end.

I remark, again, that there is a difference between real danger, and a knowledge or sense of danger. There may be as great and as real danger when we have no sense or knowledge of it, as when we have. And on the other hand, when we have the highest and the keenest sense of danger, there may be, in fact, no real danger; and indeed, as has been said, there never is any danger in the sense that anything will, as a matter of fact, turn out differently from what God foresees it will be.

Again: the fact that anything is revealed as certain, does not make it certain; that is, the revelation does not make it certain. It had been certain, had not this certainty been revealed, unless it be in cases where the revelation is a condition or means of the certainty revealed. An event may be really certain, and may be revealed as certain, and yet, humanly speaking, there may be millions of chances to one, that it will not be as it is revealed; that is, so far as human foresight can go, the probabilities may be all against it.

II. *State what is not intended by the perseverance of the saints, as I hold the doctrine.*

1. It is not, indeed, that any sinner will be saved without complying with the conditions of salvation; that is, without regeneration, and persevering in obedience to the end of life, in a sense to be hereafter explained.

2. It is not intended that saints, or the truly regenerate, cannot fall from grace, and be finally lost, by natural possibility. It must be naturally possible for all moral agents to sin at any time. Saints on earth and in heaven can by natural possibility apostatize and fall, and be lost. Were not this naturally possible, there would be no virtue in perseverance.

3. It is not intended, that the true saints are in no danger of apostacy and ultimate damnation. For, humanly speaking, there may be, and doubtless is, the greatest danger in respect to many, if not of all of them, in the only sense in which danger is predicable of any event whatever, that they will apostatize, and be ultimately lost.

4. It is not intended, that there may not be, humanly speaking, myriads of chances to one, that some, or that many of them will fall and be lost. This may be, as we say, highly probable; that is, it may be probable in the only sense in which it is probable, that any event whatever may be different from what it will turn out to be.

5. It is not intended, that the salvation of the saints is possible, except upon condition of great watchfulness and effort, and perseverance on their part, and great grace on the part of God.

6. It is not intended, that their salvation is certain, in any higher sense than all their future free actions are. The result is conditioned upon their free actions, and the end can be no more certain than its means or conditions. If the ultimate salvation of the saints is certain, it is certain only upon condition, that their perseverance in obedience to the end of life is certain. Every act of this obedience is free and contingent in the highest sense in which contingency can be predicated of any thing whatever. It is also uncertain by the highest kind of uncertainty that can be predicated of any event whatever. Therefore there is and must be, as much real danger of the saints failing of ultimate salvation, as there is that any event whatever will be different from what it turns out to be.

But here it should be distinctly remembered, as was said, that there is a difference between a certainty and a knowledge of it. It is one thing for an event to be really certain, and another thing for us to have a knowledge of it as certain. Everything is really equally certain, but many things are not revealed to us as certain. Those that are revealed as certain, are no more really so than others, but with respect to future things, not in some way revealed to us, we know not how they will prove to be. The fact that a thing is revealed to us as certain does not make it certain, nor is it really any the less uncertain because it is revealed to us as certain, unless the revelation tends to secure the certainty. Suppose the ultimate salvation of all the saints is certain, and that this certainty is revealed to us; unless this revelation is the means of securing their salvation, they are in just as much real danger of ultimately failing of eternal life, as if no such revelation had been made. Notwithstanding the certainty of their salvation, and the fact that this certainly is revealed to them, there is just as much real, though unknown, certainty or uncertainty, in respect to any future event whatever, as there is in respect to this. All events are certain with some kind of certainty, and would be whether any being whatever knew the certainty or not. So all events, consisting in or depending upon the free acts of free agents, are really as uncertain as any event can be, and this is true whether the certainty is revealed or not. The salvation of the saints then, is not certain with any higher certainty than belongs to all future events that consist in, or are conditionated upon, the free acts of free will, though this certainty may be revealed to us in one case, and not in the other.

Of course the salvation of the saints is not certain by any kind or degree of certainty that affords the least ground of hope of impunity in a course of sin. "For if they are to be saved, they are to be saved upon condition of continuing in faith and obedience to the end of life."

Moreover, their salvation is no more certain than their future free obedience is. The certainty of future free obedience, and a knowledge of this certainty, cannot be a reason for not obeying, or afford encouragement to live in sin. So no more can the knowledge of the conditional and moral certainty of our salvation afford a ground for hope of impunity in a life of sin.

8. The salvation of the saints is not certain by any kind or degree of certainty that renders their salvation or their damnation any more impossible, than it renders impossible any future acts of sin or obedience. Consequently, it is not certain in such a sense as to afford the least encouragement for hope of salvation in sin, any more than a certainty that a farmer would raise a crop upon condition of his diligent, and timely, and persevering use of the appropriate means, would encourage him to neglect those means. If the farmer had a knowledge of the certainty with its conditions, it would be no temptation to neglect the means; but, on the other hand, this knowledge would operate as a powerful incentive to the required use of them. So neither can the knowledge of the certainty of the salvation of the saints, with the condition of it, be to them a temptation to live in sin; but, on the contrary, this knowledge must act as a powerful incentive to the exercise of confidence in God, and perseverance in holiness unto the end. So neither can the certainty, that the necessary means will be used, afford any encouragement to neglect the use of them in the case of man's salvation, any more than the revealed certainty, that a farmer will sow his field and have a crop, would encourage him to neglect to sow. The known certainty of both the means and the end, with an understanding of the moral nature of the certainty, has no natural tendency to beget presumption and neglect; but, on the contrary, to beget a diligent, and cheerful, and confident use of the necessary means.

III. *Show what is intended by the doctrine in question.*

It is intended, that all who are at any time true saints of God, are preserved by his grace and Spirit through faith, in the sense that, subsequently to regeneration, obedience is their rule, and disobedience only the exception; and that being thus kept, they will certainly be saved with an everlasting salvation.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXIX.

PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS PROVED.

IV. I COME NOW TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THIS DOCTRINE.

Before I proceed to the direct proof of the doctrine, a few remarks may be desirable.

1. I would remark, that I have felt greater hesitancy in forming and expressing my views upon this, than upon almost any other question in theology. I have read whatever I could find upon both sides of this question, and have uniformly found myself dissatisfied with the arguments on both sides. After very full and repeated discussions, I feel better able to make up and express an opinion upon the subject than formerly. I have at some periods of my ministry been nearly on the point of coming to the conclusion that the doctrine is not true. But I could never find myself able to give a satisfactory reason for the rejection of the doctrine. Apparent facts that have come under my observation have sometimes led me seriously to doubt the soundness of the doctrine; but I cannot see, and the more I examine the more unable I find myself to see, how a denial of it can be reconciled with the scriptures.

I shall give the substance of what I regard as the scripture proof of this doctrine, and beg the reader to make up his opinion for himself by a careful examination. Perhaps what has been satisfactory to my mind may not be so to the minds of others. Let no one believe this, or any other doctrine upon my authority, but "prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

2. I observe, that its truth cannot be inferred from the nature of regeneration. It is true, as was said, and as will be farther shown, that perseverance is an attribute or characteristic of Christian character; but this does not necessarily result from the nature of regeneration, but from the indwelling Spirit of Christ. It has been common for that class of writers and theologians, who hold what is called the Taste Scheme of regeneration, to infer the truth of this doctrine from the nature of the change that constitutes the new birth. In this they have been entirely consistent. If, as they suppose, regeneration consists in a change in the constitution of the mind, in the implanting or infusion of a new constitutional taste, relish, or appetite, if it consists in or implies a change back of all voluntary action, and such a change as to secure and necessitate a change of voluntary action; why, then it is consistent, to infer from such a change the perseverance of the saints, unless it can be made to appear that either God, or Satan, or voluntary sin, can change the nature back again. If, in regeneration, the nature is really changed, if there be some new appetite or taste implanted, some holy principle implanted or infused into the constitution, why, then it must follow, that they will persevere by a physical law of the new nature or constitution. I see not how, in this case, they could even be the subjects of temporary backsliding, unless the new appetite should temporarily fail, as does sometimes our appetite for food. But if this may be, yet if regeneration consists in or implies a new creation of something that is not voluntary, but involuntary, a creation of a new nature, instead of a new character, I admit, that perseverance might be reasonably inferred from the fact of such a change. But since I reject wholly this theory of regeneration, and maintain that it is wholly a voluntary change, I cannot consistently infer the final salvation of the saints from the nature of the change that occurs in regeneration. I have been struck with the inconsistency of those who hold the Taste Scheme of regeneration, and yet contend, not only for falling from a regenerate state, but also that the regenerate may and do fall into a state of entire depravity, every time they sin; that they fall from this state of physical or constitutional regeneration every time they commit sin, and must be regenerated or converted anew, or be lost. Now, this is not reconcileable with the idea of the physical regeneration.

3. Nor can we infer the perseverance of the saints, with any justice, from their being, at their conversion, brought into a state of justification.

By perseverance some seem to mean, not that the saints do persevere or continue in obedience, but that they will be saved at any rate, whether they persevere in obedience or not. It was against this idea that such men as the Wesleys, and Fletcher, and their coadjutors fought so valiantly. They resisted justly and successfully the doctrine of perpetual justification, upon condition of one act of faith, and maintained that the saints as well as sinners are condemned whenever they sin. They also contended, that there is no kind of certainty that all true saints will be saved. Since I have endeavoured to refute the doctrine of a perpetual justification, conditioned upon the first act of faith, I cannot of course infer the final salvation of the saints from the nature of justification. Those who hold, that the first act of faith introduces the soul into a new relation of such a nature that, from thenceforth, it is not condemned by the law, do what it will, may justly infer from the nature of such a justification, that all who ever exercise faith will escape the penalty of the Divine law. But we have seen, that this is not the nature of gospel justification, and therefore we must not infer that all saints will be saved, from the mere fact that they have once believed and been justified.

But the following considerations, taken together, seem to me to establish the truth of the doctrine in question beyond reasonable doubt.

(1.) God has from eternity resolved upon the salvation of all the elect. This we have seen. No one of this number will ever be lost. These are given to Christ from eternity as a seed to serve him. The conversion, perseverance, and final salvation of the elect, we have seen to be secured. Their conversion, perseverance, and salvation, are secured by means of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, prevailing through the gospel, so to influence their free-will as to bring about this result. The instructions, promises, threatenings, warnings, expostulations of the Bible, with all the influences with which they are surrounded, are the instrumentalities by means of which the Holy Spirit converts, sanctifies, and saves them. At every step, as Fletcher acknowledges, "grace is beforehand with free-will." God first comes to, and moves upon, the sinner; but the sinner does not come to and move, or attempt to move God. God first draws, and the sinner yields. God calls, and the sinner answers. The sinner would never approach God, did not God draw him.

Again: God calls effectually, but not irresistibly, before the sinner yields. He does not yield and answer to a slight call. Some indeed wait to be drawn harder, and to be called louder and longer than others; but no one, in fact, comes to God until effectually persuaded to do so; that is, until he is effectually hunted from his refuges of lies, and drawn with so great and powerful a drawing, as not to force, but to overcome, his reluctance or voluntary selfishness, and as to induce him to turn to God and to believe in Christ. That the sinner is wholly disinclined to obey, up to the very moment in which he is persuaded and induced to yield, there can be no doubt. His turning, as we have seen, is an act of his own, but he is induced to turn by the drawings of the Holy Spirit.

Every person who was ever truly converted knows, that his conversion is not to be ascribed to himself, in any other sense, than that he finally consented, being drawn and persuaded by the Holy Spirit. The glory belongs to God, for the sinner only yielded after, perhaps, protracted resistance, and never until after he was so convinced as to have no further excuse or apology for sin, nor until the Spirit, by means of truth, and argument, and persuasion, fairly overcame him, and constrained, not forced him to submit. This is a brief statement of the facts connected with the conversion of every soul that was ever converted to God. This is true of the conversion of all the elect of God; and if others besides the elect are ever converted, this is a true account of their conversion.

Again: the same is true of their perseverance in holiness, in every instance, and in every act. The saints persevere, not by virtue of a constitutional change, but alone by virtue, or as a result of the abiding and indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit. "Free grace is always beforehand with free-will;" that is, the will never obeys, in any instance, nor for one moment, except as it is persuaded to do so as really as at the first. The work begun by the Holy Spirit is not carried on, except as the same Spirit continues to work in the saints to will and to do of his good pleasure. Saints do not begin in the Spirit, and then become perfect through or by the flesh. There is no holy exercise that is not as really to be ascribed to the grace and to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as is conversion itself.

The saints convert not themselves, in the sense that they turn or yield when drawn, until persuaded by the Holy Spirit. God converts them in the sense, that he effectually draws or persuades them. They turn themselves, in the sense that their turning is their own act. God turns them, in the sense that he induces or produces their turning. The same is true of their whole course of obedience in this life. The saints keep themselves, in the sense, that all obedience is their own; all their piety consists in their own voluntary obedience; but God keeps them, in the sense, that in every instance, and at every moment of obedience, he persuades, and enlightens, and draws them, insomuch, that he secures their voluntary obedience; that is, he draws and they follow. He persuades, and they yield to his persuasions. He works in them to will and to do, and they will and do. God always anticipates all their holy exercises, and persuades the saints to put them forth. This is so abundantly taught in the Bible, that to quote scripture to prove it would but waste your time. The saints are not only said to be converted, but also sanctified, and kept by the power of God.

No saint then keeps himself, except in so far as he is kept by the grace, and Spirit, and power of God. There is therefore no hope for any saint, and no reason to calculate upon the salvation of any one, unless God prevails to keep him from falling away and perishing. All who ever are saved, or ever will be, are saved by and through free grace, prevailing over free will, that is, by free grace securing the voluntary concurrence of free will. This God does, and is sure to do, with all the elect. It was upon condition of the foreseen fact, that God could by the wisest administration of his government, secure this result, that they were elected to eternal salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Now observe how the elect are saved. All the threatenings, warnings, and teachings of the Bible are addressed to them, as to all others. If there are any saints, at any time, who are not of the elect, the Bible nowhere notices any such persons, or speaks of them, as any less or more secure than the elect.

Again: the Bible nowhere represents or implies, that any but the elect are converted. It does not represent any but the elect as at any time coming in heart to Christ--as at any time regenerated or born of God. The Bible nowhere acknowledges two classes of saints, elect and non-elect. But, if there were two such classes, and the salvation of the elect was certain, as it really is, and that of the non-elect not certain, it is incredible that the Bible should not reveal this fact. Again: so far is the Bible from recognizing or implying any such distinction, that it everywhere implies the contrary. It divides mankind into two, and but two classes, and these it sets one over against the other. These are contrasted by the names, saint and sinner; people of God, and people of this world; children of God, and children of this world, or children of the devil; the elect and the reprobate, that is, the chosen and the rejected; the sanctified and the unsanctified; the regenerated and the unregenerated; the penitent and the impenitent. By whatever names they are called, it is manifest that the same classes and none others are meant. The elect of God is a common name for the saints or people of God. I cannot find in the Bible any evidence, that any were converted at any time, but the elect, or those whose salvation is sure. The elect are, or will be, every one of them certainly converted and saved. If any one chooses to contend, that any other are ever converted, the burden of proof is upon him; let him prove it, if he can. But this he must prove, in order to establish the fact, that any truly regenerated persons are ever lost, for sure it is, that no one of the elect will ever be lost. But, since I am to take the affirmative, I must take the burden of showing, that none but the elect are recognized in the scriptures as saints; and as I am speaking only of the salvation of the saints, I shall take it for granted, that all those who were from eternity chosen to eternal salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, will certainly be saved.

Now, if it can be shown, that some saints have been really lost, it will follow, that some have been converted who were not of the elect. And, on the other hand, if it can be shown that no saint has been, or will be, finally lost; but, on the contrary, that all the true saints are, and will be saved, it will follow that none but the elect are converted. For all who are, or will be saved, are saved by God, and saved by design, and in accordance with an eternal design, and of course they were elected to salvation from eternity.

I have already said, that it is incredible that the Bible should read as it does, and that it should nowhere distinguish between elect and non-elect saints, if there is any such distinction. It cannot be said with justice, that the Bible purposely conceals from all saints the fact of their election, lest it should be a stumbling-block to them. This we have seen is not the fact, but on the contrary, that the elect, at least in some instances, have known that they were elect.

But it is said, that Peter exhorts the saints to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;" from which it is inferred, that they did not know that they were elect; and furthermore, that it might be that, although they were real saints, nevertheless they were not, at least all of them, of the elect. The words here referred to stand in the following connexion:--

2Pe 1:1-10 : "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord; According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Upon this passage, I remark,--

(i.) That Peter addressed this epistle to all who had faith, that is, to all true Christians, as appears from the first verse. He addressed no one by name, but left it for every one to be sure that he had faith. He then proceeds to exhort them to grow in grace, assuring them that, if any one did not do so, he had forgotten that he was purged from his former sins; that is, if any one lacked that which he enjoined, it would prove that he had not true faith, or that he had backslidden. Then he adds, as in the 10th verse: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Here I remark:

(ii.) That the apostle plainly assumes:

(*a.*) That the called and elected will be saved; to make their calling and election sure, was to make their salvation sure: and,

(*b.*) That none others are saved but the called and elected, for if others are saved, it were of no consequence whether they were of the called and elected or not, provided they were saved;

(*c.*) That he regarded none as Christians, or as at any time having true faith, but the called and elected; for he was not exhorting supposed impenitent sinners to become Christians, but supposed Christians to be sure of their calling and election. This shows that he regarded all Christians as of the called and elected. To be sure of their calling and election was to be sure of their salvation. The apostle did not certainly mean to exhort them to become of the number of the elect, for this number we have seen was settled from eternity; but by diligence and growth in grace to secure their salvation, or thus to prove or demonstrate their calling and election. He meant also to admonish them that, although called and elected, still their ultimate salvation was conditionated upon their diligent growth in grace, and perseverance in holiness to the end of life. He therefore exhorts them to make their calling and election sure, which is the same as to secure their salvation. He speaks of calling and election as indissolubly connected. Effectual calling either results from election, or election from calling. We have seen that election is eternal; therefore, election cannot result from calling, but calling must result from election.

Again: Christians and saints, and the children and people of God, the disciples of Christ, and the elect, are to all appearance regarded throughout the Bible as the same class.

Again: Christ says, Joh 6:37, Joh 6:39 : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 39. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Here Jesus says, that all who are given to him by the Father shall come to him, and that of those that come to him, it is his Father's will that he should lose none, but that he should raise them up, (that is, to eternal life,) at the last day. He does not say here, that none do come to him who are not given to him by the Father, but this is plainly implied, for he says, 37th. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." What he means by not casting them out, is plain from verse 39. That is, "It is the Father's will that of all that shall come to me I should lose nothing." By not casting them out, then, he intended that he should surely save them, that is, all that came to him. But if he saves them, they must have been given to Christ and have been elected, or they were not. If they were not elected, or given to Christ by the Father, they will never be saved, unless some are saved without God's designing or choosing to save them. If any are saved, God saves them, through or by Christ. If he saves them, he does it designedly, and not without design. But if he ever does, or will design it, he has from eternity designed it. So then, it appears, that all who come to Christ were given to him of the Father; and that he will lose none of them, but will raise them up at the last day. My object at present, however, is not to insist that no one that comes to Christ will be lost, but only that all who come to Christ are of the number that were given to him of the Father, or are of the elect.

Again: compare verses 37, 39, 44, 45. He says: Joh 6:37, Joh 6:39, Joh 6:44-45 : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 39. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 44. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Here it appears that no one can come to Christ except he be drawn of the Father. Every one who is drawn by the Father with an effectual drawing, or every one who hears and learns of the Father comes to Christ, and no other. The Father draws none to Christ, but those whom he has given to Christ; for these, and these only, are the children of God. Isa 54:13 : "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." From these passages it appears that none come to Christ but those who are drawn by the Father, and that none are drawn by the Father but those whom he has given to his Son, or the elect; and that of those who are thus drawn to Christ, it is the Father's will that he should lose none, but that he should raise them up at the last day; that is, that he should save them. But observe, it is my particular object just now to establish the fact, that none come to Christ but those who are of the number that are given to Christ, and also that every one who is given to him shall come to him. These, and these only, are effectually called or drawn of the Father. All are called in the sense of being earnestly and honestly invited, and all the divine persuasion addressed to them that can wisely be addressed to them. But others, besides those given to the Son, are not, as a matter of fact, persuaded and effectually drawn, in a sense that secures the "concurrence of free will with free grace."

The same truth is strongly implied in many other passages in the teachings of Christ. For example, He says--

Joh 10:1-6 : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them."

He then proceeds to expound the parable. He is the good shepherd having the care of his Father's sheep. He says:

Joh 10:7-17 : "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

He had other sheep which were not yet called--they were not of this fold--that is, they were not Jews, but Gentiles; these he must bring. To the unbelieving and cavilling Jews he said:

Joh 10:26-29 : "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Here it is plainly implied, that all those were sheep who were given to him by the Father, and that all such would surely hear and know his voice and follow him, but those that were not of his sheep, or were not given him by the Father, would not believe. He says, verse Joh 10:26 : "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." What he here says amounts to this: all those are sheep who are given to me of my Father. All my sheep thus given, shall and will hear my voice, and follow me, and none others will. I do not notice in this place what he says of the certainty of their salvation, because my present object is only to show that those and those only come to Christ who are given to him of the Father, or are of the elect.

This same truth is either expressly taught, or strongly implied in a great many passages, and indeed it seems to me to be the doctrine of the whole Bible. Again, Rom 8:28 : "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Here they that love God are represented as identical with those "who are the called according to his purpose." In other words, they who love God are the called according to, or in consequence of their election. All that love God, do so because they have been effectually called, according to the purpose or election of God. This passage seems to settle the question, especially when viewed in its connexion, that all who ever love God are of the elect, and that they are prevailed upon to love God in conformity with their election.

We shall have occasion by and by to examine the connexion in which this passage is found, for the purpose of showing that all who at any time truly come to love God, will be saved. I have only quoted this twenty-eighth verse here for the purpose of showing, not directly, that all that love God at any time will be saved, but that they are of the number of the elect, from which fact their ultimate salvation must be inferred.

It is plain that the apostles regarded regeneration as conclusive evidence of election. The manner in which they address Christians seems to me to put this beyond a doubt. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, 2Th 2:13, says, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Here the apostle speaks of all the brethren at Thessalonica as beloved of the Lord, and as being from eternity chosen to salvation. He felt called upon to give thanks to God for this reason, that God had chosen them to salvation from eternity. This he represents as true of the whole church: that is, doubtless, of all true Christians in the church. Indeed, the apostles everywhere speak as if they regarded all true saints as of the elect, and their saintship as evidence of their election. Peter, in writing to the Christians in his first letter, says:

1 Pet. 1:1-9 : "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time: Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Here it is plain that Peter regarded all who had been born again to a lively hope, or who were regenerated as elected, or as chosen to salvation. I might pursue this argument to an indefinite length, but I must attend to other considerations in support of the doctrine in question.

I will for the present close what I have to say under this particular branch of the argument, by reminding you that Christ has expressly asserted that no man can or does come to him except the Father draw him, and that the Father draws to him those--and by fair inference those only--whom he has given to Christ; and further, that it is the Father's will, that of those whom the Father had given to Christ, and drawn to him, Christ should lose none, but should raise them up at the last day. It is, I think, evident, that when Christ asserts it to be his Father's will, that of those whom the Father had given him he should lose none, but should raise them up at the last day, he intended to say, that his Father not merely desired and willed this, but that such was his design. That the Father designed to secure their salvation.

This we shall more fully see in its proper place.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXX.

PERSEVERANCE PROVED.

(2.) I remark, that God is able to preserve and keep the true saints from apostacy, in consistency with their liberty: 2Ti 1:12 : "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Here the apostle expresses the fullest confidence in the ability of Christ to keep him: and indeed, as has been said, it is most manifest that the apostles expected to persevere and be saved only because they believed in the ability and willingness of God to keep them from falling. Again: Rom 14:4 : "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant; to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." Again, Phi 3:21 : "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Again, Eph 3:20 : "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Again, Jud 1:24 : "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Again, 2Co 9:8 : "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Eph 1:18-20 : "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Again, Heb 7:25 : "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." These and many other passages prove beyond a doubt that God is able to preserve his saints.

(3.) God is not only able to keep all that come to Christ, or all true Christians, but he is also willing. But Christ has settled this question, as we have seen.

Joh 6:37-40 : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me; And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Here, then, we have just seen these two points settled, namely--

(i.) That God is able to save all saints, or all who at any time truly believe and come to Christ; and,

(ii.) That he is willing, or wills to do it. Now if he is both able and willing to keep and save all the saints, he certainly will do it.

But here I know it will be objected, that by this course of argument, the doctrine of universal salvation may be established. The Bible, it is said, represents God as both able and willing to save all men, and if his being both able and willing to save the saints, proves that they will all be saved, it follows that his being able and willing to save all men proves that all men will be saved. But the cases are not parallel; for God no where professes ability to save all men, but on the contrary, disclaims such ability, and professes to be unable to save all men; that is, he cannot, under the circumstances, wisely save them, nor can he wisely do any more for saints or sinners than he does. No passage can be found in the Bible, in which God asserts his ability to save all men. The passages that affirm that "God can do all things," and that "nothing is too hard for the Lord," and the like, cannot be understood as affirming God's ability to save all men. They do imply, that he has power to do whatever is an object of physical omnipotence; but to save sinners is not an object of physical power. Their salvation, if accomplished at all, must be brought about by a moral and persuasive influence, and not by the exercise of physical omnipotence. In the sense in which we can justly apply the terms ability and inability to this subject, God is really unable to do what it is unwise for him to do. He has an end in view. This end is the highest good and blessedness of universal being. This end can be accomplished only by the appropriate means, or upon certain conditions. These conditions include the perfect holiness of moral agents. If God cannot wisely use such means as will secure the conversion and sanctification of sinners, he cannot save them. That is, he is unable to save them. This he repeatedly professes to be unable to do.

Eze 18:23, Eze 18:32 : "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

Eze 33:11 : "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Isa 5:4 : "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Hos 11:8 : "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

These are only specimens of the manner in which God speaks of his ability to save sinners, and to do more for the church or the world than he does. From such professions on the part of God, we are to understand him, as disclaiming ability to do more or otherwise than he does, in consistency with the highest good of being in general. Since the highest good of being in general is the end which he is aiming to secure, he "may justly be said to be unable to do whatever he cannot do in consistency with the use of those means that will secure this end." God, therefore, does not affirm his ability to save all men, but fully disclaims any such ability, and professes to do, and to be doing, all that he can to save them. He professes to be perfectly benevolent and infinitely wise, and to be doing all that infinite wisdom and benevolence can do for sinners and for all men, and complains, that all he can do does not save, and will not save many of them.

But with respect to the saints, he does expressly affirm his ability to keep them, in a sense that will secure their salvation. This we have seen. He does for them all that he wisely can, and does enough, as he expressly affirms, to secure their salvation. No one can attentively read and consider the passages relating to God's ability to save all men, and his ability to save his people, without perceiving, that the two cases are not parallel, but that in fact they are contrasts. He expressly affirms his ability to keep, to sanctify, and to save his elect children, whilst he repeatedly, either expressly, or by implication, disclaims ability to save all men.

Again: the Bible no where represents God as willing the salvation of all men, in the same sense in which it represents him as willing the salvation of Christians, or of his elect. Such passages as the following are specimens of God's professions of willingness to save all men.

1Ti 2:4 : "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Joh 3:16-17 : "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

2Pe 3:9 : "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

These and similar passages teach that God wills the salvation of all men, only in the sense of desiring it. This we know from the fact, that he nowhere intimates a willingness, in the sense of a design or intention, to save all men; but on the contrary, plainly reveals an opposite purpose or design; that is, he reveals the fact, that he cannot, shall not, and of course, does not, expect or design to save all men. By the profession of a willingness to save all men, we can therefore justly understand him to mean, only that he desires the salvation of all men, and that he would secure their salvation if he wisely could. This is all that we can understand him as affirming, unless we would accuse him of self-contradiction.

But he professes a willingness to save his elect, or in other words, all regenerate persons, or all believers in Christ, and all whoever will truly believe in him, in the sense of purposing or designing to save them. This is most manifest from the scriptures we have already examined, and this will still further appear from the passages to be examined.

We have seen that the Father has given a certain number to Christ, with express design to secure their salvation; that he has committed to him all the requisite power and influences to save them, and that they will actually be saved. Nothing like this can be found in the Bible, respecting any other class of men whatever. This objection, then, is without foundation, and the argument from the ability and willingness of God to save his saints, remains in full force and conclusiveness.

(4.) Again: Christ expressly prayed for all believers, and in a manner that secures their being kept and saved:--

Joh 17:2, Joh 17:6-14, Joh 17:20-24 : "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word. 7. Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee; 8. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. 10. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. 21. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. 23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Now observe, that in this most affecting prayer Christ says,--

(i.) Joh 17:2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

We have seen, that, in the 6th chapter of this book, Christ expressly teaches, that all are given to him that come to him, and that all shall come to him who were given to him by the Father.

(ii.) He proceeds to affirm, that he had in the exercise of this power kept in his Father's name all who had been given, and had come to him, and had lost none.

(iii.) He asks the Father henceforth to keep them in his own name, as he was about to leave them, as to his bodily presence. He says, Joh 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Again, he says, Joh 17:20-24 : "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Now, as surely as Christ's prayer is answered, all believers will be saved; that is, at least all who ever have believed, or ever will believe, subsequent to the offering of this prayer. But Christ's prayers are always answered.

To this it is objected, that a part of this same prayer is not answered, and of course never will be. It is said, for example, that in the 21st verse he prays for the union of all believers, which has been far enough from having been answered. The verse reads, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here he explains the sense in which he prays that all believers may be one, not that they should be all of one denomination or creed, but that they should possess one and the same spirit; that the same spirit that united the Father and the Son, that is, the Holy Spirit, who is in the Father and the Son, might also be in all Christians. This is plainly his meaning; and that this is true of all real Christians, that they possess the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit that dwells in the Father and the Son, no one can doubt who understands and believes his Bible.

But it is objected again, that Christ prayed to be delivered from crucifixion, and his prayer was not answered.

I reply, that he did not pray for this, if at all, unqualifiedly. He says, "If it be possible, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." If it were the pains of the cross from which his soul shrunk in the garden, and from which he desired, if possible, to be excused, it is plain that he did not pray unqualifiedly to be delivered; but, on the contrary, submitted the question to the will of his Father. But in the prayer, in John 17, he made no such condition. He knew that in this case it was his Father's will to grant his request. Of this he had expressly informed his disciples, as we have seen; that is, that it was his Father's will to keep and save all who were given to Christ, and had been drawn by the Father to Christ. The Spirit of this petition accords precisely with his teaching upon the subject. He had taught before that all believers would be kept and saved, and that this was his Father's will; now, could he, either expressly or impliedly, in this prayer, put in the condition that was in the prayer just referred to, namely, "If it be thy will?" But, although what has been said is a full answer to the assertion that Christ's prayers are not always answered, it may be, for some minds, important to say, that it is far from being certain that Christ prayed to be delivered from crucifixion.

Joh 12:23-28 : "And Jesus answered them, saying, the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life, shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Here Christ plainly intimates, that he did not pray to escape the death to which he was appointed, and for which he had come to that hour. But it may be asked, against what did Jesus pray in the garden? I reply, against being overcome by the agony of his soul, and crushed to death before he came to the cross. The following passages may throw some light upon this question: Joh 14:30 : "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Here he informs his disciples, that he must soon break off the conversation with them, for he was just entering into a severe conflict with Satan. Matthew records the conflict through which the Saviour passed, and of which he advised his disciples.

Mat 26:37-46 : "And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

Here it appears, that Christ had his last and great conflict with Satan. Satan set on him, as it appears, to kill him outright with anguish.

Luke, in recording this transaction, says, Luk 22:39-46 : "And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said to them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

It is, I think, plain, that this struggle in the garden was a sore and overwhelming temptation, and that an angel was sent to assist him, by resisting and putting away Satan; that is, it was by sending an angel, that his Father answered his prayer. This prayer appears to have been heard and answered for from this time his mind remained calm. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that I think evidently refers to this scene.

Heb 5:7 : "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

To what does this refer, if not to the death he feared in the garden? He said on that occasion, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He then offered up prayer with strong crying and tears, and was heard, &c. To my mind all these circumstances taken together make it very evident, that Christ did not pray against the cross, in the petition under consideration, but that, on the contrary, he prayed to be delivered from temptation, and was heard and answered.

But be this as it may, we are to remember that Christ expressly affirms, that his Father always hears, that is, answers his prayers.

Joh 11:42 : "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

Again, Paul says of Christ, Heb 7:25 : "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Here he asserts, that Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he always lives to make intercession for them. This, as plainly as possible, implies, that his intercessions are all-prevailing. Indeed, as he is the mediator, they must be.

Now let us consider how far we have advanced in establishing the perseverance and final salvation of all believers.

(i.) We have seen, that all the elect to salvation will be saved.

(ii.) That all true believers are of this number.

(iii.) That God and Christ are able to keep them from apostacy, and save them.

(iv.) That he is willing or wills to do it.

(v.) That Christ expressly prayed for the perseverance and final salvation of all believers.

(vi.) That he prayed in express accordance with the revealed will of his Father; and--

(vii.) That his prayers always prevail and are answered.

In Christ's prayer in John, chap. xvii., he expressly affirms, that he did not pray for the world, that is, for all men. He prayed only for those whom the Father had given him. For these he prayed, not merely that God would save them upon condition of their perseverance, but that God would keep them from the evil that is in the world, and save them, and make them one, in the sense, that one Spirit should be in them all. He asked manifestly the same things for all that in future believe, that he asked for those who had already believed.

Should I proceed no further the argument is complete, and the proof conclusive. But since this doctrine is so abundantly taught, either expressly or impliedly, in the Bible, I proceed to the consideration of a number of other passages which will throw still further light on the subject.

(5.) Christ expressly and designedly teaches this doctrine.

Joh 6:39-40, Joh 6:47, Joh 6:51 : "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. 47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Here he expressly teaches, as we have before seen, that it is his Father's will, that all believers, or all who at any time believe, (for this is plainly his meaning,) shall be saved; that he should lose none of them, but as we have seen, John xvii. 2, should give them eternal life. Then he claims ability to keep and save them, agreeably to his Father's will. This, remember, respects all believers, or all who are given to Christ, who, we have learned, are the same persons.

Again: Joh 10:27-29 : "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

The whole connexion shows, that Christ intended to teach the certainty of the salvation of all his sheep, or of all the elect, or, which is the same, of all true believers. But, to this it is objected, that none are sheep any longer than they remain obedient, and therefore the assertion that he will save the sheep, does not secure those who at any time sin. But I reply, that Christ recognizes all the elect as his sheep, whether converted, or whether in a state of temporary backsliding, or not. He represents his sheep as hearing his voice, and as following him, and those who are not of his sheep as not hearing his voice, and as not following him: Joh 10:16, Joh 10:26 : "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 26. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."

Again, Mat 18:12-14 : "How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

The design of this parable is to teach the doctrine I am defending. If not, what is its design? This is a full answer to the objection, that no one is recognized as a sheep who has gone astray.

But again, it is said, that although no one else can pluck the sheep out of the Father's hand, yet we can do it ourselves. I grant, that we can, by natural possibility; but this objection is good for nothing, for Christ expressly says, Joh 10:27-29 : "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Not only is no one able to pluck them out of his Father's hand, but Christ gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. This implies, that while they might or are able to apostatize and be lost, yet, as a matter of fact, they never will. What could be made out of all he says of himself as a shepherd in this passage, if, after all, he loses some of his sheep? Let any one ponder the whole chapter, and see.

(6.) Another argument, in support of the doctrine under consideration, I deduce from the fact, that Paul, an inspired apostle, believed it.

Phi 1:1-6 : "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,) For your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Here the apostle represents himself as giving thanks for all the saints at Philippi, upon the ground of his confidence that he who had begun a good work in them would perform, or perfect it, until the day of Christ. His confidence did not rest in them, but in the faithfulness of Christ. He did not express a confidence, that they would of themselves persevere, but that he who had begun a good work in them, would carry it on: that is, that he would so work in them as to keep them, and as to secure their perseverance to the end. This he expected with respect to all the saints at Philippi. But if he believed this of all the saints at that place, it is plainly and fairly inferable that he believed it, simply because he expected this, as to all true saints. He does not intimate, that he expected this because of any peculiarity in their case,--that is, not because they were better than other saints, or that God would do more for them than for others. He seems plainly to have expressed this confidence, upon the ground of his expectation, that he who begins a good work in any saint, will carry it on and perfect it until the day of Christ. Should it be said, that Paul intended merely to express the conviction or opinion of a good man, that the Philippian saints would be saved, but that he did not intend to utter this as the voice of inspiration; I reply, that Paul plainly expresses a confidence that they would all be saved, and that God would perfect the work which he had begun. Now, how came he by this confidence? He was an inspired man. If inspiration had taught him that real saints do fall away and are lost, how could he consistently express so thorough a persuasion, that all the saints at Philippi would be saved? If Paul believed in the perseverance of the saints, it must be true, or he was deceived in respect to this important doctrine. But is it not safe to trust Paul's opinion of this doctrine? If any one is disposed to contend, that we cannot with strict justice infer that Paul believed the same in respect to God's perfecting the work in all saints, that he believed in respect to the Philippians, I will not contend with him with respect to this. It is, however, clear, that Paul no where in this epistle, nor elsewhere, intimates that he had higher expectations in regard to the salvation of the Philippians, than he had in respect to the salvation of all true saints. In writing to the churches, the apostles appear to have regarded and spoken of all true saints as the elect-children of God. They seem to represent the salvation of all such persons as certain, but always keeping in mind and holding forth, either expressly or by way of implication, the nature of this certainty, that it was conditioned upon the right and persevering use of their own agency. They consequently constantly endeavour to guard the churches against delusion, in regard to their being real saints, and admonish them to prove themselves in this respect, and also warn them against the supposition, that they can be saved, without actual perseverance in faith and obedience to the end of life.

(7.) The apostles seemed to have regarded the conversion of sinners as an evidence that God designed to save them, or that they were of the elect:--

Act 2:47 : "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Act 13:48 : "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

In these passages as elsewhere, the conversion of sinners is spoken of as settling the question of their salvation. But if true saints do fall from grace and perish, why should the inspired writers so often express themselves, as if they regarded the regeneration of a person as an indication that he is one of the elect, and as securing his salvation?

So common is it for Christ and the apostles to speak of regeneration as settling the question of the salvation of those who are regenerated, that great multitudes have overlooked the fact, that there was any other condition of salvation insisted on in the Bible. When the jailor demanded of Paul and Silas what he should do to be saved, Paul replied to him "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Here, as is common in the Bible, faith is spoken of as if it were the sole condition of salvation. Repentance, faith, regeneration, &c., are often, as every student of the Bible knows, spoken of as if they were the only conditions of salvation. Now, it seems to me, that this could not, and ought not to be, if there is not a certain connexion of some sort between real conversion and eternal salvation. It is true, the necessity of perseverance to the end is often mentioned and insisted upon in the Bible as a condition of salvation, just as might be expected when we consider the nature of the certainty in question. If there is not, however, a certain connexion between true regeneration, or faith, or repentance and salvation, it seems to me incredible, that we should so often find faith, and repentance, and conversion spoken of as if they secured salvation.

Those who believe are represented as already having eternal life, as not coming into condemnation, but as having passed from death unto life. The following passages are specimens of the manner in which the scriptures speak upon this subject.

Joh 1:12-13 : "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Joh 3:36, Joh 3:16, Joh 3:18 : "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Joh 4:14 : "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Joh 5:24 : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Joh 6:37, Joh 6:40, Joh 6:45, Joh 6:47 : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Act 2:38 : "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Act 13:48 : "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

Act 16:31 : "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Mar 16:15-16 : "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Now it seems to me, that this numerous class of passages strongly imply that there is a certain connexion of some sort between coming to Christ, receiving Christ, &c., and eternal life. Observe, I do not contend that perseverance in faith and obedience is not also a condition of salvation, but on the contrary, that it actually is. Nor do I contend that such like representations as the above, settle the question that all who at any time repent, believe, or come to Christ, will be saved. The thing which I here intend is, that this class of texts is just what we might expect, if the fact of regeneration were certainly connected with salvation, and just what it seems they ought not to be, in case this were not true.

To this it is objected, that many who attended on Christ's ministry are represented from time to time as believing, of whom it is almost immediately said, that they turned back and walked no more with him. I answer, that the Bible manifestly recognizes different kinds of faith, such as an intellectual faith, a faith of miracles, and the faith of the heart. The following are specimens of the Bible treatment of this subject:

Act 8:13, Act 8:21, Act 8:37 : "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. 21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Jam 2:19 : "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble."

These and many other passages manifestly speak of an intellectual faith, or of a simple conviction of the truth.

Mat 7:22-23; 1Co 13:1-2, are specimens of the manner in which the faith of miracles is represented.

See Rom 10:9-11; Act 8:37; Gal 5:6. These and such like passages speak of evangelical faith, or the faith of the heart. When the multitude are spoken of as believing under Christ's instruction, or in view of his miracles, and then as going back and walking no more with him, we are doubtless to understand those passages as teaching simply, that they were at the time convinced of his Messiahship, and that they intellectually believed that he was what he professed to be. But their history seems to forbid the conclusion that they were truly regenerated, or that they had the true faith of the gospel.

Again: John speaks of those who openly apostasized as if they had not been true Christians: 1Jo 2:19 : "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Observe the force of the expressions, "They went out from us, but they were not of us;" that is, were not truly Christians. Why does he say so? He assigns the reason for this assertion: "for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out from us that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." That is, a part of the professed disciples went out from the rest and returned to the world, that it might be made manifest who were and who were not Christians. I do not say, however, that this is indubitably taught in this passage; but it cannot be denied, that this is its most natural construction.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXXI.

PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

V. *Consider the objections to it*.

1. It is said that the natural tendency of this doctrine condemns it; that it tends to beget and foster a carnal presumption in a life of sin, on the part of those who think themselves saints.

There is, I reply, a broad and obvious distinction between the abuse of a good thing or doctrine, and its natural tendency. The legitimate tendency of a thing or doctrine may be good, and yet it may be abused and perverted. This is true of the atonement, and the offer of pardon through Christ. These doctrines have been, and are, greatly objected to by universalists and unitarians, as having a tendency to encourage the hope of impunity in sin. It is said by them, that to hold out the idea that Christ has made an atonement for sin, and that the oldest and vilest sinners may be forgiven and saved, tends directly to immorality, and to encourage the hope of ultimate impunity in a life of sin; the hope that, after a sinful life, the sinner may at last repent and be saved.

Now, there is so much plausibility in this objection to the doctrine of pardon and atonement, that many sensible men have rejected those doctrines because of this objection. They have regarded the objection as unanswerable. But a close examination will show, that the objection against those doctrines is entirely without foundation; and not only so, but that the real natural tendency of those doctrines affords a strong presumptive argument in their favour. Who does not know, after all, that from the nature and laws of mind, the manifestation of compassion and of disinterested good will, and a disposition to forgive a fault on the part of the justly offended, tend in the highest degree to bring the offender to repentance? "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." This command is the perfection of wisdom. It recognizes mind, and the laws of mind as they are. The free offer of pardon to a convicted and self-condemned sinner has no natural tendency to encourage him in sin, but is the most potent influence possible to bring him to immediate repentance.

So the telling of a convinced and self-condemned sinner, that Christ has died for his sins, and offers freely and at once to forgive all the past, has no natural tendency to beget a spirit of perseverance in rebellion; but is on the contrary the readiest, and safest, and I may add, the only effectual method of subduing him, and bringing him to immediate repentance. But suppose, on the other hand, you tell him there is no forgiveness, that he must be punished for his sins at all events, what tendency has this to bring him to immediate and genuine repentance; to beget within him the love required by the law of God? Assuring him of punishment for all his sins might serve to restrain outward manifestations of a sinful heart, but certainly it tends not to subdue selfishness, and to cleanse the heart; whereas the offer of mercy through the death of Christ, has a most sin-subduing tendency. It is such a manifestation to the sinner of God's great love to him, his real pity for him, and readiness to overlook and blot out the past, as tends to break down the stubborn heart into genuine repentance, and to beget the sincerest love to God and Christ, together with the deepest self-loathing and self-abasement on account of sin. Thus the doctrines of the atonement and pardon through a crucified Redeemer, instead of being condemned by their legitimate tendency, are greatly confirmed thereby. These doctrines are no doubt liable to abuse, and so is every good thing; but is this a good reason for rejecting them? Our necessary food and drink may be abused, and often are, and so are all the most essential blessings of life. Should we reject them on this account?

It is admitted, that the doctrines of atonement and forgiveness through Christ, are greatly abused by careless sinners and hypocrites; but is this a good reason for denying and withholding them from the convicted sinner, who is earnestly inquiring what he shall do to be saved? No, indeed.

It is also admitted, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is liable to abuse, and often is abused by the carnal and deceived professor; but is this a good reason for rejecting it, and for withholding its consolations from the tempted, tempest-tossed saint? By no means. Such are the circumstances of temptation from within and without, in which the saints are placed in this life, that when they are made really acquainted with themselves, and are brought to a proper appreciation of the circumstances in which they are, they have but little rational ground of hope, except what is found in this doctrine. The natural tendency and inevitable consequence of a thorough revelation of themselves to themselves, would be to beget despair, but for the covenanted grace and faithfulness of God. What saint who has ever been revealed to himself by the Holy Spirit, has not seen what Paul saw when he said, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing?" Who that has been made acquainted with himself does not know that he never did, and never will take one step towards heaven, except as he is anticipated and drawn by the grace of God in Christ Jesus? Who that knows himself does not understand that he never would have been converted, but for the grace of God anticipating and exciting the first motions of his mind in a right direction? And what true saint does not know, that such are his former habitudes, and such the circumstances of trial under which he is placed, and such the downward tendency of his own soul on account of his physical depravity*(see below), that although converted, he shall not persevere for an hour, except the indwelling grace and Spirit of God shall hold him up, and quicken him in the path of holiness?

Where, I would ask, is the ground of hope for the saints as they exist in this world? Not in the fact that they have been physically regenerated, so that to fall is naturally impossible. Not in the fact that they have passed through any such change of nature as to secure their perseverance for an hour, if left to themselves. Not in the fact that they can, or will sustain themselves for a day or a moment by their resolutions. Where then is their hope? There is not even a ground of probability, that any one of them will ever be saved, unless the doctrine in question be true, that is, unless the promised grace and faithfulness of God in Christ Jesus goes before, and from step to step secures their perseverance. But if this grace is promised to any saint, as his only ground of confidence, or even hope that he shall be saved, it is equally, and upon the same conditions, promised to all the saints. No one more than another can place the least reasonable dependence on anything, except the grace equally promised and vouchsafed to all. What does a man know of himself who hopes to be saved, and who yet does not depend wholly on promises of grace in Christ Jesus?

The natural tendency of true and thorough conviction of sin, and of such a knowledge of ourselves, as is essential to salvation, is to beget and foster despondency and despair; and, as I said, the soul in this condition has absolutely little or no ground of hope of ultimate salvation, except that which this doctrine, when rightly understood, affords. However far he may have progressed in the way of life, he sees, when he thoroughly knows the truth, that he has progressed not a step, except as he has been drawn and inclined by the indwelling grace and Spirit of Christ; and that he shall absolutely go no further in the way to heaven, unless the same gracious influence is continued, in such a sense, and to such an extent, as to overcome all the temptations with which he is beset. His only hope is in the fact, that God has promised to keep and preserve him. Nothing but God's faithfulness to his Son procured the conversion of any saint. Nothing but this same faithfulness has procured his perseverance for a day, and nothing else can render the salvation of any soul at all probable. What can a man be thinking about, or what can he know of himself, who does not know this? Unless the same grace that secures the conversion of the saints, secures their perseverance to the end, there is no hope for them. It is true, that the promises to sinners and to saints are conditioned upon their faith, and upon the right exercise of their own agency; and it is also true, that grace secures the fulfilment of the conditions of the promises, in every instance in which they are fulfilled, or they never would be fulfilled.

We have seen that the promises of the Father to the Son secure the bestowment upon the saints of all grace to ensure their final salvation.

It shocks and distresses me to hear professed Christians talk of being saved at all, except upon the ground of the anticipating, and persevering, and sin-overcoming, and hell-subduing grace of God in Christ Jesus. Why, I should as soon expect the devil to be saved, as that any saint on earth will be, if left, with all the promises of God in his hands, to stand and persevere without the drawings, and inward teachings, and over-persuading influences of the Holy Spirit. Shame on a theology that suspends the ultimate salvation of the saints upon the broken reed of their own resolutions in their best estate. Their firmest resolutions are nothing unless they are formed and supported by the influence of the Spirit of grace, going before, and exciting, and persuading to their formation and their continuance. This is everywhere taught in the Bible; and who that has considered the matter does not know, that this is the experience of every saint? Where, then, is the ground of hope, if the doctrine in question be denied? "If the foundation be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" Where, then, is the evil tendency of this doctrine? It has no naturally evil tendency. Can the assurance of eternal salvation through the blood, and love, and grace of Christ, have a natural tendency to harden the heart of a child of God against his Father and his Saviour? Can the revealed fact, that he shall be more than a conqueror through Christ, beget in him a disposition to sin against Christ? Impossible! This doctrine, though liable to abuse by hypocrites, is nevertheless the sheet anchor of the saints in hours of conflict. And shall the children be deprived of the bread of life, because sinners will pervert the use of it to their own destruction? This doctrine is absolutely needful to prevent despair, when conviction is deep, and conflicts with temptation are sharp. Its natural tendency is to slay and keep down selfishness, to forestall selfish efforts and resolutions, and to sustain the confidence of the soul at all times. It tends to subdue sin, to humble the soul under a sense of the great love and faithfulness of God in Christ Jesus; to influence the soul to live upon Christ, and to renounce entirely and for ever all confidence in the flesh. Indeed, its tendency is the direct opposite of that asserted in the objection. It is the abuse, and not the natural tendency of this doctrine, against which this objection is urged. But the abuse of a doctrine is no reason why it should be rejected.

2. But it is said that real saints do sometimes fall into at least temporary backsliding, in which cases the belief of this doctrine tends to lull them into carnal security, and to prolong their backsliding, if not to embolden them to apostatize. To this I reply,--

That if real Christians do backslide, they lose for the time being their evidence of acceptance with God; and withal they know that in their present state they cannot be saved. This objection is levelled rather against that view of perseverance that says, "once in grace, always in grace;" that teaches the doctrine of perpetual justification upon condition of one act of faith. The doctrine as stated in these lectures, holds out no ground of hope to a backslider, except upon condition of return and perseverance to the end. Moreover, the doctrine as here taught is that perseverance in holiness, in the sense, that, subsequent to regeneration holiness is at least the rule, and sin only the exception, is an attribute of Christian character. Every moment, therefore, a backslider remains in sin, he must have less evidence that he is a child of God.

But as I said, he loses confidence in his own Christianity, and in this state of backsliding he does not believe the doctrine of perseverance, as a doctrine of revelation. It is absurd to say, that while backslidden from God he still has faith in his word, and believes this doctrine as a Christian doctrine, and upon the strength of the testimony of God. He does not in this state really believe the doctrine, and therefore it is not the tendency of the doctrine when believed that harms him, but a gross abuse and perversion of it. But the perversion of a doctrine is no objection to it. The real tendency of the doctrine is to break the heart of the backslider, to exhibit to him the great love, and faithfulness, and grace of God which tend naturally to subdue selfishness, and to humble the heart. When backsliders are emboldened by this doctrine and rendered presumptuous, it is never by any other than a gross perversion and abuse of it.

But still it is said, that when Christians backslide, they know if this doctrine is true, that they shall not die in a backslidden state, and that, therefore they are naturally rendered presumptuous by it. I answer, that the same objection lies against the doctrine of election, which cannot be denied. Who does not know that sinners and backsliders say, If I am elected, I shall be saved; and if not, I shall be lost? The event is certain at any rate, and if I am to use the means, I shall use the means; and if I am to neglect them, I shall neglect them. If I am one of the elect, I shall not die in sin; and if not, I shall, do what I may. The backslider says, I have been converted, and am therefore one of the elect; for there is no evidence that any of the non-elect are ever converted; but the elect cannot be lost, or will not be lost, at any rate; therefore I shall be reclaimed before I die. Now who does not see that all such refuges are refuges of lies? They are abuses of precious truth. The objection we are considering is based upon an overlooking of the all-important distinction between the natural tendency and the abuse of a doctrine. If this doctrine has a natural tendency to mischief, it must be calculated to mislead a humble, honest, and prayerful mind in search of truth. It must tend to lead a true saint away from, instead of to Christ. The fact that sinners and backsliders, who for the time being are the chief of sinners, will and do abuse and pervert it, is no better reason for rejecting this doctrine, than it is for rejecting the doctrine of atonement, of justification by faith, or the doctrine of the free pardon of the greatest sinners, upon condition of repentance and faith. It is true that no person whom God foresees will be saved, will die in sin. It is true that no elect person will die in sin; and as I believe all true saints are elect, nevertheless, the natural tendency of this doctrine is anything else than to beget presumption in the real saint; but on the contrary, it has a natural and a powerful tendency to impress him with sin subduing views of the infinite love, compassion, faithfulness, and grace of God, and to charm him away from his sins for ever. If by any means he falls into temporary backsliding, he may abuse this, as he may every other doctrine of the gospel; but let it be understood, that he does not believe for the time being one of the doctrines of the gospel. Not believing them, he of course is not injured by their natural tendency, but only by a perverse abuse of them.

As well might a universalist complain, and accuse you of preaching smooth things, and of encouraging sinners to continue in sin, by preaching that the vilest sinner may be forgiven, as for you to object to this doctrine, that backsliders are rendered presumptuous by it.

If one is more liable to abuse than the other, the difference is only in degree and not in kind. The backslider cannot know that he was ever converted; for, as a matter of fact, he has lost communion with God, and has lost the present evidence of acceptance. He does not, therefore, rest in a real belief of this doctrine, but only in a perverse abuse of it.

Those who persist in such objections should reflect upon their own inconsistency, in making a manifest perversion and abuse of this doctrine an objection to it, when they hold other doctrines, equally liable to abuse and equally abused, in spite of such abuse. Let such persons see, that they are practically adopting a principle, and insisting upon its application in this case, which, if carried out, would set aside the whole gospel. They are thus playing into the hands of infidels and universalists, and giving the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme.

3. It is objected, that the Bible speaks of the saints as if there were real danger of their being lost. It requires them to spend the time of their sojourning here in fear, and abounds with cautions, and warnings, and threatenings, that are certainly out of place, and not at all to be regarded, if the salvation of the saints is a revealed certainty. How, it is inquired, can we fear, if God has revealed the certainty of our salvation? Is not fear in such a case a result of unbelief? Can God reveal to us the fact, that we shall certainly be saved, and then call on us or exhort us to fear that we shall not be saved? Can he require us to doubt his word and his oath? If God has revealed the certainty of the salvation of all true saints, can any saint fear that he shall not be saved without downright unbelief? and can God approve and even enjoin such fears? If a person is conscious of possessing the character ascribed to the true saints in the Bible, is he not bound upon the supposition that this doctrine is true, to have and to entertain the most unwavering assurance that he shall be saved? Has he any right to doubt it, or to fear that he shall not be saved?

I answer, that no true saint who has an evidence or an earnest of his acceptance with God, such as the true saint may have, has a right to doubt for a moment that he shall be saved, nor has he a right to fear, that he shall not be saved. I also add, that the Bible nowhere encourages, or calls upon the saints to fear, that they shall not be saved, or that they shall be lost. It calls on them to fear something else, to fear to sin or apostatize, lest they should be lost, but not that they shall sin and be lost. The following are specimens of the exhortations and warnings given to the saints:--

Mat 26:41 : "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Mar 13:33-37 : "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. So watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Luk 12:37 : "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

1Co 10:12 : "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

1Co 16:13 : "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Eph 5:15-16 : "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Eph 6:10-11 . "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Phi 1:27-28 : "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God."

1Th 5:6 : "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

1Ti 6:12 : "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

2Ti 2:3 : "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

2Ti 4:5 : "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

1Pe 4:7 : "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

Mat 10:22 : "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Joh 15:6 : "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Rom 2:6-7 : "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life."

1Co 9:27 : "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

2Co 6:1 : "We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Col 1:23 : "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

Heb 3:6, Heb 3:12-14 : "But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called, To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

Heb 4:1, Heb 4:11 : "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

2Pe 1:10 : "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

Rev 2:10-11, Rev 2:17, Rev 2:26 : "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. 26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

Rev 21:7 : "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

1Pe 1:17 : "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

I find no instance in the Bible in which the saints are enjoined or exhorted to fear that they shall actually be lost; but, on the contrary, this kind of fear is everywhere, in the word of God, discountenanced and rebuked, and the saints are exhorted to the utmost assurance that Christ will keep and preserve them to the end, and finally bestow on them eternal life. They are warned against sin and apostacy, and are informed that if they do apostatize they shall be lost. They are expressly informed, that their salvation is conditioned upon their perseverance in holiness to the end. They are also called upon to watch against sin and apostacy; to fear both, lest they should be lost.

Heb 4:1 : "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Heb 6:1-6 : "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. Of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Heb 3:12-14 : "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

They are required to fear to sin, but not to fear that they shall sin in any sense that implies any expectation of sinning. They are to fear to apostatize, but not to expect, or fear that they shall apostatize. They are to fear to be lost, but not that they shall be lost. To fear to sin lest we should be lost, is a very different thing from fearing that we shall sin and shall be lost. There is just as much need of our fearing to sin, and of fearing to be lost, as there would be if there were no certainty of our salvation. When we consider the nature of the certainty of the salvation of the saints, that it is only a moral and conditional certainty we can see the propriety and the necessity of the warnings and threatenings which we find addressed to them in the Bible. The language of the Bible is just what it might be expected to be, in case the salvation of the saints were certain, with a moral and conditional certainty.

But in replying to this objection, it is important to ascertain the meaning of the terms used by the objector. I will first show what there is not, and what there is, implied in the term danger:--

(1.) We have seen that all events are really certain by some kind of certainty. Danger, then, cannot imply that there is any real uncertainty in respect to that of which we predicate danger; for this cannot truly be said of any event whatever. It will be in some way, and it is beforehand as really certain how it will be, as it is after it has occurred. Danger, then, does not imply real uncertainty.

(2.) We generally use the term as implying uncertainty as it respects our knowledge of how the event will be; that is, we predicate danger of that of which we are not certain how it will turn out to be. We generally use the term as implying that we regard the result as uncertain, and that there is at least a possibility, and even a probability, that it may turn out differently from what we would have it. The term, then, does not imply real, but only to us an apparent uncertainty. This is commonly implied in the term "danger," as we use it.

(3.) But the term does not always and necessarily imply, that we are uncertain in respect to the event of which we predicate danger. If a thing may fail by natural possibility; if, moreover, the result is suspended on the action of free-will; and if, humanly speaking, and judging of the probability of the result from the usual course of events, there are seen to be many chances to one against it; and if from the nature of the event nothing can make it certain, or secure its occurrence, but the most strenuous care and watchfulness and effort on the part of those whose agency is to be employed in its production; and if, moreover, it is understood, that those concerned will have many temptations to take a course that would, if taken, defeat it; to each of which temptations the agent can yield with the greatest ease, and no compulsion will be used to prevent his yielding;--I say, when there is a concurrence of such facts and circumstances, we should say that there was danger, even if the result were a revealed certainty. There is in this case, in truth, as real and as much danger of failure, as there is that any event whatever will be different from what it in fact turns out to be; and considering the nature of the certainty, and the multitude of apparent contingencies upon which the result is suspended; and, humanly speaking, the many chances to one against its occurrence, we should in such a case say there is danger, and could not but feel a sense of danger, although we knew that the result was certain. For example, suppose a man about to cross the Niagara river upon a wire just over the falls, and suppose it to be revealed to him and to the world that he should cross in safety; but suppose it to be revealed also that he is not to be preserved by a miracle, but that his safety is to depend upon his own skill, prudence, and efforts, and the fact revealed to be simply that he will so behave as to cross in safety. Now all would say and feel that there was danger in this case, although they might have the fullest confidence in the result. The danger is as real, in this case, as if the certainty were not revealed; and considering the multitude of chances of failure, we should feel, and say that there is danger, notwithstanding the revealed certainty. If the certainty were absolute, or were that of necessity, we should not say or feel that there was danger. But when the certainty is understood to be only a moral one, we should as properly say that there was danger, as if the certainty, though real, were not revealed. By danger, then, we mean to express, not a real, but only an apparent uncertainty, and a human probability, or at least a natural possibility, that an event may turn out otherwise than we desire. We do not always and necessarily mean that the event is uncertain to us, but that humanly speaking, and judging from the ordinary course of events, it is possible or probable that it may not occur as we would have it; and that nothing can render it certain but care, and watchfulness, and diligence, and perseverance on the part of him or them upon whose agency the event is suspended.

But this objection assumes a false philosophy of mind. It assumes that fear is out of place and impossible, except when there is at least supposed uncertainty. It is said that fear is an emotion that always implies real or apprehended danger in the sense of uncertainty.

It is asserted, that the emotion of fear cannot exist but upon condition that the subject does not regard himself as safe, or that he does not regard the interest or thing safe, concerning which fear is excited; but this is a mistake. It is true that fear is more readily excited when there is no accredited certainty in regard to the safety of the thing or interest concerning which the fear is excited; and it is also true, that this kind of fear tends, by reason of its strength and from its nature, very strongly to selfish efforts to escape from apprehended danger. It is also true, that fear may be and often is excited, when there is no accredited uncertainty, and no apprehended danger, in the sense of uncertainty in regard to the safety of self, or of the interest or thing respecting which the fear is excited. For example, place an individual upon the verge of a precipice, beneath which yawns a gulph of frightful depth, and withal chain him fast so that he knows that to fall is impossible, and yet his fears will be excited. An emotion of fear will arise in spite of himself. Webster quotes Rogers's definition of fear, thus: "Fear is that passion of our nature which excites us to provide for our security on the approach of evil." But this, as we shall see, is saying only half the truth. "Fear," Webster says, "expresses less apprehension than dread, and dread less than terror, and terror less than flight. The force of this passion beginning with the most moderate degree may be thus expressed: Fear, dread, terror, fright." He says again, "Fear in scripture is used to express a filial, or a slavish passion. In good men, the fear of God is a holy awe, or reverence of God and of his laws, which springs from a just view and real love of the divine character, leading the subjects of it to hate and shun everything that can offend such a holy being. Slavish fear is the effect or consequence of guilt: it is the painful apprehension of merited punishment." Every one knows that these two kinds of fear are frequently spoken of in the Bible. Fear does not necessarily imply an apprehension of real danger. For example, to return to the individual upon the verge of the precipice: here, although there is a known natural impossibility of falling, and of course no apprehension of danger, in the sense of uncertainty, yet who does not perceive, that even more than simple fear would, at least in many cases, be excited? To look down, even if certain of not falling, would excite in many minds a degree of dread, and even of terror, that would be almost unendurable. Few individuals could be found, in whom the emotion of fear, and even of terror would not, under such circumstances, be awakened. It is a great mistake to suppose that this emotion cannot exist, except where there is real or apprehended danger in the sense of uncertainty. Who, for example, cannot conceive, and who that has considered the matter does not admit, that a view of the torments of the damned may, and doubtless will, excite a wholesome fear and dread of sin in the inhabitants of heaven? The witnessing of anything terrible in its nature tends to awaken the emotion of fear or terror, whether we regard ourselves as exposed to it or not. Much more is this true, when we know that the evil is naturally possible to us, and that nothing but care and watchfulness on our part, prevents its actually coming upon us. Now, although we are certain, that we shall not fall from a precipice upon which we stand, yet a view of so terrible an object awakens the corresponding emotions at once. Instead of saying that fear is an emotion that is awakened only by an apprehension of real danger, it were more in accordance with truth to say, that it is an emotion that is awakened when its correlated object is present to the thoughts; and its correlated object is anything whatever that is fearful, or dreadful, or terrible in its nature, whether we regard ourselves as really exposed to it in the sense of uncertainty or not. Thus, should we stand on the shore and witness a shipwreck, or be within hearing of a battle, or witness the rush of a distant tornado, as it spreads its wings of desolation over a country or a city, and in a direction that forbids the possibility of injury to us, the emotion of fear, and even of terror, in such cases would be awakened, even if we were sure that no real harm would result to any being whatever. All the emotions have their correlated objects; and it is a great mistake to say, that the presence of these objects does not awaken them, except upon condition that our own interest, or the interest of some one else, is to be affected thereby. Objects naturally lovely, when presented to the mind, naturally awaken corresponding emotions. Objects of beauty and deformity, of desire, and of terror, naturally awaken their corresponding emotions, wholly irrespective of any apprehended pleasure or pain to be derived from them. But surely I need not enter into a further statement or illustration of a fact of universal consciousness. The affirmation that fear is correlated only to real or apprehended danger, in the sense of uncertainty, and not at all to objects naturally fearful or terrible, irrespective of apprehended danger, is so palpable a contradiction of human consciousness, that few reflecting minds can fail to perceive it.

Again: the sanctions of law have and even in heaven will and must have, their appropriate influence. But what is their appropriate influence? These sanctions are remuneratory and vindicatory, as we have formerly seen. They present all that is naturally desirable as the reward of virtue. They hold forth all that is dreadful and terrible as the reward of sin. The contemplation of these sanctions naturally begets their correlated emotions in all worlds and at all times. The inhabitants of hell no doubt have their desires awakened by a contemplation of the happiness of heaven, while the inhabitants of heaven have their pity, their fears, their dread awakened in view of the torments of hell, and in neither case is it in view of any apprehended uncertainty. The inhabitants of hell know that the joys of heaven are certainly never to be theirs, and the inhabitants of heaven know that the miseries of hell are never to be theirs. Nevertheless, the emotions respond to their correlated objects in both worlds, and no doubt will as long as mind exists.

Sin is a hateful, and a fearful, and a terrible thing. The wrath of an offended God is infinitely terrible in its nature. Endless torments are unspeakably fearful and terrible. The flaming penalty of the divine law is an object of infinite terror. These things are so correlated to the constitution of moral agents, as naturally to excite their corresponding emotions, entirely irrespective of any apprehended personal danger. When added to this tendency that results from the nature and correlations of those objects, there is a sense of uncertainty in regard to our personal safety, the contemplation of these objects causes intense agony. A certainty of personal security relieves the agony, but it does not cause the emotion of fear, and awe, and dread, wholly to subside. Enough remains to fix the attention, and to act as a safeguard against presumption, in cases where there is a natural possibility of the evil we fear becoming ours. What a mistake in psychology to affirm, that fear cannot exist unless it be excited by a belief of personal danger, in the sense of uncertainty in respect to whether the evil shall come upon us. I say again, that the emotion is correlated to its object, and is not dependent upon an apprehension of personal danger, as every one knows. When the apprehension of personal danger is added, the excitement of the emotion is greatly and painfully aggravated. And on the other hand, the emotion is modified and softened by a sense and certainty of personal security. But still the emotion in a modified and softened form will exist so long as an object, fearful and terrible in its nature, is made the object of contemplation.

In this life, time, and habit, and reflection, may cause emotions of fear to cease, even in the presence of a fearful object, as in the case of the supposed precipice. Continuing for a long time to look upon precisely the same object, and considering that there was and could be no danger, in the sense of uncertainty, and familiarizing the mind to this contemplation, might in time cause the sensible emotions of fear to cease. The same would be true of any other emotion, such as an emotion of love, or a sense of beauty, or deformity, &c. This would occur where the object contemplated presented no new attractions on the one hand, or repulsions or terrors on the other. But suppose the more the object was contemplated, the more it developed its beauties, its deformities, or its terrors to the mind. In this case, the emotions corresponding would never cease. This is precisely the case with the sanctions of moral law, with the wrath and the love of God, with the joys of heaven and the pains of hell. These objects will never lose their influence for the want of novelty. They will never cease to beget their correlated emotions, for the reason that they will be ever new in the sense of always presenting to the gaze of intelligent beings, more to desire on the one hand, and more to fear and dread on the other.

But again: we see that this objection is based upon a gross error in respect to the philosophy of moral government. Moral law exists with its sanctions as really in heaven as on earth, and its sanctions have in heaven the very influence that they ought to have on earth. It is as true in heaven as on earth, that the soul that sinneth shall die. Now, can the sanctions of law exert no influence in heaven? I suppose no reasonable person will doubt the certainty, and the known certainty of the perseverance of all saints there. But if they are certain that they shall not sin and fall, can they not be the subjects of fear in any sense? I answer, yes. They are naturally able to sin, and may be sometimes placed under circumstances where they are tempted to selfishness. Indeed, the very nature of mind renders it certain, that the saints will always have need of watchfulness against temptation and sin.

Now, it is the design of the sanctions of law in all worlds to produce hope on the one hand, and fear on the other; in holy beings the hope of reward, and the fear to sin lest they should perish. This hope and fear in a being duly influenced by them, is not selfishness. It is madness and desperate wickedness not to be influenced by them. Our reason affirms that we ought to be influenced by them, that our own salvation is of infinite value, and that our damnation were an infinite evil. It therefore affirms that we ought to secure the one and to avoid the other. This is law both on earth and in heaven. This we are not to do selfishly, that is, to seek our own salvation, or to avoid our own damnation, exclusively or only, but to seek to save as many as possible; to love our neighbour as ourselves, and ourselves as our neighbour. In all worlds the sanctions of law ought to have their influence, and with holy beings they have. Holy beings are really subjects of fear, to sin, and to be lost, and are the only beings who have the kind of fear which God requires, and which it is the design of the sanctions of law and of the gospel to inspire. What! are we to be told that a certainty of safety is wholly inconsistent with every kind and degree of fear? What, then, is the use of law in heaven? Must a man on earth or in heaven doubt whether he shall have eternal life, in order to leave room for the influence of moral law, and of hope, and of fear? or in order to leave play for the motives of moral government? There is room for the same fear in heaven that ought to be on earth. No one had a right to expect to violate the precept, and thereby incur the penalty of law. But every one was bound to fear to do so. The penalty was never designed on earth, any more than it is in heaven, to beget a slavish fear, or a fear that we shall sin and be damned; but only a fear to sin and be damned. A fear to sin and to be lost, will, to all eternity, no doubt, be a means of confirming holy beings in heaven. The law will be the same there as here. Free agency will be the same there as here. Perseverance in holiness will be a condition of continued salvation there as really as here. There may, and doubtless will be, temptations there as well as here. They will, therefore, need there substantially the same motives to keep them that they need and have here. There will there be laws and conditions of continued bliss as here. There will be the same place, and in kind, if not in degree, the same occasion for fear there that there is here. I say again, that the objection we are considering, overlooks both the true philosophy of mind, and of the influence of the sanctions of moral law.

The objection we are considering is based upon the assumption that warnings, exhortation to fear, &c., are inconsistent with the revealed certainty of the salvation of the saints. But does not the Bible furnish abundant instances of warning in cases where the result is revealed as certain? The case of Paul's shipwreck is in point. This case has been once alluded to, but I recur to it for the sake of illustration in this place. God, by Paul, revealed the fact, that no life on board the ship should be lost. This he declared as a fact, without any revealed qualification or condition. But when the sailors, who alone knew how to manage the ship, were about to abandon her, Paul informs them that their abiding in the ship was a condition of their salvation from death. The means were really as certain as the end; yet the end was conditionated upon the means, and if the means failed, the end would fail. Therefore Paul appealed to their fears of death to secure them against neglecting the means of safety. He did not intend to excite in them a distrust of the promise of God, but only to apprise them of the conditional nature of the certainty of their safety which had been revealed to them, and thus cause them at once to fear to neglect the means, and to confide in the certainty of safety in the diligent use of them. But this is a case, be it understood, directly in point, and by itself affords a full answer to the objection under consideration. It is a case where a revealed certainty of the event was entirely consistent with warning and threatening. Nay, it is a case where the certainty, though real, was dependent upon the warning and threatening, and the consequent fear to neglect the means. This case is a full illustration of the revealed certainty of the ultimate salvation of the saints; and were there no other case in the Bible where warning and threatening are addressed to those whose safety is revealed, this case would be a full answer to the assertion, that warnings and threatenings are inconsistent with revealed certainty. Paul feared to have the means of safety neglected, but he did not fear that they really would be, because he knew that they would not.

To the pertinency of this case as an illustration, it is objected, that the prophet pronounced the destruction of Nineveh in forty days to be certain, as really as Paul in this case revealed the certainty of the safety of all on board the ship; therefore, it is contended that Paul did not intend to reveal the result as certain, because when a revelation was made respecting the destruction of Nineveh, in just as unqualified terms, the event showed that it was not certain. To this I reply, that in the case of Jonah, it is manifest from the whole narrative that neither Jonah nor the Ninevites understood the event as unconditionally certain. Jonah expressly assigned to God his knowledge of the uncertainty of the event, as an excuse for not delivering his message. So the people themselves understood, that the event might not be certain, as their conduct abundantly shows. The difference in the two cases is just this: one was a real and a revealed certainty, and the other was neither. Why then should this case be adduced as setting aside that of the shipwreck? But it is said, that no condition was revealed in the one case more than in the other. Now so far as the history is recorded, no mention is made in the case of Nineveh, that Jonah intimated that there was any condition upon which the destruction of the city could be avoided: yet it is plain, that both Jonah and the Ninevites understood the threatening to be conditional, in the sense of the events being uncertain. Jonah himself did not expect it with much certainty. But in the case of Paul, he expressly affirms, that he believed God that it should be as he had declared, that there should be the loss of no man's life, and he encouraged them to believe the same thing. Paul understood the end to be certain, though he knew, and soon informed them, that the certainty was a moral one, and conditioned upon the diligent use of means. The two cases are by no means parallel. It is true that Nineveh would have been destroyed, had they not used the appropriate means to prevent it; and the same is true of the ship's crew; and it is also true that, in both cases, it was really certain that the means would not be neglected; yet, in one case, the certainty was really understood to be revealed, and was believed in, and not in the other. Now observe, the point to be illustrated by reference to this case of shipwreck. It is just this: Can a man have any fear, and can there be ground and need of caution and fear, where there is a real and revealed, and believed or knowing certainty? The objection I am answering is, that, if the salvation of the saints is certain, and revealed as such, and is believed to be certain, there is then no ground of fear, and no necessity or room for warning, threatening, &c. But this case of shipwreck is one in which all these things meet.

(1.) The event was certain, and of course the conditions were sure to be fulfilled.

(2.) The certainty was revealed.

(3.) It was believed. Yet,

(4.) There was warning, and threatening, and fear to neglect the means. But these things did not all meet in the case of Jonah and the Ninevites. In this case,

(1.) It was not certain that the city would be destroyed.

(2.) It was not understood to be revealed as certain.

(3.) It was not believed to be certain.

Why, then, I ask again, should these cases be taken as parallels? Paul's case is conclusive for the purpose for which it is cited, to wit, as being an instance in which there was:

(1.) Certainty.

(2.) Revealed certainty.

(3.) Believed certainty.

(4.) Threatening and warning.

(5.) Fear to neglect the means. It follows that threatenings, and warnings, and fears, are consistent with revealed and believed certainty. This strikes out the foundation of the objection.

* see distinction between moral and physical depravity, Lecture XXXVIII. II

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXXII.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

Again, Paul repeatedly speaks of his own salvation as certain, and yet in a manner that conditionates it upon his perseverance in faith and obedience to the end. He says;

Phi 1:19, Phi 1:25 : "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith."

2Ti 4:18 : "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever."

In this place it is plain, that he regarded his perseverance and ultimate salvation, by and through the grace of God, as certain. Paul everywhere, as every attentive reader of the Bible knows, renounces all hope but in the indwelling grace and Spirit of Christ. Still he felt confident of his salvation. But if he had no confidence in himself, on what was his confidence based? Again:

2Ti 1:12 : "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Here again Paul expresses the fullest confidence of his own salvation. He did not merely intend to say that Christ was able, if he was disposed, to keep that which he had committed to him, but he assumed his willingness and asserted his ability, as the ground of his confidence. That he here expressed entire confidence in his ultimate salvation, cannot reasonably be doubted. He did not say that he was persuaded that Christ was able to save him, if he persevered; but his confidence was founded in the fact, that Christ was able to secure his perseverance. It was because he was persuaded that Christ was able to keep him, that he had any assurance, and I might add even hope, of his own salvation. The same reason he assigned as the ground of confidence that others would be saved. To the Thessalonians he says, 2Th 3:3 : "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." Again, Jude says, Jud 1:24 : "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Again, Peter says, of all the elect or saints, 1Pe 1:5 : "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Thus we see, that the ground of confidence with the apostles was, that God and Christ could and would keep them, not without their own efforts, but that he would induce them to be faithful, and so secure this result. The same was true of Christ, as is manifested in his last prayer for them. Joh 17:15-16 : "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." But the apostles frequently express their confidence, both in the certainty of their own salvation, and also in the salvation of those to whom they wrote. Paul says, 1Co 9:26-27 : "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away." Here he expresses the fullest confidence that he shall win the crown, but at the same time recognizes the condition of his salvation, and informs us that he took care to fulfil it, lest he should be a cast away. He says, 1Co 9:26 : "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one who beateth the air." He alludes to the Olympic games, and in this connexion says, 1Co 9:24-25 : "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." He then adds, 1Co 9:26-27, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away."

Of those who ran in these games, but one could win the prize. But not so in the Christian race: here all might win. In those games, because but one could possibly win, there was much uncertainty in respect to whether any one in particular could win the prize. In the Christian race there was no need of any such uncertainty. As it respected himself he says, 1Co 9:26 : "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:" that is, I do not run with any uncertainty or irresolution, because of uncertainty in respect to whether I shall win the prize. Nor do I fight as one that beateth the air, or as one who fights uncertainly or in vain; but while I have this confidence, as a condition of this confidence, I keep under my body. It has been denied that Paul intended to express a confidence in his salvation in this place; but this cannot be reasonably denied. He was speaking in this connexion of the Christian race, and of the conditions of winning the victor's crown. He affirms that there was no real uncertainty whether he should win the crown. In the Olympic games there was uncertainty, because but one could win; but here no such ground of uncertainty existed; and, moreover, with him there was no real uncertainty at all, while at the same time he understood the conditional nature of the certainty, and kept under his body, &c. Can any one suppose that Paul really had any doubt in regard to his own ultimate salvation? Now observe, these passages in respect to Paul are not adduced to prove that all saints will be saved; nor that, if Paul was sure of his salvation, therefore all saints may be. To prove this is not my present design, but simply to show, that while Paul was sure, and had no doubt of his ultimate salvation, he yet feared to neglect the means. He was not disheartened in the Christian race, with a sense of uncertainty, as they who ran in the Olympic games. He was not, as they might be, irresolute on account of their great uncertainty of winning. He expected to win, and yet be dared not neglect the conditions of winning. Nay, he expected to win, because he expected to fulfil the conditions; and he expected to fulfil the conditions, not because he had any confidence in himself, but because he confided in the grace and Spirit of God to secure his perseverance. Nevertheless, he kept under his body, and feared self-indulgence, lest he should be a cast away.

Paul affirms of the Thessalonians, that he knew their election of God. 1Th 1:4 : "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." In both his epistles to this church, he often speaks of them in a manner that implies, that he regarded their salvation as certain, and yet he also frequently warns and exhorts them to faithfulness, and to guard against being deceived by false teachers, &c. 2Th 2:1-3 : "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." He addresses the same strain of exhortation to them that he does to all Christians, and plies them with admonition and warning, just as might be expected, considering the moral and conditional nature of the certainty of their salvation.

In writing to the Philippians, he says, Phi 1:6-7 : "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." Here he expresses the confidence of an inspired apostle, that Christ would secure their salvation. But yet in Phi 2:12-13, he says: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Here he warns them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. There is no stronger passage than this, where the saints are exhorted to fear; and mark, this is addressed to the very persons of whom he had just said, Phi 1:6 : "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Almost at the same breath he expresses the confidence of an inspired apostle, that he who had begun a good work in them would carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ; that is, that he would surely save them; and at the same time exhorts them to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling." He did not express confidence that they would persevere, except their perseverance was secured by Christ, but that Christ would carry on the work he had begun. Paul also addresses the church at Ephesus as follows:--

Eph. 1:1-12 : "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Now, let any one read the epistle through, and he will find, that these same elect persons are addressed throughout with precept, exhortation, and warning, just as all other saints are throughout the Bible. To quote the instances of this were only to quote much of the epistle. Indeed this is the common usage of the inspired writers, to address the saints as the elect of God, as persons whose salvation was secure as a matter of fact, but whose salvation was after all conditionated upon their perseverance in holiness; and they hence proceed to warn, admonish, and exhort them, just as we might expect when we consider the nature of the certainty of which they were speaking.

But if it be still urged, that the fact of election is not revealed in any case to the individuals who compose the elect; that if the fact of election were revealed to any one, to him threatenings and warnings would be out of place; I reply, that this is only saying, that if certainty is revealed as such at any time, and in respect to anything, then warnings, and threatenings, and fears, are wholly out of place. But this is not true, as we have seen in the case of the shipwreck. Here the certainty was revealed to the individuals concerned, and accredited. Christ also revealed to his apostles the fact of their election, as we have seen, also to Paul. Can any one reasonably call in question the fact, that the apostles understood well their election of God, not only to the apostleship, but also to eternal life? John directs one of his epistles as follows: "The elder to the elect lady and her children." Observe again, what Paul says in writing to the church at Ephesus, in the passage which has just been quoted.

Here he expressly recognizes himself as one of the elect, as he does elsewhere, and as the apostles always do, directly or by way of implication, and yet Paul and the other apostles did not feel that warning, and watchfulness, and fear to sin were at all out of place with them.

Job speaks as if the certainty of his salvation had been revealed to him. He says:

Job 19:25-27 : "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Can any one suppose that Job regarded threatenings, and warnings, and fear to sin, as out of place with him?

It is generally admitted, that there is such a thing as the full assurance of faith or hope, or as attaining to the certain knowledge that salvation is secure to us. But would a saint who has made this attainment be less affected than others by all the threatenings, and warnings, and exhortations to fear, found in the Bible? Would such souls cease to tremble at the word of God? Would they cease to pass their time of sojourning here with fear? Would they cease to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling?" Would God no longer regard them as belonging to the class of persons mentioned in Isa 66:2 : "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Christ prayed for the salvation of his apostles, in their presence, in such a manner as to leave no room for them to doubt their ultimate salvation, if they expected his prayers to be answered. He did the same with respect to all that should believe on him through their word. Now will you affirm, that they who are conscious of believing in Jesus, must cease to have confidence in the efficacy of his prayers, before they can feel the power, and propriety, and influence of warnings, and threatenings, and the various motives that are addressed to the elect of God to preserve them from falling? The supposition is preposterous. What! must we doubt the efficacy of his prayers, in order to credit and appreciate the force of his warnings? In fact, the more holy any one is, and the more certain he is of his eternal salvation, the more does sin become an object of loathing, of fear, and even of terror, to him. The more holy he is, the more readily he trembles at the word of God, and the more sensibly and easily he is affected by a contemplation of sin and divine wrath, the more awful and terrible these things appear to him, and the more solemnly do they affect him, although he has the fullest assurance that he shall never taste of either sin or hell. It is true, indeed, as we shall have occasion to remark hereafter, that in general, the Bible assumes that individuals are not sure of their salvation, and upon that assumption proceeds to warn them.

But still it is insisted that, if the end is certain, so are the means; and if one is revealed as certain, so is the other; and that therefore it is absurd, and implies unbelief, to fear that we shall neglect the means, or that either the end or means will fail. But as we have said, to fear to neglect the means, and to fear that we shall neglect them, are not the same. We are naturally able to neglect them, and there is just as much real danger of our neglecting them, as there would be if no revelation were made about it, unless the revelation of the certainty of their use be a means of securing the use of them. We are therefore to fear to neglect them. There is, in fact, as much real danger of our neglecting the means of our salvation, as there is that any event whatever will be different from what it turns out to be. There is no more real danger in one case than in the other; but in one case the certainty is revealed, and in the other not. Therefore, when the certainty is not revealed, it is reasonable to fear that the event will not be as we desire, and as it ought to be. But in the other,--that is, when the certainty is revealed, we have no right to fear that it will be otherwise than as revealed, nor to fear that the means will in fact be neglected; but in all such cases we should fear to neglect the means, as really and as much, as if no revelation of certainty had been made: just as Paul did in the case of his shipwreck.

Again: it is inquired, are we not to fear that any of the saints will be lost, and pray for them under the influence of this fear? I answer, no. The saints are the elect. None of God's elect will be lost. We are to pray for them as Christ prayed for his apostles, and as he prayed for all believers, not with the fear that they will be lost, for this were praying in unbelief; but we are to pray for all persons known to be saints, that they may persevere unto the end and be saved, with confidence that our prayer will be answered. But it is said, that Paul expressed doubts in regard to the salvation of the churches in Galatia. I answer, that he expressed no doubt in respect to their ultimate salvation; he says, "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." Gal 4:20. In the margin it reads, "I am perplexed for you." He says in the next chapter: "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." Gal 5:10. Paul set himself zealously to reclaim these churches from error, and expresses full confidence of the result; and no where, that I see, intimates, that he doubted whether they would finally be saved.

But it is said still, that if the salvation of all the saints is secured, and this certainty is revealed, there is no real danger of their either neglecting the necessary means, or of their being lost, and therefore warnings, and threatenings, and fears are vain; and that the certainty being granted, it is irrational and impossible to fear, without doubting the truth of God; that certainty is certainty, and it matters not at all of what kind the certainty is; that if it be granted that the event is certain, all danger, and of course all cause of fear, is out of the question.

To this form of the objection I reply, that it proceeds upon the assumption, that there is no danger of the saints' falling, if God has revealed the certainty of their ultimate salvation. But what do we mean by danger? It has already been said, that all events are certain, in the sense that it is and was from eternity as really certain that they will be, and how they will be; and that all their circumstances and conditions are, and eternally were, as certain, as they ever will be. So that there never is any real danger, in the sense of uncertainty, that any event will be otherwise than it turns out in fact to be. By danger, then, is not meant that there is really any uncertainty in respect to how anything will be. But all that can properly be intended by danger is, that there is a natural possibility, and, humanly speaking, a probability, that it may be otherwise than as we desire; that this is probable in the sense that there is, humanly speaking, from the circumstances of the case, and so far as we can judge, from the course of events, a probability that a thing may not occur as we would have it.

Now, a natural possibility always exists in respect to the falling and final destruction of the saints; and in most cases at least, the circumstances are such, that humanly speaking, and aside from the grace of God, there is not only real danger, but a certainty that they will fail of eternal life. There are, humanly speaking, many chances to one that they will fall and be lost. Now, this danger is as real as if nothing of certainty had been revealed. The event would have been as certain without the revelation of the certainty as with it, unless it be true, which I suppose in many cases is the fact, that the revelation of the certainty helps to secure their perseverance.

But again: the objection overlooks the nature of the certainty, and erroneously assumes that nothing depends upon its nature, when, in fact, everything depends upon its nature. If it were a certainty of necessity, then there could be no danger, because no possibility of being otherwise. In this case, warnings, expostulations, threatenings, exhortations to fear, &c., would be out of place and mere trifling; but since the certainty is but a certainty of liberty, or a moral certainty, and one that is conditionated upon our own free acts, and upon the influence of those warnings which are found in the Bible, as well as upon the influence of those fears to sin to which we are exhorted;--I say, since the nature of the certainty is such as to be conditionated upon these influences, it is preposterous to say that nothing depends upon the nature of the certainty; for it is manifest that the entire event may be dependent, and turn upon the nature, and an understanding of the nature of the certainty. When the nature of the certainty is understood, it is entirely rational and necessary to fear to sin, lest thereby we should lose our souls. For be it remembered, we are able to apostatize, and should we do so, we must be lost. It is no answer to say, that it is a revealed certainty that we shall persevere, and not be lost, for the certainty that we shall not be lost is no greater than that we shall not apostatize, and we are naturally able to apostatize. The certainty that we shall be saved, is no greater than that we shall persevere to the end. If, then, we do not persevere, but apostatize, we shall assuredly be lost. Fear to sin and apostatize, fear to neglect perseverance, is just as rational as if the certainty of the event were not revealed. Perseverance in holiness will no doubt be a condition of the abiding of the saints in heaven; and, since they will be free, and there will be a natural possibility of falling or of sinning, they will then fear to sin.

But it is said, that "perfect love casteth out fear." True, but what kind of fear does love cast out? I answer, the "fear that hath torment." It casts out the fear of hell, that is, of actually going to hell; but it does not cast out the fear of God, nor the fear of sin, but begets both. Love casts out the fear that we shall be lost, but not a fear to be lost. It cast out the fear that we shall apostatize, but begets a fear to apostatize. The place for fear in the saints is in the presence of temptation. When enticed or tempted to sin, a salutary fear and dread of sin and of its consequences is aroused, and the soul recoils from the temptation as from death and hell. Let it not be said, then, that if a thing is certain, it is certain, and it matters not by what kind of certainty; for there is in no case of real, known certainty, any rational ground of fear. Such things are loosely said. Both the kind of certainty, and the kind of fear are here overlooked. It is true that, in this case, there is no rational ground to fear that either the end or the means will actually fail; but there is just as rational a ground to fear to neglect the means, as if no certainty whatever were revealed. There is no more room for presumption in one case than in the other. In both cases to neglect the conditions is possible; and in our circumstances, extremely natural and easy, and even certain, but for the preventing grace of God. This neglect would in either case prove fatal.

The temptations to neglect are alike in both cases: there are therefore equally rational grounds of fear to neglect the conditions in both cases. There are not, it is true, equal grounds to fear in both cases that we really shall neglect these conditions, but there are equal grounds to fear to neglect them. A fear that we shall really neglect them is not salutary. But a fear to neglect them is highly so. A fear that we shall neglect them, and that we shall be lost, tends strongly to selfishness, because it does not imply nor consist with confidence that we shall be preserved and saved. But a fear to sin, to offend God, to be lost, is consistent with a confidence that we shall be preserved and saved, and does not therefore tend to selfishness in efforts to escape damnation, at least not to the same extent. The right kind of fear tends to liberty and to life. The wrong kind of fear gendereth to bondage and to death.

But it is said again, that fear implies a sense of danger, which it is said is impossible, when we know the certainty. I answer again, that fear to sin does imply a sense of the danger of sinning, and there is reason to have this sense of danger, when there is, in fact, all the real danger that there is in any case whatever, that any event may be different from what it turns out to be. As I have said, a sense of danger is possible and reasonable when failure is possible, and when the event is conditioned, not only upon free acts, but also upon the greatest watchfulness and perseverance on our part. The danger is so real, and the sense of danger is so reasonable in this case, that although the event is certain, yet it is conditioned upon this sense of danger. Were not the danger as real as in cases where no certainty had been revealed, and were there not a sense of danger, the result might fail. But the fact, that there is as real a danger of the damnation of the saints as there is that any event may turn out to be different from what in fact it will be; and the fact that the saints have a sense of this danger, and understand the conditional and moral nature of this certainty, are conditions of the certainty of their salvation, and tend to make it certain. Surely this is extremely plain; For example, let us suppose again that a man is about to venture down Niagara Falls in a bark canoe. It is revealed to him that he shall go down safely, but at the same time it is also revealed that he is not to be preserved from death by a miracle, but on the contrary that he must, as a condition, exert all his skill, and avoid everything that tends to procure a failure, and omit nothing that is essential to his descending safely without a miracle; that the event, though certain, is conditioned upon the right and persevering exercise of his own agency, and that although it is sure, and he may rest in the assurance, that both the means and the end are certain, and that neither of these will fail; yet to defeat the end by the neglect of the means is within his power; that he will meet with great temptations to neglect the means--temptations to presumption on the one hand, and to unbelief and despair on the other; temptations to levity, or to despondency; to innumerable neglects and wanderings of attention, and such-like things, which, if not guarded against will prove his destruction. Now who cannot see in this case the propriety and necessity of both the assurance, and the warnings, and the place for the salutary influence of a fear to neglect the necessary means? This I regard as a fair illustration of a revealed certainty of the perseverance of the saints, in the sense under consideration.

But thus far I have replied to the objections upon the assumption, that the certainty of the salvation of the saints is revealed, in the sense that individual saints may know the certainty of their own salvation. I have shown, as I trust, that admitting this to be true, yet the nature of the certainty leaves abundant room for the influence of a wholesome sense of danger, and for the feeling of hope and fear. But the fact is, that in but few cases comparatively does it appear, that the certainty is revealed to the individuals as such. The salvation of all true saints is revealed, as we have seen, and the characteristics of true saints are revealed in the Bible. So that it is possible for individual saints to possess a comfortable assurance of salvation, upon the knowledge that they are saints. And as was shown, it is doubtless true that in some cases, in the days of inspiration, and not improbably in some cases since the Bible was complete, individuals have had a direct revelation by the Holy Spirit that they were saints, and accepted of God.

But in the great majority of cases in all time hitherto, the saints have had no personal and clear revelation of their being saints, and no evidence of it, except what they gather from an experience that in their view accords with the Bible description of the character of the saints. When Peter addressed his epistles to the elect saints, for example, although he regarded the elect as certain of salvation, yet he did not distinguish and address individuals by name; but left it for them to be satisfied of their own election and saintship, by their own consciousness of possessing the character that belongs to the saints. He did not reveal to any one in particular the fact of his own election. This was for the most part true of all the letters written to the churches. Although they were addressed as a body, as elect, and as saints, yet from this they were not to infer, that they were all saints or elect, but were to learn that fact, and who were real saints, from their conscious character.

We have seen, in another place, that the Bible represents perseverance, in the sense already explained, as an attribute of Christian character; and therefore no one can have evidence that he is a saint, any farther than he is conscious of abiding in obedience. If saints do abide in the light, and have the assurance that they are saints, we have seen the sense in which they may be influenced by hope and fear, and the sense in which moral law with its sanctions may be useful to them. But when a saint shall backslide, he must lose the evidence of his being a saint, and then all the warnings and threatenings may take full effect upon him. He finds himself not persevering, and has of course to infer that he is not a saint; and the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints can be no comfort to him. It is in fact against him; for this doctrine is, that the saints do persevere; and every day he lives in backsliding, it becomes less evident that he is a saint. The Bible is manifestly written, for the most part, upon the assumption, that individual saints do not certainly know their election, and the certainty of their own salvation. It therefore addresses them, as if there were real uncertainty in respect to their salvation; that is, as if, as individuals, they were not certain of salvation. It represents the salvation of real saints as certain, but represents many professed saints as having fallen, and warns them against presumption and self-deception, in the matter of their profession, privileges, and experience. It represents the danger of delusion as great, and exhorts them to examine and prove themselves, and see whether they are truly saints. The warnings found in the Bible, are for the most part, evidently of this kind; that is, they assume that individuals may deceive themsleves, and presumptuously assume their own election, and saintship, and safety, from their privileges, relations, and experiences. Inspiration, therefore, proceeds to warn them, assuming that they do not know the certainty of their own individual salvation. We shall by and by have occasion to examine some passages that will illustrate and confirm this remark.

There is, therefore, I apprehend, no real difficulty in accounting for the manner in which the Bible is written, upon the supposition that the doctrine under consideration is true. But on the contrary, it appears to me, that the scriptures are just what might be expected, if the doctrine were true. When we consider the nature of the certainty in all cases, and also that the great mass of professed Christians have no certain revelation of their being real saints, that there is so much real danger of deception, in regard to our own characters, and that so many are and have been deceived;--I say, when we consider these things, there can be no difficulty in accounting for the manner in which both professors and real saints are addressed in the word of God.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXXIII.

PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

FURTHER OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

3. A fourth objection to this doctrine is, that if, by the perseverance of the saints is intended, that they live anything like lives of habitual obedience to God, then facts are against it.

To this objection I reply: that by the perseverance of the saints, as I use these terms, is intended that, subsequently to their regeneration, holiness is the rule of their lives, and sin only the exception. But it is said, that facts contradict this.

(1.) The case of king Saul is brought forward as an instance in point to sustain the objection.

To this I reply: that it is far from being clear that Saul was ever a truly regenerate man. He appears, in connexion with his appointment to the throne of Israel, to have been the subject of divine illuminations, in so far as to be much changed in his views and deportment, and as to have had another heart, in so much that he prophesied, &c.; but it is nowhere intimated that he became a truly regenerate man, a truly praying child of God. Similar changes are not unfrequently witnessed in men, and changes evidently brought about by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit, where there is no good reason to believe that the subjects of them were truly regenerated. From the history of Saul, subsequent to the change of which we are speaking, we gather absolutely nothing that looks like true piety. His case therefore cannot properly be brought as an objection to the doctrine in question, for the plain reason, that evidence is wanting that he ever was a saint. His prophesying, as is evident from the connexion in which it is spoken of, was merely speaking fervently upon religious subjects. He was so much enlightened, as to manifest for a time considerable excitement upon the subject of religion, and as to mingle with the schools of the prophets, and take an interest in their exercises. But this was only similar to what we often witness, when the end, and indeed when all the circumstances, duly considered, show clearly that true regeneration has not taken place. Who has not seen men have, for the time being, another, but not a holy, heart?

(2.) It is said, that David did not persevere in obedience, in the sense that obedience was his rule, and sin only the exception. To this I reply--

(i.) It is not pretended that there is any doubt respecting the final salvation of David.

(ii.) That David did not persevere, in the sense above defined, wants proof. His Psalms, together with his whole history, show that he was a highly spiritual man. He was an eminent type of Christ, and, for a man in his circumstances, was a remarkable saint. To be sure, David practised polygamy, and did many things that in us, under the light of the gospel, would be sin. But it should be considered, that David lived under a dispensation of comparative obscurity, and therefore many things which would now be unlawful and sinful, were not so in him. That David, with comparatively few exceptions, lived up to the light he had, cannot be reasonably called in question. He is said to have been a man after God's own heart. I know this is said of him as a king, but I know also that, as king this could not have been said of him, unless he had feared and served the Lord, and in the main lived up to the light with which he was surrounded.

(3.) It is also said, that Solomon king of Israel did not persevere, in the sense contended for in this discourse. Of Solomon I would say,--

(i.) That he was manifestly a type of Christ.

(ii.) That he at one period of his life, for how long a time it does not appear, fell into grievous backsliding, and appears in some sense to have tolerated idolatry.

(iii.) His final apostacy has been inferred from the fact that idolatry was practised in Israel after his supposed repentance, and until the end of his life. The people were allowed to offer sacrifices, and to burn incense in the high places, and therefore his repentance was not genuine.

To this I reply, that the same was true also during the reign of several of the pious kings who succeeded him, and is probably to be accounted for by the fact that neither Solomon nor his successors had, for a considerable time, political power or influence enough to abolish idolatry altogether. The people were greatly divided in their religious views and worship. Many were the priests and devotees of the groves and high places, and multitudes of the high and more influential classes clave to their idols. It was a very difficult matter to put an effectual stop to idolatry, and perhaps was impossible in Solomon's day, and for a long time after. Solomon's idolatrous wives and concubines had doubtless exerted great influence in rendering idolatry popular with the people, and it was not until several generations had passed away, that the pious kings seem to have had sufficient political power to banish idolatry from the nation. Solomon's final apostacy, then, cannot be inferred from the fact, that idolatry continued to be practised in the nation until long after his death. There is no reason to believe that he continued to practise it himself. But,--

(iv.) I remark, that, from the writings of Solomon, we may gather sufficient evidence that, in the general, he did not live a wicked life, though he fell into many grievous sins. His *Ecclesiastes* seems to have been written after he was reclaimed from backsliding, as appears from the fact, that the book contains many statements of his views and experiences while in his wanderings from God. It appears to me, that the book is inexplicable upon any other supposition. In his wanderings from God, as is common, he fell into great doubts and embarrassments in regard to the works and ways of God. He became sceptical, and in the book under consideration, he states the sceptical views that he had entertained. But the book, as a whole, contains conclusive evidence of piety at the time it was written. This probably will not be called in question.

Again: the *Proverbs* and *Song of Solomon* show, that he was not only a pious man, but also, at least when they were written, a highly spiritual man. Especially is this true of his Song. The Proverbs were doubtless the result of deep and protracted reflection and observation, and were written at intervals extending through his whole or nearly his whole reign. He was a man of great study, and of great learning for his day. He must have spent much time in deep meditation and communion with God, and there is no greater mistake, as I apprehend, than to suppose that Solomon was an apostate, or that he lived anything like a majority of his days in a state of backsliding from God. His profound wisdom, manifested on various occasions, and his history and writings altogether, when duly considered, render it extremely probable, if not certain, that his backsliding was but temporary, and that he was soon reclaimed. We have little more recorded of him than his public life, except what is contained in his own writings. Should we judge of him only by his recorded history, apart from his writings, we might infer that he lived, at least for a long time, in sin; but from his writings we must infer, that his life as a whole was one of deep thought, much profound meditation upon God and divine things, much research into the works, and ways, and government of God, both moral and providential, and of much spirituality. His practice of polygamy on so large a scale, and many other things that appear in his life were, in the substance and principle of them, common to the most pious men of that age and nation. Solomon's case, when duly considered, cannot disprove the doctrine under consideration. Many things in him that shock us, might have been consistent with his living in a state of acceptance with God.

4. Observation, it is said, conflicts with the doctrine in question. So far as human observation can go, I admit that this is so; that many persons seem to be born again, and to run well for a time, and afterwards fall, and apparently live and die in sin. But it should be remarked, that observation cannot be conclusive upon this subject, because we cannot certainly know, that any of the cases just alluded to are real conversions to God. Hence the objection fails of conclusiveness. Were it certainly known, that such persons were truly regenerated, and that afterwards they fall away and live in sin, and die in that state, it would follow, that the doctrine, at least in the form in which I have stated it, cannot be true. But this is not, and cannot be certainly known by observation. If, as I trust, it has been found to be true, in our examination, that the Bible plainly teaches the doctrine in question, in the form in which I have stated it, it must follow of course that observation cannot disprove it, for the reason that it is not a question that lies within the reach of observation, in such a sense as to admit of certainty, or of any such kind or degree of evidence as to shake the sure testimony of the Bible.

5. But an appeal is also made to consciousness to overthrow this doctrine. It is said, that the real saints, at least in some instances, know themselves to have lived a great part of their lives in sin, and even by far the greater part of their days subsequent to regeneration.

This objection or assertion may be answered substantially as was the last. It is true, indeed, that the saints may know themselves to have been regenerated; and it is also true, that many may think they know this when they are deceived. A man may know himself to be awake, but from this it does not follow that no one can think himself awake while he is asleep. But since upon examination, it has been found that the Bible plainly teaches the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, in the sense in which I have defined it, we must of course yield the objection founded on experience, and grant that such experiences can weigh nothing against the testimony of God. The objection of course cannot be conclusive; for it is not one of the nature that admits of no error or doubt. The Bible defines all the essential attributes of Christian character. Now, if upon examination, perseverance in the sense here insisted on is proved to be one of them, it is absurd to array against the doctrine the consciousness of not persevering. It is to assume that we, and not the Bible, can decide who is a Christian, and what are the essential attributes of Christian character.

6. But it is also objected to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, that several passages of scripture plainly teach that some real saints have fallen away and been lost. I will therefore now proceed to the examination of those passages upon which the principal reliance is placed to disprove this doctrine. The first one which I shall notice is found in 1Co 10:1-12, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat of the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ); But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them, as it is written; The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

It is said of this passage, that the history of the Israelites is here introduced as a warning to real Christians; consequently, the apostle must have assumed, that those of the Israelites who fell were real saints, or there would have been no pertinency or force in his allusion. To this I reply, that the pertinency and force of the allusion appear to me to have been as follows. The Israelites composed the visible church of God. At the time mentioned, they were all professors of religion. All possessed great light and privileges compared with the rest of the world; they therefore felt confident of their acceptance with God, and of their consequent safety and salvation. But with many of them it turned out, that God was not well pleased. Some of them turned out to be idolaters and were destroyed. Now, says the apostle, let this be a warning to you. You are in like manner professors of religion. You are all members of the visible church of God to which the promises are made. You have great light and privileges when compared with the world at large. You may think yourselves to be altogether safe, and sure of final salvation. But remember, that the history of the ancient church is written for your benefit; and the destruction of those just alluded to, is recorded for your admonition. Be not high minded, but fear. Do not be presumptuous, because you are members in good standing in the visible church, and possess great light and privileges; but remember, that many before you, who were like you in these respects, have lost their souls; "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

If the apostle had intended to convey the impression that they were real saints that fell in the wilderness, and that real saints do fall away and are lost, he would no doubt have said, let him that standeth, instead of him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. The term rendered thinketh is represented by Robinson as correctly translated in this passage. The meaning of the apostle appears to have been this, that others who were, from their circumstances and fancied characters, very confident of their safety, had been finally cast off and lost; therefore, take heed to yourselves, lest being similarly situated, you in like manner deceive yourselves; and while you think that you stand, you should fall and perish.

But it may be said, that the apostle speaks of those as falling who had eaten of the spiritual meat, and drank of the rock Christ, and therefore must have been real saints. To this I reply, that the apostle does indeed use universal language, and speak of all the Israelites as doing these things; but who will soberly contend that he intended really to be understood as affirming, that all the Israelites that passed through the sea, &c., were true saints? What he says does not necessitate the conclusion that any of them were truly regenerated saints. They were all baptized unto Moses, that is, were all introduced into the covenant of which he was the mediator. They all ate of the same spiritual bread, that is, the manna on which the Lord fed them. They all drank of the spiritual rock; that is, of the water that gushed from the rock when Moses smote it with his rod, and which rock was a type of Christ, as was also the manna. Now, does the apostle mean to say, that all the Israelites understood the typical meaning of these waters, and this manna, and that they were all truly spiritual or regenerate persons? I think not. All that he intended appears to me to be, that all the church of the Jews at the time were so far partakers of the grace of Christ, as to receive this baptism, and as to have this spiritual or typical bread and water, and also to enjoy great light and much miraculous instruction, but that, nevertheless, with many of them God was displeased. Their being baptized in their passage through the Red Sea, did not imply that they so understood and consented to it at the time, nor does the assertion that they ate the spiritual food, and drank of the spiritual rock, imply anything more than that they enjoyed these great and high privileges, and counted themselves as very secure in consequence of them. It is certainly straining the sense to make the apostle affirm, that all the Israelites were real saints who passed through the sea. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he intended to affirm the real piety of any of them. It was not essential to his purpose to do so.

In examining the class of passages adduced to prove that some real saints have fallen from grace and been lost, I am only concerned to show, that they do not by fair construction necessitate this conclusion. I may admit that, if the doctrine of perseverance were not found to be clearly taught in the Bible, the not unnatural construction of some of the class of texts in question might lead to the conclusion that some, yea many, real saints have been lost.

But since, from the previous examination it has appeared, that the doctrine is plainly and unequivocally taught in the Bible, all that needs to be shown of the class of texts now under consideration is, that they do not, when fairly interpreted, really and unequivocally teach that some true saints have been lost. This showing will sufficiently vindicate the scriptures against the imputation of self-contradiction, in both affirming and denying the same doctrine. Observe, I am not called upon to show, that the passages in question cannot be so construed, and with considerable plausibility, as to make them contradict this doctrine; but all I am called upon to show in this place is, that they do not necessarily, by fair construction, contradict it; that they do not necessitate the admission either that the Bible contradicts itself, or that a different construction must be given to the passages that seem to teach this doctrine.

With these remarks I proceed to the examination of 2Pe 2:9-22 : "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government: presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. Spots they are, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to return from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Now observe, the apostle calls the persons of whom he speaks "wells without water: clouds that are carried with a tempest:" that is, without rain. His whole description of them shows, that he is speaking of false professors or hypocrites. But it is inferred, that they are fallen saints, because it is said they have "forsaken the right way, and are gone astray after the error of Balaam," &c. But this does not necessarily imply that they were in heart ever in the right way, but that they have forsaken the right way, so far as the outward life is concerned; in which respect they had doubtless been in the right way, or they would not have been admitted to membership in the church.

But it is said of these false professors, that "they allure through lust and much wantonness those who were clean escaped from those who live in error." But neither does this necessitate the conclusion, that they had escaped in heart from those that lived in error, but merely that they had for the time being outwardly abandoned their idolatrous practices and companions, and had made a profession, and put on the form of Christianity.

But it is also said, 2Pe 2:20-22 : "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Neither does this necessitate the conclusion, that they had in heart escaped from the pollutions that are in the world, but merely that they had outwardly reformed. What is said in the last verse seems to favour this construction. 2Pe 2:22 : "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." That is, the dog has returned to his vomit, because he remains a dog, and is not changed; and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire, because she is still a sow, and her washing has not changed her nature. So, the apostle would say, by returning to their former ways, do the persons in question show, that they have experienced no radical change; but on the contrary, that they are only like a washed sow, sinners still, who have been only outwardly cleansed, while within they are the same as ever. This appears to me to be all that can fairly be made out of this passage.

I will now attend to 1Ti 1:19-20 : "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck. Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Of this text I may say, that the apostle was writing to Timothy as an eminent religious teacher, and was giving him cautions respecting his influence in that relation. Hymeneus and Alexander, as we may infer from this, and which is still more plainly taught in other passages, were religious teachers, who had cast off or perverted the true faith or doctrine of the gospel, and thus made shipwreck. They had put away faith and a good conscience, and by so doing had made shipwreck of the true gospel. This passage does not teach that these men were true Christians, nor does it necessarily imply that any had been true saints who had gone with them. The expression, "some having put away," does not necessarily imply that they once had true faith and a good conscience, but only that they taught that which was inconsistent with either; or it may mean that they had rejected or refused both faith and a good conscience; that they practised and taught things inconsistent with either true faith, or with the true gospel, or with a good conscience, and had therefore run upon a rock, and wrecked their souls, and the souls of those who followed them. But this proves nothing in respect to their ever having been real saints.

The apostle was speaking in popular language, and represented things as they appeared to the observer. Thus we should speak of spurious converts. It certainly does not appear to me, that this passage would, without forced construction, warrant the conclusion that some real saints had been lost, even apart from those passages that, we have seen, seem unequivocally to teach the doctrine. Much less, when those passages are considered, are we, as I think we have seen, authorized so to construe this passage as to make it either contradict them, or to necessitate such a modification of their construction as is contended for by those who deny the doctrine in question. If the doctrine in question is not really taught in the Bible, we certainly should not believe it; but if it is, we must not lightly reject it. We need candidly to weigh each passage, and to understand, if we can, just what is the mind of God as therein revealed.

The case of Judas has been relied upon as an instance of utter apostacy, and of consequent destruction. It is said, that in the Psalms Judas is spoken of as the familiar friend of Christ in whom he trusted. Psa 41:9 : "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

There is no reason to believe that Ps. 41 primarily respected either Christ or Judas. Christ quotes the 9th verse, as is common in the New Testament, not because it was originally spoken of himself or of Judas, but because his case was like that of the Psalmist. In the passage in which Christ quotes these words, he directly negatives the idea of Judas being one of his true disciples. He says, Joh 13:18, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

Here Christ plainly teaches, that he to whom he applied these words, was not chosen in the sense of being chosen to salvation, or in the sense of his being a true saint. He says:

Joh 6:64-65, Joh 6:70-71 : "But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father. 70. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? 71. He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."

He had chosen twelve to follow him as pupils or disciples; but one of them he had known from the beginning to be a wicked man. In Joh 17:12 Christ says, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Christ has been represented as saying to his Father in this passage, that he had lost none that the Father had given him except the son of perdition, that is Judas. But this is not the meaning of the passage in Christ's prayer. He intended that of those that the Father had given him, he had lost none; but the son of perdition was lost that the scripture might be fulfilled.

The same form of expression is used in Luk 4:27 : "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. Here *eime* is used in the original as meaning not *except*, but as an adversative conjunction *but*. Naaman was not an Israelite, but a heathen. Christ here used the same form of expression as in Joh 17:12. In this passage in Luke it is plain, that he intended that the prophet was not sent to any Israelite, *but* to a heathen. This same form is also used, Mat 12:4 : "How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests."

Here the same form of expression in the original is used, as in Joh 17:12. The plain meaning of this form in Mat 12:4 is *but*, not *except*. It was not lawful for David, nor for his companions to eat the shew-bread, *but* it was lawful for the priests to do so. So also, Act 21:25 : "As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered unto idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication." Here the same form is used, and the plain meaning of the phraseology is just that which I am contending for, in the passage in Christ's prayer. Likewise, Rev 21:27 : "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Here again the same form of expression, and the same word in the original, are used in the sense now contended for. Nothing shall enter into the city that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, *but* they which are written in the Lamb's book of life, shall enter in. So beyond reasonable doubt, Christ intended to say in his prayer to his Father: "While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost, that is, I have lost none of those whom thou hast given me; but the son of perdition is lost, according to the scriptures."

But it seems to me, that the context shows clearly what the Saviour intended by this form of expression. He says, Joh 17:11-12 : "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled:" that is: "Do thou keep them in thine own name and lose none of them, for while I was with them I kept them in thy name, and lost none of them; but the son of perdition is lost." He evidently did not mean to say, I lost but one whom thou gavest me. Or that he kept in his Father's name all except one of those whom the Father had given him. He says, Joh 17:6-12 : "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Here he plainly represents, that all who had been given him by the Father, had known and kept the word of God. They had believed and persevered, and Christ was glorified in them. Since he had kept them in his Father's name, and had lost none of them, he proceeds to pray, that now the Father will keep them in his own name. Let any one ponder well this passage from verse 6 to 12, and he will see, I trust, that this is a true view of the subject. At any rate this cannot be a proof text to establish the fact, that any have fallen from grace: for the plain reason, that the text can quite as naturally at least, and I think with much greater propriety, be quoted to sustain the doctrine which it is adduced to disprove. Again:

Mat 18:21-35 : "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times; but until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant. I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

This has been adduced to prove that some do fall from grace, especially Mat 18:32-34. But from this whole passage it is evident, that what the Lord meant, was to set in a strong light the necessity of a forgiving spirit, and that this is a condition of salvation. It is a parable designed to illustrate this truth, but does not assert as a fact, that any truly pardoned soul was ever lost; nor does it imply this, as any one may see who will duly weigh the whole parable. It does plainly imply, that a pardoned soul would be lost should he apostatize; but it does not imply that such a soul ever did apostatize. I consider next, 1Ti 5:12 : "Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith." This passage stands in the following connexion:--

1Ti 5:9-13 : "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man: Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not."

The word rendered damnation in this passage is often rendered judgment and condemnation; and the meaning may be, that the younger widows were found to wax wanton and fall into condemnation, and for a time at least to disgrace their profession, by casting off their first faith; or it may mean, that they were apt to be found among those who renounced the profession of the true faith, which they at first professed. They were young widows. Uneducated as heathen women were and are, and it could not be surprising that many of this class should make a spurious profession, and afterwards cast off their profession through wantonness, and disgrace their profession. The apostle, therefore, warns Timothy against too hasty a reception of them, or against having too early a confidence in the reality of their piety.

As every one knows, that Dr. Adam Clarke was a strong opponent of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, I give his views of this passage from his commentary. See Clarke, on verses 3, 9, 11 and 12:--

"1Ti 5:3 : 'Honour widows that are widows indeed.' One meaning of the word *timao*, to honour, is to support, sustain, &c., Matt. xv. 45, and here it is most obviously to be taken in this sense. Provide for those widows especially, which are widows indeed; persons truly destitute, being aged and helpless; and having neither children nor friends to take care of them; and who behave as becometh their destitute state.

"1Ti 5:9 : 'Take not into the number.' Let her not be taken into the list of those for which the church must provide. But some think that the apostle means the list of those who were deaconesses in the church; and that no widow was to be admitted into the rank who did not answer to the following character.

"1Ti 5:11 : 'But the younger widows refuse.' Do not admit those into this office who are under sixty years of age. Probably those who were received into such a list, promised to abide in their widowhood. But as young or comparatively young women, might have both occasion and temptations to re-marry, and so break their engagement to Christ, they should not be admitted. Not that the apostle condemns their re-marrying as a crime in itself, but because it was contrary to their engagement.

"'Wax wanton.' *Katastreniasosi*, from *kata* intensive, and *streniao*, to act in a luxurious or wanton manner. The word is supposed to be derived from *sterein*, to remove, and *enia*, the rein; and is a metaphor taken from a pampered horse, from whose mouth the rein has been removed; so that there is nothing to check or confine him. The metaphor is plain enough, and the application easy.

"1Ti 5:12 : 'Having damnation.' In the sense in which we use this word, I am satisfied the apostle never intended it. It is likely that he refers here to some promise or engagement, which they made when taken on the list already mentioned; and now they have the guilt of having violated that promise; that is the *krima*, or condemnation, of which the apostle speaks.

"'They have cast off their first faith.' By pledging their fidelity to a husband, they have cast off their fidelity to Christ; as a married life and their previous engagement are incompatible. Dr. Macknight translates these two verses thus:--'But the younger widows reject; for when they cannot endure Christ's rein, they will marry; incurring condemnation, because they have put away their first fidelity.'"

This passage does not assert, that any real Christian had fallen and had been lost, and the most that can be made of it is that they may, or can do so, and that there is danger of apostacy. This I fully admit and maintain; that is, that humanly speaking there is danger; which is the only sense in which there is danger that any event may be different from what it, in fact, turns out to be. I have already said, and shall have occasion to say again, that there is, and can be, no danger in the sense of real uncertainty, that any event whatever will be different from what it turns out to be, and from what God foresees that it will be. But in the sense of probability, judging from the natural course of events as they appear to us, there may be a high degree of probability, and therefore the utmost danger that things may be different from what in fact they turn out to be, and from what God foresees that they will be, and from what they really would be, were it not for the warnings, and threatenings, and a consequent sense of danger.

Again: It has been said, that from Christ's letters to the churches in Asia, recorded in Revelations, we learn that those churches, some of them at least, were in a state of apostacy from God; and that from the fact that the judgments of God annihilated those churches, there is reason to believe that the apostacy was complete and final, and their destruction certain. To this I reply, that those letters were written to churches as such, just as the prophets spoke of the Jewish Church as such. The things which the prophets declare of the Jewish church were declared of them as a body of professed saints, some generations of whom had more, and some less, real piety. The prophets would rebuke one generation for their backsliding and apostacy, without meaning to represent that the particular individuals they addressed were ever true saints, but meaning only that the body as such was in a degenerate and apostate state, compared with what the body as such had been in former times. So Christ writes to the churches of Asia, and reproves them for their backslidden and apostate condition, asserts that they had fallen, had left their first love, &c., from which, however, we are not to infer, that he intended to say this of those who had been truly converted as individuals, but merely that those churches as bodies had fallen, and were now composed of members as a whole who were in the state of which he complained; just as we say of the Roman Catholic church, or of the Lutheran or German Reformed, or of other bodies in which piety is at a low ebb, that they have left their first love, &c. In saying this, we should not mean to be understood as affirming, that the individuals who now compose those churches were at any time in a better spiritual state than they are at present but only that the churches as such are fallen from what those bodies once were, and had left the love, and zeal, and obedience once manifested in them.

The churches of Asia were doubtless, when first gathered by the apostles and primitive ministers, full of faith, and zeal, and love. But things had changed. Many of the members had changed, and perhaps every member who had originally composed those churches was dead, previous to the time when these letters were written. However this may be, there had doubtless been great changes in the membership of those churches; and since they were evidently addressed as bodies, it cannot be fairly inferred, from what is said, that the same persons addressed had fallen from a state of high spirituality into backsliding or apostacy, but that was true only of the then present membership, when compared with the former membership and state of the churches. These letters cannot be justly relied upon as disproving the doctrine in question; for the utmost that can be made of them is, that those churches as bodies were at the time in a state of declension.

The passages we have examined are, so far as I know, the principal ones upon which reliance has been placed to disprove the doctrine in question. I have read over attentively several times the views of Mr. Fletcher, in his Scripture Scales, and the passages quoted by him to disprove this doctrine. His chief reliance is manifestly upon the numerous passages that imply the possibility and danger of falling, rather than on any passages that unequivocally teach that any have fallen or will utterly fall. I am not aware that any respectable writer has laid much stress upon other passages than those I have examined, as expressly teaching, or unequivocally implying the fact of the fall and ruin of real saints. There may be such writers and such passages as those of which I speak; but if there are, I do not recollect to have seen them.

REMARKS.

1. If the doctrine under consideration is not true, I cannot see upon what ground we can affirm, or even confidently hope, that many of our pious friends who have died have gone to heaven. Suppose they held on their way until the last hours of life. If we may not believe that the faithfulness of God prevailed to keep them through the last conflict, what reason have we to affirm that they were preserved from sin and apostacy in their last hours, and saved? If the sovereign grace of God does not protect them against the wiles and malice of Satan, in their feebleness, and in the wreck of their habitation of clay, what has become of them? I must confess that, if I did not expect the covenanted mercy and faithfulness of God to prevail, and to sustain the soul under such circumstances, I should have very little expectation that any would be saved. If I could have any confidence that Christians would stand fast while in health, aside from the truth of this doctrine, still I should expect that Satan would overcome them in the end, when they passed through the last great struggle. Who could then trust to the strength of his own purposes?

2. But I could no more hope, that myself or any one else, would persevere in holiness in our best estate, even for one day or hour, if not kept by the power of God through faith, than I could hope to fly to heaven.

As I have before said, there is no hope of any one's persevering, except in so far as free grace anticipates and secures the concurrence of free will. The soul must be called, and effectually called, and perpetually called, or it will not follow Christ for an hour. I say again, that by effectual calling, I do not mean an irresistible calling. I do not mean a calling that cannot, or that might not be resisted; but I do mean by an effectual calling, a calling that is not in fact resisted, a calling that does in fact secure the voluntary obedience of the soul. This is my only hope in respect to myself, or any body else. This grace I regard as vouchsafed to me in the covenant of grace, or as a reward of Christ's obedience unto death. It is pledged to secure the salvation of those whom the Father has from eternity given to the Son. The Holy Spirit is given to them to secure their salvation, and I have no expectation that any others will ever be saved. But these, every one of them, will surely be saved. There is, there can be no hope for any others. Others are able to repent, but they will not. Others might be saved, if they would believe, and comply with the conditions of salvation, but they will not.

We have seen, that none come to Christ, except they are drawn of the Father, and that the Father draws to Christ those and those only whom he has given to Christ, and also, that it is the Father's design that of those whom he has given to Christ, he should lose none, but that he should raise them up at the last day. This is the only hope that any will be saved. Strike out this foundation, and what shall the righteous do? Strike out from the Bible the doctrine of God's covenanted faithfulness to Christ--the truth that the Father has given to him a certain number whose salvation he foresees, that he could and should secure, and I despair of myself and of every body else. Where is any other ground of hope? I know not where.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LVI. - continued

JUSTIFICATION.

5. Perseverance in faith and obedience, or in consecration to God, is also an unalterable condition of justification, or of pardon and acceptance with God. By this language in this connexion, you will of course understand me to mean, that perseverance in faith and obedience is a condition, not of present, but of final or ultimate acceptance and salvation.

Those who hold that justification by imputed righteousness is a forensic proceeding, take a view of final or ultimate justification, according with their view of the nature of the transaction. With them, faith receives an imputed righteousness, and a judicial justification. The first act of faith, according to them, introduces the sinner into this relation, and obtains for him a perpetual justification. They maintain that after this first act of faith it is impossible for the sinner to come into condemnation; that, being once justified, he is always thereafter justified, whatever he may do; indeed that he is never justified by grace, as to sins that are past, upon condition that he ceases to sin; that Christ's righteousness is the ground, and that his own present obedience is not even a condition of his justification, so that, in fact, his own present or future obedience to the law of God is, in no case, and in no sense, a *sine quà non* of his justification, present or ultimate.*

*Dr. Duffield, a recent expounder of what, he is pleased to insist, is the only orthodox view of the subject, says:--"The sacred Scriptures clearly teach, that God, by one gracious act, once passed, and for ever immutable, releases the sinner who believes, so effectually and fully from the penalty of the law, that he is removed from under its dominion, and never more comes into condemnation. Justification is an act of God's free grace, which takes immediate effect in this mortal life, and by which the relation of the sinner who believes on Jesus Christ, is so thoroughly changed to the law, that through the actings of his faith he passes from under the condemnation, and penalty of the law, and being accepted as righteous, only for the righteousness of Christ, is adopted into the family of God's children. It is one act of God, once done and for ever, and begins immediately to produce its fruits." Indeed, Christian, what do you think of this? One act of faith, then instantly justified, once and immutable, you can never by any possibility need pardon again. No, the law has perished as it respects you. Faith has made it void, for that is no law that has no penalty. Then you can no more sin, for you have no law. "For where there is no law, there is no transgression." "Sin is not imputed where there is no law." So if you do sin, your sin is not imputed, and you need no pardon. What an infinite mistake are Christians labouring under, according to this theory, when they ask for a pardon of their sins committed after this immutable act of justification. And further: live as you may, after once believing, you must be saved, your justification is immutable. What say you to this?

Now this is certainly another gospel from the one I am inculcating. It is not a difference merely upon some speculative or theoretic point. It is a point fundamental to the gospel and to salvation, if any one can be. Let us therefore see which of these is the true gospel.

I object to this view of justification:--

1. That it is antinomianism. Observe: they hold that upon the first exercise of faith, the soul enters into such a relation to Christ, that with respect to it the penalty of the Divine law is for ever set aside, not only as it respects all past, but also as it respects all future acts of disobedience; so that sin does not thereafter bring the soul under the condemning sentence of the law of God. But a precept without a penalty is no law. Therefore, if the penalty is in their case permanently set aside or repealed, this is, and must be, a virtual repeal of the precept, for without a penalty it is only counsel, or advice, and no law.

2. But again: it is impossible that this view of justification should be true; for the moral law did not originate in the arbitrary will of God, and he cannot abrogate it either as to its precept or its penalty.**(see below) He may for good and sufficient reasons dispense in certain cases with the execution of the penalty. But set it aside in such a sense, that sin would not incur it, or that the soul that sins shall not be condemned by it, he cannot--it is naturally impossible! The law is as unalterable and unrepealable, both as to its precept and its penalty, as the nature of God. It cannot but be, in the very nature of things, that sin in any being, in any world, and at any time, will and must incur the penalty of the moral law. God may pardon as often as the soul sins, repents, and believes but to prevent real condemnation where there is sin, is not at the option of any being.

3. But again: I object to the view of justification in question, that it is of course inconsistent with forgiveness or pardon. If justified by imputed righteousness, why pardon him whom the law accounts as already and perpetually, and perfectly righteous? Certainly it were absurd and impossible, for the law and the law-giver judicially to justify a person on the ground of the perfect obedience of his substitute, and at the same time pardon him who is thus regarded as perfectly righteous. Especially must this be true of all sin committed subsequently to the first and justifying act of faith. If when once the soul has believed, it can no more come into condemnation, it certainly can no more be forgiven. Forgiveness implies previous condemnation, and consists in setting aside the execution of an incurred penalty.

4. If the view of justification I am opposing be true, it is altogether out of place for one who has once believed, to ask for the pardon of sin. It is a downright insult to God, and apostacy from Christ. It amounts according to their view of justification, to a denial of perpetual justification by imputed righteousness, and to an acknowledgment of being condemned. It must therefore imply a falling from grace, to pray for pardon after the soul has once believed. But upon their view falling from grace is impossible.

5. According to this view of justification, all the prayers offered by the saints for the pardon of sins committed after their first act of faith, not even excepting the Lord's prayer, have all been wrong and impious, and have all been a virtual denial of a fundamental truth of the gospel. Shame on a theory from which such consequences irresistibly follow! The soul cannot be pardoned unless it be condemned; for pardon is nothing else than setting aside the condemning sentence of the divine law.

6. But this view of justification is at war with the whole Bible. This everywhere represents Christians as condemned when they sin--teaches them to repent, confess, and pray for pardon--to betake themselves afresh to Christ as their only hope. The Bible, in almost every variety of manner, represents perseverance in faith, and obedience to the end, as a condition of ultimate justification and final salvation. Let the following passages serve as examples of the manner in which the Bible represents this subject:--

Eze 18:24. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

Eze 33:13. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."

Mat 10:22. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." [Mat 24:13.]

Joh 15:6. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Rom 2:6-7. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient endurance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life."

1Co 9:27. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

1Co 10:12. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2Co 6:1. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Col 1:23. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

Heb 3:6, Heb 3:12-14. "But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." 12. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." 13. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." 14. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Heb 4:1. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

2Pe 1:10. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

Rev 2:10-11, Rev 2:17, Rev 2:26-27. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death. 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. 26. And he that overcometh, and, keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; 27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father."

Rev 21:7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Observe, I am not here calling in question the fact, that all true saints do persevere in faith and obedience to the end; but am showing that such perseverance is a condition of salvation, or of ultimate justification. The subject of the perseverance of the saints will come under consideration in its proper place.--(See "Perseverance.")

7. The view of justification which I am opposing is contradicted by the consciousness of the saints. I think I may safely affirm, that the saints in all time are very conscious of condemnation when they fall into sin. This sense of condemnation may not subject them to the same kind and degree of fear which they experienced before regeneration, because of the confidence they have that God will pardon their sin. Nevertheless, until they repent, and by a renewed act of faith lay hold on pardon and fresh justification, their remorse, shame, and consciousness of condemnation, do in fact, if I am not much deceived, greatly exceed, as a general thing, the remorse, shame, and sense of condemnation, experienced by the impenitent. But if it be true, that the first act of faith brings the soul into a state of perpetual justification, so that it cannot fall into condemnation thereafter, do what it will, the experience of the saints contradicts facts, or, more strictly, their consciousness of condemnation is a delusion. They are not in fact condemned by the moral law as they conceive themselves to be.

8. Christ has taught the saints to pray for forgiveness, which implies that when they sin they are condemned. There can be no pardon except there be condemnation. Pardon, as has been said, consists in setting aside the execution of the penalty of law upon the sinner. If therefore the law and the lawgiver do not condemn him, it is absurd to pray for pardon. The fact therefore that inspired saints prayed repeatedly for the pardon of sin committed subsequent to their regeneration; that Christ taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness; that it is natural to saints to pray for pardon when they have sinned; also, that the Bible expressly asserts that if a righteous man forsake his righteousness and sin, his righteousness shall not be remembered, but he shall be condemned for sin; and also that the human intellect affirms that this must be so: these facts render it plain, that perseverance in faith and obedience must be a condition of final justification and of eternal life.

9. If I understand the framers of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, they regarded justification as a state resulting from the relation of an adopted child of God, which state is entered into by faith alone, and held that justification is not conditionated upon obedience for the time being, but that a person in this state may, as they hold that all in this life in fact do, sin daily, and even continually, yet without condemnation by the law, their sin bringing them only under his fatherly displeasure, and subjecting them to the necessity of repentance, as a condition of his fatherly favour, but not as a condition of pardon or of ultimate salvation. They seem to have regarded the child of God as no longer under moral government, in such a sense that sin was imputed to him, this having been imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness so literally imputed to him that, do what he may after the first act of faith, he is accounted and treated in his person as wholly righteous. If this is not antinomianism, I know not what is; since they hold that all who once believe will certainly be saved, yet that their perseverance in holy obedience to the end is, in no case, a condition of final justification, but that this is conditionated upon the first act of faith alone. They support their positions with quotations from scripture about as much in point as is common for them. They often rely on proof-texts that, in their meaning and spirit, have not the remotest allusion to the point in support of which they are quoted. I have tried to understand the subject of justification as it is taught in the Bible, without going into laboured speculations or to theological technicalities. If I have succeeded in understanding it, the following is a succinct and a true account of the matter:

The Godhead, in the exercise of his adorable love and compassion, sought the salvation of sinners through and by means of the mediatorial death and work of Christ. This death and work of Christ were resorted to, not to create, but, as a result of the merciful disposition of God, and as a means of securing the universe against a misapprehension of the character and design of God in forgiving and saving sinners. To Christ, as Mediator between the Godhead and man, the work of justifying and saving sinners is committed. He is made unto sinners "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." In consideration of Christ's having by his death for sinners secured the subjects of the Divine government against a misconception of his character and designs, God does, upon the further conditions of a repentance and faith, that imply a renunciation of their rebellion and a return to obedience to his laws, freely pardon past sin, and restore the penitent and believing sinner to favour, as if he had not sinned, while he remains penitent and believing, subject however to condemnation and eternal death, unless he holds the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end. The doctrine of a literal imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity, of the literal imputation of all the sins of the elect to Christ, and of his suffering for them the exact amount due to the transgressors, of the literal imputation of Christ's righteousness or obedience to the elect, and the consequent perpetual justification of all that are converted from the first exercise of faith, whatever their subsequent life may be--I say I regard these dogmas as fabulous, and better befitting a romance than a system of theology.

But it is said, that the Bible speaks of the righteousness of faith. "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith."-- Rom 9:30. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."-- Phi 3:9. These and similar passages are relied upon, as teaching the doctrine of an imputed righteousness; and such as these: "The Lord our righteousness;" "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." By "the Lord our righteousness," we may understand, either that we are justified, that is, that our sins are atoned for, and that we are pardoned and accepted by, or on account of the Lord, that is, Jesus Christ; or we may understand that the Lord makes us righteous, that is, that he is our sanctification, working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; or both, that is, he atones for our sins, brings us to repentance and faith, works sanctification or righteousness in us, and then pardons our past sins, and accepts us. By the righteousness of faith, or of God by faith, I understand the method of making sinners holy, and of securing their justification or acceptance by faith, as opposed to mere works of law or self-righteousness. *Dikaiosune*, rendered righteousness, may be with equal propriety, and often is rendered justification. So undoubtedly it should be rendered in 1Co 1:30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The meaning here doubtless is, that he is the author and finisher of that scheme of redemption, whereby we are justified by faith, as opposed to justification by our own works. "Christ our righteousness" is Christ the author or procurer of our justification. But this does not imply that he procures our justification by imputing his obedience to us.

The doctrine of a literal imputation of Christ's obedience or righteousness is supported by those who hold it, by such passages as the following: Rom 4:5-8. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputed righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." But here justification is represented only as consisting in forgiveness of sin, or in pardon and acceptance. Again, 2Co 5:19, 2Co 5:21. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here again the apostle is teaching only his much-loved doctrine of justification by faith, in the sense that upon condition or in consideration of the death and mediatorial interference and work of Christ, penitent believers in Christ are forgiven and rewarded as if they were righteous.

IV. *Foundation of the justification of penitent believers in Christ. That is, what is the ultimate ground or reason of their justification.*

1. It is not founded in Christ's literally suffering the exact penalty of the law for them, and in this sense literally purchasing their justification and eternal salvation. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith affirms as follows: chapter on Justification, section 3--"Christ by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners." If the framers of this confession had made the distinction between the grounds and conditions of justification, so as to represent the gracious disposition that gave the Son, and that accepted his obedience and satisfaction in their stead, as the ground or moving cause, and the death and work of Christ as a condition or a means, as "that without which" the benevolence of God could not wisely justify sinners, their statement had been much improved. As it stands, the transaction is represented as a proper *quid pro quo*, a proper full payment of the debt of the justified. All the grace consisted in giving his Son, and consenting to the substitution. But they deny that there is grace in the act of justification itself. This proceeds upon the ground of "exact justice." There is then according to this, no grace in the act of pardon and accepting the sinner as righteous. This is "exact justice," because the debt is fully cancelled by Christ. Indeed, "Christian, what do you think of this?" God has, in the act of giving his Son and in consenting to the substitution, exercised all the grace he ever will. Now your forgiveness and justification are, according to this teaching, placed on the ground of "exact justice." You have now only to believe and demand "exact justice." One act of faith places your salvation on the ground of "exact justice." Talk no more of the grace of God in forgiveness! But stop, let us see. What is to be understood here by exact justice, and by a real, full satisfaction to his Father's justice? I suppose all orthodox Christians to hold, that every sinner and every sin, strictly on the score of justice, deserves eternal death or endless suffering. Did the framers of this confession hold that Christ bore the literal penalty of the law for each of the saints? or did they hold that by virtue of his nature and relations, his suffering, though indefinitely less in amount than was deserved by the transgressors, was a full equivalent to public justice, or governmentally considered, for the execution of the literal penalty upon the transgressors? If they meant this latter, I see no objection to it. But if they meant the former, namely, that Christ suffered in his own person the full amount strictly due to all the elect, I say:--

(1.) That it was naturally impossible.

(2.) That his nature and relation to the government of God was such as to render it wholly unnecessary to the safe forgiveness of sin, that he should suffer precisely the same amount deserved by sinners.

(3.) That if, as their substitute, Christ suffered for them the full amount deserved by them, then justice has no claim upon them, since their debt is fully paid by the surety, and of course the principal is, in justice, discharged. And since it is undeniable that the atonement was made for the whole posterity of Adam, it must follow that the salvation of all men is secured upon the ground of "exact justice." This, as has been said, is the conclusion to which Huntington and his followers came. This doctrine of literal imputation, is one of the strongholds of universalism, and while this view of atonement and justification is held they cannot be driven from it.

(4.) If he satisfied justice for them, in the sense of literally and exactly obeying for them, why should his suffering be imputed to them as a condition of their salvation? Surely they could not need both the imputation of his perfect obedience to them, so as to be accounted in law as perfectly righteous, and also the imputation of his sufferings to them, as if he had not obeyed for them. Is God unrighteous? Does he exact of the surety, first, the literal and full payment of the debt, and secondly, perfect personal obedience for and in behalf of the sinner? Does he first exact full and perfect obedience, and then the same amount of suffering as if there had been no obedience? And this, too, of his beloved Son?

(5.) What Christian ever felt, or can feel in the presence of God, that he has a right to demand justification in the name of Christ, as due to him on the ground of "exact justice." Observe, the framers of the Confession just quoted, studiously represent all the grace exercised in the justification of sinners, as confined to the two acts of giving his Son and accepting the substitution. This done, Christ fully pays the debt, fully and exactly satisfies his Father's justice. You now need not, must not conceive of the pardon of sin as grace or favour. To do this is, according to the teaching of this Confession, to dishonour Christ. It is to reject his righteousness and salvation. What think you of this? One act of grace in giving his Son, and consenting to the substitution, and all forgiveness, all accepting and trusting as righteous, is not grace, but "exact justice." To pray for forgiveness, as an act of grace, is apostacy from Christ. Christian! Can you believe this? No; in your closet, smarting under the sting of a recently committed sin, or broken down and bathed in tears, you cannot find it in your heart to demand "exact justice" at the hand of God, on the ground that Christ has fully and literally paid your debt. To represent the work and death of Christ as the ground of justification in this sense, is a snare and a stumbling-block. If this is the true account of it, antinomianism must be the true gospel, than which a more false and licentious dogma never existed. But this view that I have just examined, contradicts the necessary convictions of every saint on earth. For the truth of this assertion I appeal to the universal consciousness of saints. Whose business is it to cry heresy, and sound the alarm of error through the land!

2. Our own works or obedience to the law or to the gospel, are not the ground or foundation of our justification. That is, neither our faith, nor repentance, nor love, nor life, nor anything done by us or wrought in us, is the ground of our justification. These are conditions of our justification, in the sense of a "*not without which*," but not the ground of it. We are justified upon condition of our faith, but not for our faith; upon condition of our repentance, love, obedience, perseverance to the end, but not for these things. These are the conditions, but not the reason, ground, or procuring cause of our justification. We cannot be justified without them, neither are we or can we be justified by them. None of these things must be omitted on pain of eternal damnation. Nor must they be put in the place of Christ upon the same penalty. Faith is so much insisted on in the gospel as the *sine quà non* of our justification, that some seem disposed, or at least to be in danger of substituting faith in the place of Christ; of making faith instead of Christ the Saviour.

3. Neither is the atonement, nor anything in the mediatorial work of Christ, the foundation of our justification, in the sense of the source, moving, or procuring cause. This, that is the ground of our justification, lies deep in the heart of infinite love. We owe all to that merciful disposition that performed the mediatorial work, and died the accursed death to supply an indispensable condition of our justification and salvation. To stop short in the act which supplied the condition, instead of finding the depths of a compassion as fathomless as infinity, as the source of the whole movement, is to fail in discrimination. The work, and death, and resurrection, and advocacy of Christ are indispensable conditions, are all-important, but not the fundamental reason of our justification.

4. Nor is the work of the Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying the soul, the foundation of our justification. This is only a condition or means of bringing it about, but is not the fundamental reason.

5. But the disinterested and infinite love of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the true and only foundation of the justification and salvation of sinners. God is love, that is, he is infinitely benevolent. All he does, or says, or suffers, permits or omits, is for one and the same ultimate reason, namely, to promote the highest good of universal being.

6. Christ, the second person in the glorious Trinity, is represented in scripture, as taking so prominent a part in this work, that the number of offices and relations which he sustains to God and man in it are truly wonderful. For example, he is represented as being: 1. King. 2. Judge. 3. Mediator. 4. Advocate. 5. Redeemer. 6. Surety. 7. Wisdom. 8. Righteousness. 9. Sanctification. 10. Redemption. 11. Prophet. 12. Priest. 13. Passover, or Lamb of God. 14. The bread and water of life. 15. True God and eternal life. 16. Our life. 17. Our all in all. 18. As the repairer of the breach. 19. As dying for our sins. 20. As rising for our justification. 21. As the resurrection and the life. 22. As bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. 23. As he, by whose stripes we are healed. 24. As the head of his people. 25. As the bridegroom or husband of his church. 26. As the shepherd of his flock. 27. As the door by which they enter. 28. As the way to salvation. 29. As our salvation. 30. As the truth. 31. As being made sin for us. 32. That we are made the righteousness of God in him. 33. That in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. 34. That in him all fulness dwells. 35. All power in heaven and earth are said to be given to him. 36. He is said to be the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 37. Christ in us the hope of glory. 38. The true vine of which we are the branches. 39. Our brother. 40. Wonderful. 41. Counsellor. 42. The mighty God. 43. The everlasting Father. 44. The prince of peace. 45. The captain of salvation. 46. The captain of the Lord's host.

These are among the official relations of Christ to his people, and to the great work of our justification. I shall have frequent occasion to consider him in some of these relations, as we proceed in this course of study. Indeed, the offices, relations, and work of Christ, are among the most important topics of Christian theology.

Christ is our Justification, in the sense that he carries into execution the whole scheme of redemption devised by the adorable Godhead. To him the scriptures everywhere direct the eyes of our faith and of our intelligence also. The Holy Spirit is represented not as glorifying himself, but as speaking of Jesus, as taking of the things of Christ and showing them to his people, as glorifying Christ Jesus, as being sent by Christ, as being the Spirit of Christ, as being Christ himself dwelling in the hearts of his people. But I must forbear at present. This subject of Christ's relations needs elucidation in future lectures.

REMARK.

The relations of the old school view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, a return to personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to the law, cannot with them be a condition of justification. They must have a justification while yet at least in some degree of sin. This must be brought about by imputed righteousness. The intellect revolts at a justification in sin. So a scheme is devised to divert the eye of the law and of the lawgiver from the sinner to his Substitute, who has perfectly obeyed the law. But in order to make out the possibility of his obedience being imputed to them, it must be assumed, that he owed no obedience for himself; than which a greater absurdity cannot be conceived. Constitutional depravity or sinfulness being once assumed, physical regeneration, physical sanctification, physical divine influence, imputed righteousness, and justification, while personally in the commission of sin, follow of course.

**Dr. Duffield holds that the moral law originated in the sovereign will of God, and of course he can set it aside.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LVII. - continued

SANCTIFICATION.

"TO THE TROY [N. Y.] PRESBYTERY.

"Dear Brethren,

"Permit me to make a few remarks upon your report on the subject of Christian perfection. I have read with attention most that has come to hand upon the subject of your report, and have thought it of little use to reply, until some opponent of our views should throw his objections into a more tangible form than any one had hitherto done. Your report embraces, in a condensed form, almost all that has been said in opposition to our views. For this reason, as well as for the reason that I have a high respect and fervent love for those of your number with whom I am acquainted, I beg leave to be heard in reply.

"What I have said was prepared for, and should have been published in the 'New York Evangelist.' I wrote to the editor, making the request to be heard through his columns; to which he made no reply. I still hope he will not fail to do me, yourselves, and the church the justice to give this article a place in his columns. The truth demands it. (Since changed Editors.) For no other reason, I am sure, than to subserve the interests of truth would I say one word. Without further preface, I quote your statement of the real point at issue. You say,--

"'That there is some issue, admits of no doubt. What is it? It is not, whether by the requirements of the moral law, or the injunctions of the gospel, men are commanded to be perfectly holy; not whether men are under obligations to be thus holy; not whether as moral agents, such a state is to them a possible state; not whether the gospel system is competent to secure actual perfection in holiness, if its entire resources be applied; not whether it is the duty and privilege of the church to rise much higher in holy living, than it has ever yet done in this world. To join issue on any, or all of these points, is to make a false issue; it is to have the appearance of a question without its reality. Some, or all of these points, form a part of the scheme of 'Christian perfection;' but certainly they do not invest it with any peculiar character, for they involve no new sentiment differing from the ground taken by the great body of orthodox Christians in every age. It cannot be supposed 'that their advocacy has led to the various and fearful solicitudes of learned and pious men, in regard to the truth and tendency of this system. It must, therefore, be fraught with some other element. What is that element? The assertion that Christian men do attain in some cases, during the present life, to a state of perfect holiness, excluding sin in every form, and that for an indefinite period may remain in this state.'

"Upon this I remark:--

"1. You have made a false issue. Proof:--

"(1.) What our position is. It is, and always has been, that entire sanctification is attainable in this life, in such a sense as to render its attainment a rational object of pursuit, with the expectation of attaining it.

"This proposition, it would seem, you admit; but on account of 'the various and fearful solicitudes of learned and pious men,' you take it for granted, there must be a heresy somewhere, and accordingly proceed to take issue with us, upon one of the arguments we have used in support of our proposition; and reply to our other arguments, as if they had been adduced by us in support of the proposition, upon which you have erroneously made up the issue.

"(2.) Some of the arguments by which we have attempted to establish this proposition are--

"(i.) That men are naturally able to obey all the commandments of God.

"(ii.) That this obedience is without qualification demanded of men in this life.

"(iii.) That the gospel proffers sufficient grace to secure their entire sanctification in this life; and that nothing is wanting but 'appropriative acts,' on the part of Christians, to realize this result.

"(iv.) That the entire sanctification of Christians in this life was made the subject of prayer by inspired men, and also that Christ taught his disciples to pray for it.

"(v.) That this state has actually been attained.

"These are among our arguments; and as they are the only ones to which you have professed to reply, I will mention no others.

"(3.) I will put our arguments in the form of syllogisms in their order.

"(i.) Whatever is attainable in this life, on the ground of natural ability, may be aimed at with a rational hope of success. A state of entire sanctification in this life is attainable, on the ground of natural ability. Therefore, it may be aimed at with a rational hope of success.

"Again. Whatever men are naturally able to do in this life, they may aim at doing, with a rational hope of success. Men are naturally able to do all their duty, which is to be entirely sanctified. Therefore, they may aim at entire sanctification with a rational hope of being entirely sanctified.

"You admit both the major and minor premises in these syllogisms. Can the conclusion be avoided?

"(ii.) Whatever God commands to be done by men in this life, may be done by them. God commands men to be entirely holy in this life. Therefore, a state of entire holiness in this life is possible. You admit both the major and minor premises. Can the conclusion be avoided?

"(iii.) Whatever attainment the gospel proffers sufficient grace to secure in this life, may be made. The gospel proffers sufficient grace, should any one 'apply its entire resources,' to secure a state of entire sanctification in this life. Therefore this state may be secured, or this attainment may be made. Here again you admit both premises. Can the conclusion be denied?

"(iv.) Whatever was made the subject of prayer by the Spirit of inspiration may be granted. The entire sanctification of the saints in this life was prayed for by the Spirit of inspiration. Therefore, Christians may aim at and pray for this state, with the rational expectation of being entirely sanctified in this life.

"Again. What Christ has made it the universal duty of the church to pray for, may be granted. He has made it the duty of all Christians to pray for the entire sanctification of the saints in this life. Therefore, these petitions may be presented, and Christians may expect to be entirely sanctified in this life. Both premises in these syllogisms are admitted. Are not the conclusions inevitable?

"(v.) Whatever men have done, men can do. Men have been entirely sanctified in this life. Therefore they may be so sanctified. The minor premise in this syllogism you deny; and, strange to tell, you affirm, over and over again, that this one argument of ours is the main proposition to be established! And you reply to all our other arguments in support of the main proposition, as if they had been adduced to prove this! Now it would have been equally fair, and just as much in point, so far as our argument in support of the main proposition is concerned, if you had made an issue with us on any other argument adduced by us in support of that proposition--insisted that that was the main question--and replied to our arguments as if they had been adduced in support of that.

"You misrepresent our logic. Assuming that the fact of actual attainment is the main proposition which we are labouring to establish, and in support of which we adduce the fact of actual attainment only as an argument, you misrepresent our reasoning. To put this matter in the clearest light, I will place side by side, the syllogisms which you put in our mouths, and our own syllogisms.

"YOUR SYLLOGISMS IMPUTED TO US.

" 1. 'Whatever is attainable in this life, is actually attained in this life. A state of perfect holiness is attainable in this life; therefore it is actually attained.'

"OUR OWN SYLLOGISMS.

"1. Whatever is attainable in this life, may be aimed at, with the rational hope of attaining it: entire sanctification is attainable in this life; therefore the attainment of this state may be aimed at with a rational hope of success.

"YOUR SYLLOGISMS IMPUTED TO US.

" 2. 'Whatever is possible by the provisions of the gospel in this life, will take place in this life; the perfect sanctification of all believers is possible by those provisions; therefore it will actually take place in this life.'

"OUR OWN SYLLOGISMS.

"2. Whatever attainment is possible, by the provisions of the gospel, in this life, may be aimed at by those under the gospel, with a rational hope of attaining it; the perfect sanctification of believers is possible by these provisions; therefore believers may aim at making this attainment, with a rational hope of success.

"YOUR SYLLOGISMS IMPUTED TO US.

" 3. 'In relation to the commands it will be sufficient to say, that although the Bible does command a state of perfect holiness in the present life, it does not follow that the command is in any instance obeyed fully on earth. Before we can arrive at this conclusion, we must adopt the following principle; that is, that whatever is commanded in the Bible is actually performed by the subjects of that command.'

"The syllogism would stand thus:

"Whatever is commanded by God, is actually performed; perfect holiness is commanded; therefore all men are perfectly holy.

"OUR OWN SYLLOGISMS.

"3. Whatever the Bible commands to be done in this life, may be done; the Bible commands Christians to be perfect in this life; therefore they may be perfect in this life.

"Now, brethren, I ask if you will deny the major premise, the minor premise, or the conclusion in either of the above syllogisms? You cannot deny either. I beseech you then to consider what injustice you have done to yourselves, to us, your brethren, and to the cause of truth, by such an evasion and misrepresentation of our logic.

"(4.) What your logic must be to meet our argument as we have stated it. If you would state in syllogistic form an argument that shall meet and set aside our reasoning, it must stand thus: That a thing is attainable in this life, is no proof that it can be attained. This must be assumed as a major premise, by any one who would answer our logic. But who does not see, that this amounts to a denial of an identical proposition? The same as to say, that a thing being attainable in this life, is no proof that it is attainable in this life. But to waive this consideration, and state the argument as it must stand in syllogistic form; to meet and refute our logic, it must stand thus: 'That a thing is attainable in this life is no proof that it can be attained. Entire sanctification is attainable in this life. Therefore, its attainability is no proof that it can be attained.' Who does not see, that the major premise is false, and that therefore the conclusion is? Now observe: we admit, that its attainability is no proof that it will be attained. But we insist, that its attainability is proof that the attainment may be aimed at, with a rational hope of success.

"Again: would you meet our second argument with a syllogism, it must stand thus: 'That God commands a state of entire sanctification in this life, is no proof that such a state is attainable in this life. God does command a state of entire sanctification in this life. Therefore the command is no proof that such a state is attainable.' Brethren, this argument would have the attribute of logical conclusiveness, if the major premise were not false. The very same course must be pursued by you, would you meet and set aside our reasoning in respect to our other arguments. This is so manifest, that I need not state the syllogisms.

"2. In respect to our inference in favour of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, drawn from the prayers of inspiration, and the fact that all Christians are commanded to pray for the entire sanctification of believers in this life, you say as follows:--

"'Similar defects characterize the arguments drawn from the prayers which the Bible records, as well as those which it authorizes Christians to make. It is true, that Christ prayed for his disciples in language the most elevated: 'Sanctify them through the truth.' The same may be said of the great Apostle, when he prayed: 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' We are directed to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven, and in general authorized to pray for a perfect victory over all sin at every time. These are the facts. Now, what is the inference? The advocate of 'perfection' responds--that some believers are perfectly sanctified in the present life. These, and kindred facts we offer, to prove this conclusion. Is there then between the two a certain connexion? If we admit the one, must we logically admit the other? Facts speak a very different language. Were those included in the prayer of Christ thus sanctified, and that from the moment of its utterance? Was the same true of all the Christians of Thessalonica? Has the will of God yet been done on earth as perfectly as in heaven? Has every believer who has hungered and thirsted after righteousness, attained to sinless perfection in this life? Did not Paul most fervently pray for the salvation of Israel, and have not thousands of Jews since died in their sins? Did he not pray that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, and was it removed? The grand mistake in this reasoning is, that it fixes what the nature and terms of prayer do not fix; that is, the time when, and the place where, the sought blessing shall be obtained.'

"On this I remark:--

"This appears to me a most remarkable paragraph. Here you quote a part of 1Th 5:23. 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly,' and then stop, assuming that nothing can be affirmed in respect to the time when the apostle prayed that this blessing might be granted. Now, beloved brethren, why did you not quote the whole passage, when it would have been most manifest, that the apostle actually prayed for the blessing to be granted in this life? I will quote it, and see if this is not so: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"As the sanctification of the 'body,' as well as the soul and spirit, is prayed for, and that the whole being may be 'preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' how can you say as you do--'The grand mistake in this reasoning is, that it fixes what the nature and the terms of prayer do not fix, that is, the time when, and place, here, the sought blessing shall be obtained?' Does not this prayer contemplate the bestowment of this blessing in this life? Who can reasonably deny it? Again: You say, 'We are directed to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven, and in general authorized to pray for a victory over all sin at every time.' Now, how can you make this admission, and still add the assertion just quoted, that 'prayer does not fix the time when this blessing is to be expected?' Certainly, the time when, is, in this prayer, limited to this life. In order to meet our argument, based upon the prayer of the apostles and the injunction of Christ, to pray for the entire sanctification of believers in this life, you must argue as follows. Here again I put the syllogisms into separate columns, that you may see them in contrast.

"YOUR REASONING PUT IN SYLLOGISTIC FORM.

"That the Spirit of inspiration prayed for the entire sanctification of believers in this life, is no evidence that an answer to this prayer may be expected by saints in this life. Paul, under the spirit of inspiration, did pray for the entire sanctification of the saints in this life. Therefore, this prayer is no evidence that saints may aim at being entirely sanctified in this life, with a rational hope of being so sanctified.

"OUR SYLLOGISMS.

"Whatever state was prayed for by the Spirit of inspiration, Christians may aim at with a rational hope of attaining; the Spirit of inspiration prayed for the entire sanctification of saints in this life. Therefore, Christians may aim at this attainment with the expectation of success.

"YOUR REASONING PUT IN SYLLOGISTIC FORM.

"Again: That Christ has made it the universal duty of saints to pray for the entire sanctification of Christians in this life, is no evidence that they may offer this prayer, with a rational expectation of being answered. Christ has made it the universal duty of Christians to pray for entire sanctification in this life. Therefore, this is no evidence that they may offer this prayer with the rational hope of being heard and answered.

"OUR SYLLOGISMS.

"Again: Whatever state Christians are required to pray for in this life, they may pray for with the expectation of being heard and answered. Christians are required to pray for a state of entire sanctification in this life. Therefore, they may pray for this attainment with the expectation of being heard and answered in this life.

"Now, brethren, whose logic is most conclusive?

"3. In one paragraph of your report, you admit and deny at the same breath, that entire sanctification is promised in this life. You say--

"'It is a glorious truth, that God has promised to all believers a final victory over sin, which undoubtedly will be accomplished in some period of their history. But does it follow, that because believers are to be perfectly sanctified at sometime and somewhere, the present life will be the time and place of this perfect sanctification? Let a promise be adduced, if it can be, that fixes the period of this event to the present life. The divine promises, like the provisions of the gospel, are conditioned as to the degree of their results, by appropriative acts on the part of the believer. Hence, the fallacy of the argument is apparent, in that it takes for granted that some believers in the present life do fully comply with all the conditions contemplated in the promises themselves. Without this assumption it proves nothing.'

"In the first part of this paragraph, you deny that God, anywhere in the Bible, promises a state of entire sanctification in this life, and request that one promise be adduced, that fixes this event to the present life. And then you seem immediately to admit that the blessing is promised, on the condition of 'appropriative acts on the part of the believer.' This you must intend to admit, inasmuch as you have before admitted, that 'should a believer avail himself of all the resources of the gospel, he might make this attainment.' Certainly you will not pretend to have any authority for such an admission, unless the promises when fairly interpreted do proffer such a state to Christians upon condition of 'appropriative acts.' How shall we understand such a denial and admission at the same breath, as this paragraph contains?

"But you request that one promise may be adduced that fixes the period of entire sanctification to the present life. I might quote many: but as you ask for only one, I will quote one, and the one, a part of which you have quoted--1 Thess. ii. 23, 24. 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.'

"That this prayer and promise relate to this life, I think cannot consistently be questioned. The prayer is, that the 'body,' as well as the 'spirit and soul,' be wholly sanctified, and 'be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Then the promise--'Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.' Does not this relate to this life?

"4. You deny that Christians can know that they are in a state of entire sanctification.

"You say, 'If a case of perfection were admitted to be real, still it is impossible, in the present state of our faculties, to find and predicate certain knowledge of it.'

"Here, assuming as you do, that the main proposition respects the fact of actual attainment, you insist that this fact, did such cases exist, would be entirely insusceptible of proof. Indeed! Does God command man to do what he cannot know that he does, even if he does it? This would be passing strange. You admit that God requires men to be entirely sanctified, condemns them if they are not, but yet deny that they could know that they obeyed, if they did. This would indeed be a singular requirement--to command a man on pain of eternal death to do that which he could not possibly know that he did, even if he did it. This denial of ability to know, whether we are in a state of entire sanctification, is a total denial of the doctrine of natural ability, as I presume it is held by every member of your body. Does not every one of you, my brethren, hold that natural ability to obey a command is the *sine quà non* of moral obligation to obey it? Do not you hold that a man cannot be under a moral obligation to do what he cannot understand--to use a power which he does not know himself to possess--to employ his faculties in any kind or degree of service, which he cannot know to be his duty? Now if a man does all that he is able to know himself capable of doing, is he under a moral obligation to do anything more? But if he is unable to know that he falls short of his duty, does he fall short of it? Brethren, will you give us light upon this subject? Do you, will you seriously maintain, that a man is naturally unable to know whether he obeys the commands of God, and yet, that he is condemned and liable to be damned for coming short, when he could not know that he came short? Brethren, will you maintain this?

"5. *Your answer to our proof-texts is a very summary one*. It consists simply in affirming that we have misapplied them--that we regard certain terms as proofs of perfection, which are only distinctive of Christian character,--and, that we interpret them in an absolute and unrestricted sense--without so much as naming one of them. You have, indeed, quoted one passage, and affirmed that 'a better proof-text cannot well be conceived.' But we have never regarded nor quoted it as a proof text at all. Your disposal of our proof-texts is really a short-hand method of getting over them. But there was one difficulty in the way of your quoting and answering them--which was that had you quoted them, it would have appeared to everybody, that they were used by us to prove another proposition than that which you were controverting.

"6. Our arguments in support of the fact of attainment you have passed over almost in silence. At the same time, you have taken our arguments adduced to prove the practical attainability, and replied to them, as if adduced to prove the fact of actual attainment. Brethren, we think we have reason to feel grieved with this.

"7. You find yourselves obliged to be exceedingly indefinite in regard to the measure of attainment which Christians may rationally hope to make in this life. You say, 'The question is not whether it is the duty and privilege of the church to rise much higher in holy living than it has ever yet done in this world.' Now, brethren, I ask how much higher attainments Christians may make in this world, than they have ever yet made? This is, with us, and must be with the church, a question of all-absorbing interest. Do you answer to this question, that Christians may make indefinitely higher attainments than they have yet made? I ask again, on what authority is this affirmation made? Do you argue it from the fact, that the gospel has promised sufficient grace to Christians on condition of appropriative acts, to secure in them a higher state of holiness than has yet been attained? But if Christians may rationally hope to attain a higher state of holiness, than has ever yet been attained, by appropriating to themselves promises which proffer entire sanctification in this life, why may they not rationally aim at attaining all that the gospel has promised to them? Brethren, will you answer this question?

"Appended to your report is a resolution, expressing 'regret and sorrow at the ground taken on this subject by the theological professors at Oberlin.' Will you permit us to reciprocate your regret and sorrow, and express our deep grief, that the presbytery of Troy have taken such ground upon this subject, and so misapprehended, and of course misrepresented the arguments of their brethren?

"I must close this communication with a few

"REMARKS.

"1. We admit you had a right to take issue with us on the question of actual attainment, if you were dissatisfied with our course of argument on that position. But you had no right to represent our argument in support of another position as you have done. You had no right to represent our argument in favour of the practical attainability, as having been adduced in support of the fact of actual attainment. This you have done, and by so doing, you have done your brethren and the cause of truth great injustice.

"2. To what I have said in this article, you may reply, that you never denied the practical attainability of a state of entire sanctification, and that therefore on that question you have no controversy with us. Why, then, my brethren, did you not admit that in our main position you agree with us, and that you only deny one of the arguments by which we attempted to support that position? This, as Christian men, you were bound to do. But instead of this, you have said nothing about admitting our main position; but made the transfer of our arguments to the support of the one upon which you take issue, and thus represent our logic as absurd and ridiculous. We shall be happy to discuss the question of actual attainment with our brethren, when they ingenuously admit, that the main position we have taken, namely, the practical attainability of a state of entire sanctification in this life, is a truth of the Bible.

"3. Permit me to ask, my brethren, what opponent or course of argument might not be rendered ridiculous by the course you have taken, that is, by stating another proposition than that intended to be supported, and then representing the whole course of argument as intended to support the substituted proposition?

"4. Should you say that your report was not intended as a reply to our argument, I ask, who has ever argued in support of this doctrine in the manner you represent? Who ever inferred, that because men have natural power to obey God, therefore they do obey him? I have read with attention almost everything that has come to hand upon this subject, and I never saw or heard of any such mode of argumentation as that to which you profess to reply.

"5. Will your presbytery, in reply to what I have written, excuse themselves by saying, that their treatment of our argument was an oversight--that they had supposed us to reason in the way they have represented us as reasoning? To this I must reply, that you were bound to understand our argument before you replied to it, in your public or any other capacity. And especially were you under this obligation, inasmuch as I had twice written to a leading member of your body, beseeching him, in the bowels of Christian love, to examine this subject, and to be sure he did it in a spiritual frame of mind, before he committed himself at all upon the question.

"6. Will you, dear brethren, permit me to ask how long the opposers of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, expect to retain the confidence of the church, and prevent their understanding and believing this doctrine, by such a course of procedure as this? You are no doubt aware, that your course is not a novel one, but that it has been substantially pursued by several other opposers of this doctrine.

"And now, beloved brethren in the Lord, do not understand me as entering into a war of words with you, or as entertaining the least unkind feeling in my heart towards you. I most cheerfully leave to your deliberate and prayerful consideration, the remarks I have freely made on your report. I cannot, however, refrain from saying, that when I saw the name of one whom I greatly loved, and with whom I had often taken sweet counsel, attached to that report, my heart felt a kind of spontaneous gushing, and I almost involuntarily exclaimed, *'Et tu, Brute!'*

"Yours in the bonds of Christian love,

"C. G. FINNEY."

Since these replies were published, nothing worthy of notice has appeared in opposition to them that has fallen under my observation, but the policy seems to have been adopted of preventing further inquiry upon the subject. Nevertheless the agitation of the question in the minds and hearts of private Christians and of many ministers, is going steadily, and, in many places, rapidly forward, as I have good reason to know. Indeed it is manifest, that there is increasing light and interest upon the subject, and it is beginning, or, I should say, fast coming to be better understood, and its truthfulness and its importance appreciated. No thanks, however, are due to some of the leading journalists of the day, if this blessed and glorious truth be not hunted from the world as a most pernicious error. Nothing could have been more unfair and unjust than the course pursued by some of them has been. May the blessed Lord bring them to see their error and forgive them, not laying this sin to their charge.

It may doubtless appear unaccountable to the public in general, both in this country and elsewhere, that no objection was made to the doctrine of entire sanctification, when published in the "New York Evangelist," and afterwards in the form of a volume, and so extensively circulated, and that the same doctrine should excite so much alarm when published in the "Oberlin Evangelist." It may also appear strange, that such pains should have been taken to confound our views with those of antinomian perfectionists, when every one can see, that there is no more analogy between their views, as set forth in their Confession of Faith, and our views, than between them and anything else. This they have all along alleged, and consequently have been amongst our bitterest opposers. Perhaps it is not desirable that the public should be made acquainted with the springs of influence that have stirred up, and put in motion all this hurricane of ecclesiastical and theological opposition to Oberlin. It is unpleasant to us to name and disclose it, and perhaps the cause of truth does not, at present at least, demand it.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXVIII. - continued

SANCTIFICATION.

I care not to speculate upon abstractions, and upon the grounds of hope where there is neither desire nor will; that is, where there is no religion. But I have been amazingly anxious myself to have the question here put answered in relation to myself; and I know that many others are intensely anxious to have this question answered. Must I always expect to be overcome by temptation? May I not rationally hope to obtain a permanent victory over sin in this life? Must I carry with me the expectation of going more or less frequently into rebellion against God so long as I live? Is there no hope in the case? Has grace made no such provision, that it is rational for me, in this state of intense interest and anxiety, to hope for complete deliverance from the overcoming power of sin in this life? Is there no foundation anywhere upon which I can build a rational hope, that I shall make this attainment? Are all the commands, and exhortations, and promises, and declarations in the Bible touching this subject, a delusion? Are they no warrant for the expectation in question? May I never rationally expect to be more than a conqueror in this life? Must I expect to succumb to Satan ever and anon, so long as I live, and is every other expectation irrational?

The Holy Spirit is given to Christians, to abide with and in them, for the express purpose of procuring entire sanctification in this life. It is said, Rom 8:26-27 : "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Now it is a fact that the Holy Spirit often stirs up, in the souls of all Christians, intense desire for this attainment. He as manifestly begets within them a longing for this attainment, as he does for ultimate salvation. Now, why is it not as rational to expect the one as the other? Their ultimate salvation they do expect, and receive the drawings of the Spirit after the grace of perseverance, as an earnest or evidence, that God intends to secure their perseverance and salvation. They regard it as rational to indulge this desire, excited by the Holy Spirit, and to hope for the thing which they desire. The thing is promised, and they feel stirred up to take hold on these promises. Surely then it is perfectly rational to hope for the fulfilment of them.

And is not the same true of the promises of entire sanctification in this life? These are among the most full and express promises in the Bible. The Holy Spirit excites in all Christians the most earnest desire for the thing promised. Why is it not rational to hope for the thing which we desire? I do not here say that all do hope for it. All Christians do desire it; this is one element of hope: but why do not all entertain the expectation of making this attainment, and thus hope for it? Is it because there is no rational ground of hope? But what ground is wanting? It is expressly promised. God has nowhere intimated, that it is not his design to fulfil this class of promises. The Spirit leads us to pray for it. Now would it be rational to believe that these promises will be fulfilled to us? Why not? The difficulty, and the only difficulty that can exist in this case, is that human speculation and false teaching have forbidden confidence or expectation; so that while there is intense desire, there is no real hope indulged of receiving the blessing. The blessing is delayed because there is no hope. There is ground of hope, but false teaching has forbidden hope to be indulged. The church are told by men in high places, that such a hope is irrational. Thus the Holy Spirit is resisted, and grieved, and quenched, when he is striving to inspire hope that this blessing will be obtained. This is just as the devil would have it.

The fact is, there are precisely as good ground for the hope of obtaining a complete victory over sin in this life, as there are for the hope of perseverance and salvation. But in one case these grounds are recognized and acknowledged, and in the other they are denied. In one case the hope is encouraged by teachers, and in the other it is discouraged. But there is not, that I can see, the least ground for this distinction. If there is ground for the one hope, so is there for the other. Suppose the ground for hope in both cases were denied, as it is in one, what would be the result?

But again: Has grace established any such connection between the present belief of the promises and their fulfilment, as to render it certain, or in any degree probable, that they will be fulfilled to us?

I have already said, that the objection we are considering must proceed upon the assumption that there is no such connection. But let us look at this.

Suppose that God had expressly promised any blessing whatever, upon condition that I believe the promise. I am led by the Holy Spirit to a present laying hold by faith upon that promise. Now, does not this render it rational in me to hope that I shall receive the thing promised? If not, why not? Is it replied, that a further condition of the promise is, that I persevere in faith, and in the use of the appropriate means, and I have no ground for rational hope that I shall continue to believe and to use the means? Then the fact that the Holy Spirit at present stirs me up to present faith, affords no degree of evidence that he will continue to do so; and the fact, that I at present lay hold of the promise, does not afford the least reason for the hope, that I shall keep hold and use the means, in any such sense as to secure the blessing promised. Well, if this were so, the Bible were the greatest deception that was ever palmed upon mankind. The fact is, there must be at least a connection of high probability, if not of certainty, between the present actual belief of the promises, and the future fulfilment of them to us, or the Bible and the whole gospel are nonsense.

But again: I say that this is as true of the promises of entire sanctification in this life, as of any other promises whatever. If it is not, I say again, let the contrary be shown, if it can be.

But again: when Christians are stirred up by the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon any class of promises in prayer, and faith, they have good ground for the hope, that it is the design of God to grant the blessing promised them. Now, it is plainly in accordance with the revealed will of God, that Christians should be wholly sanctified and kept from sin. And suppose the Holy Spirit stirs up the soul to great longings and wrestlings for complete deliverance from sin, and to plead and believe such promises as the following:--

1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Jer 31:31-34 : "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jer 32:40 : "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

Eze 36:25-27 : "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Rom 5:21 : "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Rom 6:11 : "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

1Th 4:3.--"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

If the Holy Spirit perform his work in the soul according to Rom 8:26-27 --"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God;" I say, if the Holy Spirit leads Christians to pray for the fulfilment of such promises as those just quoted, and to believe those promises, have they no reasonable ground for the hope that the blessing will be granted? Indeed, they have the best of reasons for such an expectation.

Suppose it be objected, that many Christians have been led thus to pray, who have not received the blessing sought. I answer, that it remains to be proved that they were led by the Holy Spirit to plead any promise in faith, where they have not received, or will not receive an answer according to the true spirit and meaning of the promise which they plead and believed. Suppose they may have thought at some time, or that they have often thought, that they had become so established that they should sin no more, and that the event has proved that they were mistaken; this does not prove that it is irrational for them to expect that their prayers shall yet be fully answered. Suppose a parent is led by the Holy Spirit to pray in faith for the conversion of a child, and that this child appears, if you please, from time to time to be converted, but that the event shows that he was mistaken; that is, that he was not truly converted; this is no reason for his despairing of his conversion. He is still warranted to hope, and is bound, if he is conscious of having prayed in faith for his conversion, still to expect his conversion, and to use the appropriate means to secure this result. Just so, if a Christian has been led to plead the promises of deliverance from all sin: for example, such an one as 1Th 5:23-24.--"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." I say, if any saint on earth is conscious of being, or having been, led to pray in faith for the fulfilment of this promise, he is warranted to expect its fulfilment to him, according to its true spirit and meaning; and this he is bound to expect, although he may have supposed that he had entered upon this state, and found himself mistaken a hundred times. The fact, that he has not yet received the fulfilment of the promise *in extenso*, no more proves that he will not, than the delay in the case of the promise that Abraham should have a son, proved that it was irrational in him to expect the promise to be fulfilled to him. It has been objected, that it was irrational to expect to attain to a state in this life in which we should sin no more, because many have supposed they had made the attainment, and found at length that they were mistaken. But there is no force in this objection. Suppose this is granted, what then? Does this prove that the prayer of faith will not be answered? Suppose many such mistakes have been made; does this disprove the word of God? In no wise. God will still fulfil his promises, and "is not slack concerning them as some men count slackness." If such a promise has been pleaded in faith, heaven and earth shall pass away before the answer shall fail. But suppose it should be alleged, that evidence is wanting that any ever did or will plead those promises in faith. To this I answer, that the soul may be as conscious of exercising faith in these promises, as it is of its own existence; and although one might think he believed when he did not, still it would be true, that when one actually did believe he would know and be sure of it.

Many Christians can as confidently affirm that they plead these promises in faith, as that they are Christians. Now, is it irrational for them to expect the fulfilment of them? No indeed, any more than it is irrational to expect to be saved. If the one expectation is irrational, so is the other.

Will it be replied, that the one is less probable than the other? I ask, what have probabilities to human view to do with rendering it irrational to believe God, and expect him to fulfil his word? Suppose it is less likely to human view, that we shall ever in this life arrive at a point in Christian attainment, beyond which we shall sin no more, than it is that we shall ultimately be saved: I say, suppose this to be granted, what then? Cannot God as truly, and so far as we know, as easily secure the one as the other? It may be, that God foresees that the final salvation of some or of many souls turns altogether upon the fact, that such a work be accomplished upon them as shall settle and confirm them in obedience, before certain trials overtake them.

But suppose, again, it be said that few or none have given evidence of this attainment before death, and yet many have been saved; there is therefore little or no reason to believe that the elect are entirely sanctified in this life. I answer, that it is certain from the Bible, that the saints are sanctified wholly in this life; that is, at some period in this life.

I have no doubt, though I do not expect this to have weight with an objector, that great multitudes have been sanctified and preserved, agreeably to 1Th 5:23-24. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

But again, I say, that the past experience and observation of the church, whatever it may be in respect to the subject under consideration, is not the test of what it is reasonable to expect in future. If it is, it is unreasonable to expect any improvement in the state of the church and the world. If past experience is to settle the question of what it is rational to expect in future, then at no period of the church's past history was it rational to expect any improvement in her condition. It is not to past experience, but to the promises and the revealed design of God, and to the Holy Spirit, that we are to look for a ground of rational hope in regard to the future.

I suppose that it will not be denied by any one, that most Christians might rationally hope to be indefinitely better than they are; that is, to be much more stable than they are. But if they might rationally hope to be much better than they are, on what ground can they rationally hope for this? The ground of this hope must be the indwelling and influence of the Holy Spirit; that "exceeding great and precious promises are given to us, whereby we may be made partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust;" that the Holy Spirit is struggling within us to secure in us the fulfilment of the conditions of those promises, and therefore we may reasonably hope to make indefinitely higher attainments in this life than we have yet made:--I say, I suppose that no Christian will deny this. But some of these promises expressly pledge the state of entire sanctification in this life. This is not only true in fact, but is plainly implied in the saying of Peter just quoted. Observe, Peter says, 2Pe 1:4 : "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This plainly implies, that those promises cover the whole ground of entire sanctification. Now with such promises in our hands, why should it be thought unreasonable to hope for entire and permanent victory over sin in this world, any more than it is irrational to hope for indefinite improvement in this life. Will it be said, that it is easier to keep us from sin generally than uniformly. But who can know, that God cannot as easily give us a complete victory, as to suffer us to sin, and then recover us again? At any rate, the promises of entire sanctification are made, and it is just as rational, that is, just as truly rational to expect them to be fulfilled to us, and to expect that we shall be led to fulfil the conditions of them, as that we shall fulfil the conditions of the promises of perseverance. If there be not the same degree of reason to hope for one as for the other, still there is real ground of rational hope in both cases. This cannot reasonably be denied. It is therefore rational to hope for both.

Now the fact is, that Christians find themselves disposed to attain this state. If they are disposed to aim at it, and to pray and struggle for such a victory, is it rational for them to expect or hope to obtain such a victory? The question is not really, whether it is rational to hope that Christians will be disposed to attain this state. The fact of their being Christians implies that they are thus disposed; and the inquiry is, being thus disposed, is it rational for them to expect to make the attainment? I answer,--yes. It is perfectly rational for any and every Christian, who finds himself disposed to aim at and struggle after this state, to expect to obtain the blessing which he seeks; and every Christian is drawn by the Holy Spirit to desire this attainment. He has, in the very fact of his being led to desire and pray after it, and to pray and struggle after a complete and lasting victory over sin, the best of evidence that he may rationally expect to make the attainment. It is just as rational to expect this, under such circumstances, as it is to expect to persevere to the end of life in grace; or as rational as it is to expect to make indefinitely higher advances in holiness. If it is rational to hope to make indefinitely higher attainments than we have made, because of, or upon the conditions of the promises, and of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to stir us up to fulfil the conditions of the promises, it is just as rational to hope for a permanent victory over sin, upon the same conditions. If the Holy Spirit leads on to indefinitely higher attainments, it is rational to expect to make them. If he leads on to the fulfilment of the conditions of the promises of complete and permanent victory over sin, it is just as rational to expect to attain this state, as it is to expect to make indefinite advances toward it.

How can this be denied? I cannot see why one expectation should be irrational, if the other is not so.

Now observe, the question respects acts of will. Religion, as we have seen, consists in the consecration of the will or heart to God. A Christian is supposed to have consecrated his heart and himself to God. The will is influenced either by light in the intelligence, or by the impulses of the sensibility. Selfishness, or sin, consists in the will's being governed by the desires, appetites, passions, or propensities of the sensibility. Temptation finds its way to, and exerts its influence upon, the will through the sensibility. Now, can a Christian expect or rationally hope, by aiming to do so, to attain to such a state of mind, that he shall be no more overcome by temptation, and led into sin?

We have seen, that the end upon which benevolence fixes, is the highest good of being in general. This is the Christian's ultimate end or intention. We have also seen that the elements of this intention are--

(1.) Entireness; that is, the whole will or heart is devoted to this end.

(2.) Present time; that is, the soul enters now upon, and at present makes, this consecration.

(3.) The consecration is designed to be entire, and everlasting; that is, the consecrated soul does not enlist as an experiment, nor for a limited time; but true consecration or devotion to God is comprehensive, so far as present intention goes, of all the future. This consecration to be real is comprehensive of all future duration, and of all space; that is, the soul in the act of true consecration, enlists in the service of God for life, to be wholly God's servant in all places, at all times, and to all eternity. These are the true elements of all acceptable consecration to God. The soul in the act of consecration makes no reserves of time, or place, or powers; all are surrendered to God. It does not intend nor expect to sin at the moment of consecration. It fully intends to be, and remain wholly the Lord's. It chooses the great end upon which benevolence fixes, and designs to relinquish it no more for ever. But experience teaches the Christian his own weakness, and that, if left to himself, he is easily overcome by temptation. His sensibility has been so little developed in its relations to eternal realities; his will has so long been in the habit of being led by the feelings and desires of the sensibility, that when the propensities are strongly excited, he finds to his confusion and unspeakable grief, that he is weak; and that if left to himself, he invariably yields to temptation; or that he is at least very liable to do so, and that he frequently sins. Now, the question is, Is there no ground of rational hope that he may attain such an established state as uniformly to have the victory over temptation? Is there no ground of rational hope in this respect, until after this life? Has grace made no such provision, as to render it rational in the true saints, to expect or hope to gain so complete a victory that Rom 5:21, shall be realized in their own experience: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord;" Also, Rom 6:14 : "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." Also, 1Th 5:23-24 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole soul, &c., faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Also, Jer 32:40 : "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Also, Col 4:12 : "That you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." I say, the true question is, Is there no hope for the Christian, that these and such-like passages shall be fulfilled to him, and realized in his own experience in this life? Can he not rationally hope, that the developements of his sensibility may be so corrected, that he may be thoroughly and constantly enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and enjoy so constant and so deep an anointing, may be so baptized into Christ, and made so thoroughly acquainted with him, in his various offices and relations, as to break effectually and permanently the power of temptation; and so confirm the soul in its consecration as that, through the indwelling of Christ by his Spirit, he shall be more than conqueror in every conflict with the world, the flesh, and Satan? Is there no hope? This is the agonizing inquiry of every soul who has felt the galling and fascinating power of temptation. Observe, in the case supposed, the soul is at present willing, and deeply solicitous to avoid all sin in future. Thus far grace has prevailed; the soul has committed itself to God. Is there no hope that it can abide in this state of committal? Is it irrational for it, in the midst of its anxieties, to stand fast for ever; to hope that it shall ever in this life find itself practically able to do so? If not, what do the scriptures mean? If I may not rationally hope to stand in every hour of temptation, what can this passage mean? 1Co 10:13 : "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Does this only mean, that we shall have the natural ability to bear temptation? Does it not mean, that such Divine help shall be vouchsafed, as that we may rationally hope and expect to stand in the hour of trial? Indeed it does.

There certainly is not in the philosophy of mind anything to forbid the entertaining of a rational hope of making the attainment in question; but, on the contrary, everything both in the Bible and in the philosophy of mind to warrant such an expectation. The mind only needs to be brought into such a state of developement, and to be so constantly under the influence of Divine illumination, as to set the Lord always before it; and so to have the sensibility developed in its relations to divine things, as to secure the uniform action of the will, in conformity with the law of God.

The great difficulty with all classes of unsanctified persons is, that their desires are too strong for their reason. That is, their sensibility is so developed, that their excited propensities control their will, in opposition to the law of God, as it is revealed in the reason. Now, if a counter developement can be effected that shall favour, instead of oppose, the right action of the will, it will break the power of temptation, and let the soul go free. If desires to please God, if desires after spiritual objects, shall be developed, if the sensibility shall be quickened and drawn to God, and to all spiritual truths and realities, these desires, instead of tending to draw the will away from God, will tend to confirm the will in its consecration to God. In this case, the desires going in the same direction with the reason, the power of temptation is broken. The sensibility, in this case, rather favours the right action of the will. That such a developement of the sensibility is needed and possible, every Christian knows.

That the Holy Spirit, by enlightening the mind, often creates the most intense desires after God and universal and unalterable holiness, is a matter of common experience. It is a matter of common experience, that while those desires continue, the soul walks in unbroken consecration to, and communion with, God. It is when counter desires are awakened, and the feelings and emotions toward God and divine things are quenched and suppressed, that the will is seduced from its allegiance. Now there is, there can be, nothing in the philosophy of mind, to forbid the hope of attaining to such a state of developement of the sensibility, that it shall become, as it were, dead to every object that tends to draw the heart from God, and so alive to God as to respond instantly to truth and light, and as to be mellow and tender towards God and Christ and divine things, as the apple of the eye. When this is effected, it is perfectly philosophical to look for permanent consecration of will to God, in obedience not to the sensibility, but in obedience to the reason. The feelings are then such, that the reason demands their indulgence, and that the objects upon which they fasten shall be sought. The whole mind is then going forth in one direction. Observe, I do not say that it is impossible for the will to abide steadfast in opposition to the feelings, desires, and emotions; but I do say, and all experience proves, that until the sensibility is developed in its relations to God and divine realities, the steady and undeviating action of the will in its devotion to God cannot be depended upon. Now the great work of the Holy Spirit in the soul consists, at least very much, in so enlightening the mind, in respect to God and Christ and divine realities, as to render the soul dead to things of time and sense, and alive to God and eternal things; to crucify the old man; and to develope a new class of desires and emotions that will favour, instead of oppose, the right action of the will.

Now observe, when the Spirit begets this hungering and thirsting after the universal and complete conformity of the whole being to God; when he stirs up the soul to an intense effort, and to a tearful agony and travail for deliverance from the power of temptation; is it irrational for the soul to make these efforts? Does reason or revelation forbid the expectation, that the blessing sought should be obtained? Is the soul mad, and irrationally aiming at an impossibility, or is it irrationally engaged in striving to get loose, and to rise permanently above the power of temptation? If it is irrational to expect to make the attainment in question, it is irrational to aim at it. Nay, it is impossible truly to aim at it, except it be regarded as possible. The soul must think it reasonable to expect to make this attainment, or it cannot think it reasonable to try to make it. But is it deceived in thinking this attainment practicable? If so, but convince it that the expectation is irrational, and it will aim at making it no longer. It must, by a law of its own nature, give up the pursuit, in despair of ever living without being, at least frequently, overcome by temptation while it abides in the flesh. But does the Bible encourage this despair? Does not the Bible denounce this state of mind as unbelief and sin? What are the promises--what is the gospel--and what are the provisions of grace, if after all there is practically no remedy for the agonized Christian in such circumstances? Is there no rational ground of hope or help for him in God? Then surely the gospel is a vain boast and a deception.

Observe, the question before us is, whether the Christian, who is actually willing, and most earnestly desirous of rising permanently above the power of sin and temptation, and who is stirred up to lay hold on the promises of complete deliverance, and to plead them in faith before God, can rationally hope to make the attainment in this life at which he is aiming? Is such a soul mad and deluded, or is it rationally employed? and are its expectations in accordance with reason and revelation? Undoubtedly they are in accordance with both.

But before I dismiss this objection, I must not fail to glance at the future prospects of the church. It is, and long has been, the belief of the great body of orthodox Christians, that the church is destined, at a future period of her earthly history, to rise to a state answerable to the representations of the prophets and apostles,--a state in which she shall come forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." In proof of the fact of a future millennium on earth, let such passages as the following be consulted:--

Gen 22:18 : "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

Psa 22:27 : "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."

Psa 37:11 : "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Psa 72:6-7, Psa 72:11, Psa 72:17 : "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. 17. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."

Psa 86:9 : "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name."

Isa 2:2, Isa 2:4, Isa 2:17, Isa 2:20 : "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares; and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 17. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats."

Isa. 25:6-8 : "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

Isa 32:13, Isa 32:15-18 : "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city. 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. 18. And my people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

Isa 45:22-23 : "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

Isa 49:6 : "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Isa 59:19-20 : "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord."

Isa 60:18, Isa 60:21 : "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. 21. Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

Isa 66:23 : "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord."

Dan 7:27 : "And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Mic 4:1-2 : "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Hab 2:14 : "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Mal 1:11 : "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

Joh 12:31-32 : "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Rom 11:25-27 : "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Rev 11:15 : "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Rev 20:2-3 : "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

These things are said of the extension and state of the church undeniably at some period of its history in this world. That is, they are said of the church, not in a glorified state, but of her in her state of earthly prosperity. At least, this is and has long been held by the great mass of Christians.

The following things are said of her holiness at the time specified.

Isa 60:21 : "Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

Jer 31:33-34 : "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Eze 36:25-29 : "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you."

Eze 37:23-24 : "Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions, but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be kind over them; and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them."

Zep 3:13 : "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Zec 14:20 : "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."

Rom 11:25-27 : "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceit,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

These things are said of the holiness of the church at that time.

The following, among other passages, represent the spirit of peace and unanimity that shall prevail at that time.

Psa 29:11 : "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

Psa 37:11 : "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Psa 72:3, Psa 72:7 : "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

Isa 52:8 : "Thy watchman shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

Isa 60:17-18 : "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

Isa 66:12 : "For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall ye suck, ye shall be born upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees."

Mic 4:3-4 : "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it."

The following passages speak of the great intelligence of the church at that period:

Isa 11:9 : "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Isa 29:18, Isa 29:24 ; "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. 24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

Isa 33:6 : "And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasurer."

Jer 3:15 : "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

Heb 8:11 : "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

The following passages describe the temporal prosperity of the church at that time, and show clearly, that the state of which mention is made, belongs to a temporal, and not to a glorified state, as I understand them.

Psa 72:7, Psa 72:16 : "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 16. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

Isa 60:5-7, Isa 60:13 : "Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee. 6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. 13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."

Joe 2:21-26 : "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he hath given you the former rain, moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locusts hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed."

Joe 3:18. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

Isa 25:6. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

Isa 35:1-10. "The wilderness and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Isa 41:18. "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Again: the church at that period shall have great enjoyment:

Isa 25:8. "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it."

Isa 35:10; "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Isa 52:9; "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem."

Isa 65:18-19; "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."

Zep 3:14-17; "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day shall it be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thy hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

Let the following passages be viewed in contrast with the past history of the church:--

Isa 11:6-8.--"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den."

Isa 40:4-5. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Isa 41:18-20. "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

Isa 55:13. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

These passages are, as every reader of the Bible knows, specimens of the manner in which the Bible represents the state of the church in future. I have quoted thus copiously to lay before the reader the general tenor of scripture upon this subject. It is also a matter of common knowledge, that nearly all orthodox Christians are expecting the church to enter upon this state soon. But how is this state to be attained, if it is irrational for Christians to hope to be entirely sanctified in this life? If the above passages do not describe a state of complete and continued holiness, what language could describe such a state? These promises and prophecies will be fulfilled at some time. They are, as it respects individuals, and respects the whole church, conditioned upon faith. But this faith will actually be exercised. The church will enter into this state. Now, is it unreasonable for the church, and for any and every Christian, to hope at this age of the world to enter upon this state? Would it be irrational for the church to arise, and aim at making these attainments in holiness during the present century? How is it possible for the church as a body to arrive at this state, while it is regarded as unreasonable, and as dangerous error for Christians to hope or expect to get into a state of abiding consecration to God in this life?

It must be, I think, evident to every one, that if the objection under consideration has any weight, the prophecies can never be fulfilled; and that, while the theological schools insist, and ministers insist, that the expectation of making the attainment in question is irrational and dangerous, the prophecies and promises will not be fulfilled to the church. While such a sentiment is insisted on, the seminaries and the ministry are in the way of the onward movement of the ark of holiness and of truth.

The objection, that it is irrational to expect to make such attainments in this life, as to get a complete victory over temptation and sin, must be groundless, or both the Bible and the Holy Spirit are found false witnesses: but this cannot be; the thought of it is blasphemy.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXVII. - continued

PURPOSES OF GOD.

IV. *Different senses in which God purposes different events.*

1. The great end of all his works and ways he must have purposed positively, that is, absolutely. This end, namely his own good and the highest good of the universe, he set his heart upon securing. This end he no doubt properly intended, or purposed to secure. This must have been his ultimate intention or purpose. This end was no doubt a direct object of choice.

2. God must no doubt also, in some sense, have purposed all the necessary means to this result. Such actions as tended naturally, or on account of their own nature, to this result, he must have purposed positively, in the sense that he delighted in them, and chose them because of their own nature, or of their natural relation to the great end he proposed to accomplish by them. Observe, the end was an ultimate end, delighted in and chosen for its own sake. This end was the highest good or well-being of himself and the universe of sentient existences. This has been sufficiently shown in former lectures; and besides it follows of necessity from the nature and attributes of God. If this were not so, he would be neither wise nor good. Since he delighted in and chose the end for its own sake or value, and purposed it with a positive purpose, he must also have chosen and delighted in the necessary means. He must have created the universe, both of matter and of mind, and established its laws, with direct reference to, and for the sake of, the end he purposed to accomplish. The end was valuable in itself, and chosen for that reason. The necessary means were as really valuable as the end which depended upon them. This value, though real, because of their tendency and natural results, is not ultimate, but relative; that is, they are not, in the same sense that the end is, valuable in themselves; but they being the necessary means to this end, are as really valuable as the end that depends upon them. Thus our necessary food is not valuable in itself, but is the necessary means of prolonging our lives. Therefore, though not an ultimate good, yet it is a real good of as great value, as the end that naturally depends upon it. The naturally necessary means of securing a valuable end we justly esteem as equally valuable with the end, although this value is not absolute but relative. We are so accustomed to set a value on the means, equal to the estimated importance of the end to which they sustain the relation of necessary means, that we come loosely to regard and to speak of them as valuable in themselves, when in fact their value is not absolute but relative.

God must have purposed to secure, so far as he wisely could, obedience to the laws of the universe, both physical and moral. These laws were established for the sake of the end to which they tended, and obedience to them must have been regarded by God as of real, though not ultimate, value, equal to that of the end, for the accomplishment of which they were ordained. He must have delighted in obedience to these laws for the sake of the end, and must have purposed to secure this obedience so far as he could in the nature of things; that is, in so far as he wisely could. Since moral law is a rule for the government of free moral agents, it is conceivable, that, in some cases, this law might be violated by the subjects of it, unless God resorted to means to prevent it, that might introduce an evil of greater magnitude than the violation of the law in the instances under consideration would be. It is conceivable, that, in some cases, God might be able so to overrule a violation of his laws, physical and moral, as upon the whole to secure a greater good than could be secured, by introducing such a change into the policy and measures of his administration, or so framing his administration, as to prevent altogether the violation of any law. God might, and no doubt does, prefer that every creature should, in the precise circumstances in which he is placed, obey all the laws of his being. But if, under these circumstances, voluntary agents will in any case disobey, their disobedience, though a real, may be a less evil than such a change in the administration of his government as would prevent the violation, would be. In this case, he might regard the violation as the less of two evils, and suffer it rather than change the arrangements of his government. He might sincerely deplore and abhor these violations of law, and yet might see it not wise to prevent them, because the measures necessary to prevent them might result in an evil of still greater magnitude. He might purpose to suffer these violations, and take the trouble to overrule them, so far as was possible, for the promotion of the end he had in view, rather than interpose for their prevention. These violations he might not have purposed in any other sense than that he foresaw them, and purposed not to prevent them, but on the contrary to suffer them to occur, and to overrule them for good, so far as this was practicable. These events, or violations of law, have no natural tendency to promote the highest well-being of God and of the universe, but have in themselves a directly opposite tendency. Nevertheless, God could so overrule them, as that these occurrences would be a less evil than that change would be that could have prevented them. Violations of law then, he might have purposed only to suffer, while obedience to law he might have designed to produce or secure.

3. We have seen, that God and men may have different motives in the same event, as in the case of the brethren of Joseph, already alluded to:--

Gen 45:4-6 : "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest!"

As also in the case of the king of Assyria: Isa 10:5-7, Isa 10:12. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

Also, Joh 3:16 : "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Act 2:23. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

These, and such like instances, show that wicked agents may, and often do, and when wicked, always do, entertain a very different reason for their conduct from what God entertains in suffering it. They have a selfish end in view, or do what they do for a selfish reason. God, on the contrary, has a benevolent end in view in not interposing to prevent their sin; that is, he hates their sin as tending in itself to destroy, or defeat the great end of benevolence. But foreseeing that the sin, notwithstanding its natural evil tendency, may be so overruled, as upon the whole to result in a less evil than the changes requisite to prevent it would, he benevolently prefers to suffer it rather than interpose to prevent it. He would, no doubt, prefer their perfect obedience, under the circumstances in which they are, but would sooner suffer them to sin, than so change the circumstances as to prevent it; the latter being, all things considered, the greater of two evils. God then always suffers his laws to be violated, because he cannot benevolently prevent it under the circumstances. He suffers it for benevolent reasons. But the sinner always has selfish reasons.

4. The Bible informs us, that God brings good out of evil, in the sense that he overrules sin to promote his own glory, and the good of being:-- Psa 76:10. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Rom 3:5, Rom 3:7 : "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) 7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I judged as a sinner? And not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just."

Rom 5:20 : "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Rom 8:28 : "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

5. The Bible also informs us that God does not aim at producing sin in creation and providence; that is, that he does not purpose the existence of sin in such a sense as to design to secure and promote it, in the administration of his government. In other words still, sin is not the object of a positive purpose on the part of God. It exists only by sufferance, and not as a thing which naturally tends to secure his great end, and which therefore he values on that account and endeavours to promote, as he does obedience to the law.

Jer 7:9-10. "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not? And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

1Co 14:33 : "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

Jam 1:13-17 : "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Jam 3:14-17 : "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy."

1Jo 2:16 : "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Obedience to law is an object of positive purpose. God purposes to promote it, and uses means with that design. Sin occurs incidentally, so far as the purpose of God is concerned. It need not be, and doubtless is not, the object of positive design or purpose, but comes to pass because it cannot wisely be prevented. God uses means to promote obedience. But moral agents, in the exercise of their free agency, often disobey in spite of all the inducements to the contrary which God can wisely set before them. God never sets aside the freedom of moral agents to prevent their sinning, nor to secure their obedience. The Bible everywhere represents men as acting freely under the government and universal providence of God, and it represents sin as the result of, or as consisting in, an abuse of their freedom.

Gen 42:21 : "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Exo 8:32 : "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."

Exo 9:27 : "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."

Exo 10:16-17 : "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only."

Deu 30:19 : "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Jos 24:15 : "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2Sa 24:1, 2Sa 24:10. "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 10. And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

Pro 1:10, Pro 1:29-31 : "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 29. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: 30. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof; 31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

Pro 16:9 : "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps."

Pro 23:26 : "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

Son 1:4 : "Draw me, and we will run after thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee."

Isa 5:3 : "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard."

Hos 13:9 : "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."

Mat 13:15 : "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Mat 18:7 : "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Luk 22:22 : "And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed."

Luk 23:39 : "And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, if thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

Joh 5:40 : "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Act 4:27 : "For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together. 28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Rom 2:15 : "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."

Phi 2:12 : "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: 13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The following things appear to be true in respect to the purposes of God, as taught both by reason and revelation:--

(1.) That God's purposes extend in some sense to all events.

(2.) That he positively purposes the highest good of being, as a whole, as his end.

(3.) That he has ordained wise and wholesome laws as the necessary means of securing this end.

(4.) That he positively purposes to secure obedience to these laws in so far as he wisely can, and uses means with this design.

(5.) That he does not positively purpose to secure disobedience to his laws in any case, and use means with that design; but that he only purposes to suffer violations of his law rather than prevent them, because he foresees that, by his overruling power, he can prevent the violation from resulting in so great an evil as the change necessary to prevent it would do. Or in other words, he sees that he can secure a greater good upon the whole, by suffering the violation under the circumstances in which it occurs, than he could by interposing to prevent it. This is not the same thing as to say, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. For should all moral agents perfectly obey, under the identical circumstances in which they disobey, this might, and doubtless would result in the highest possible good. But God, foreseeing that it were more conducive to the highest good of being to suffer some to sin, rather than so change the circumstances as to prevent it, purposed to suffer their sin, and overrule it for good; but he did not aim at producing it, and use means with that intent.

(6.) Obedience to law he directly purposes to secure.

(7.) Disobedience to law he never purposed or aimed to secure; but on the contrary purposed to prevent it, so far as he wisely could.

(8.) When he cannot wisely prevent it, he wisely suffers and overrules it, so as to render it, not a less evil than obedience would have been in the identical circumstances in which the disobedience occurs, but as a less evil than the change of circumstances necessary to prevent it would be.

V. *God's revealed will is never inconsistent with his secret purpose.*

It has been common to represent sin as the necessary occasion, condition, or means of the greatest good, in such a sense, that upon the whole God secretly, but really prefers sin to holiness in every case where it exists; that while he has forbidden sin under all circumstances, upon pain of eternal death, yet, because it is the necessary occasion, condition, or means of the greatest good, God really prefers its existence to holiness in every instance in which it exists. It has been said, sin exists. God does not therefore prevent it. But he could and would prevent it, if he did not upon the whole prefer it to holiness, in the circumstances in which it occurs. Its existence, then, it has been said, is proof conclusive that God secretly prefers its existence to holiness, in every case in which it occurs. But this is a *non sequitur*. It does not follow from the existence of sin, that God prefers sin to holiness in the circumstances in which it occurs; but it may be, that he only prefers sin to such a change of circumstances as would prevent it. Suppose I require my son to do a certain thing. I know that he will do it, if I remain at home and see to it. But I know also, that if I go from home he will not do it. Now I might prefer that he should do as I command, and consider his disobedience as a great evil; still I might regard it as a less evil than for me to remain at home, and keep my eye upon him. I might have just reasons for supposing that, under the circumstances, a greater good could be secured upon the whole by my going from home, although his disobedience might be the consequence, than by remaining at home, and preventing his disobedience. Benevolence therefore might require me to go.

But should my son infer from my leaving him, under these circumstances, that I really, though secretly, preferred his disobedience to his obedience, under the identical circumstances in which I gave the command, would his inference be legitimate? No, indeed. All that he could justly infer from my leaving him, with the knowledge that he would disobey me if I did, would be, that although I regarded his disobedience as a great evil, yet I regarded remaining at home a greater.

Just so, it may be when sin exists. God is sincere in prohibiting it. He would greatly prefer that it should not exist. All that can be justly inferred from his not preventing it is, that, although he regards its existence as a great and real evil, yet upon the whole he regards it as a less evil, than would result from so great a change in the administration of his government as would prevent it. He is therefore entirely and infinitely sincere in requiring obedience, and in prohibiting disobedience, and his secret purpose is in strict keeping with his revealed will. Were the moral law universally obeyed, under the circumstances in which all moral agents exist, no one can say, that this would not be better for the universe, and more pleasing to God than disobedience is in the same circumstances. Nor is it fair to infer, that upon the whole, God must prefer sin to holiness, where it occurs, from the fact that he does not prevent it. As has been said, all that can justly be inferred from his not preventing it is, that under the circumstances he prefers not sin to holiness, but prefers to suffer the agent to sin and take the consequences, rather than introduce such changes in the policy and administration of his government as would prevent it. Or it may be said, that the present system is the best that infinite wisdom could devise and execute, not because of sin, but in spite of it, and notwithstanding sin is a real though incidental evil.

It is a palpable contradiction and an absurdity to affirm, that any being can sin, intending thereby to promote the greatest good. This will appear if we consider:

1. That it is admitted on all hands, that benevolence is virtue.

2. That benevolence consists in willing good, or the highest good of being as an end.

3. That it is duty to will both the end and the necessary means to promote it.

4. That right and benevolence are always at one, that is, that which is benevolent must always be right, and can in no case be wrong.

5. That consequently it can never be sin to choose the highest good of being, with all the necessary occasions, conditions, and means of promoting it.

6. It is impossible therefore for a being to sin, or to consent to sin, as an occasion, condition, or means, or designing thereby to promote the highest good of being; for this design would be virtue, and not sin. Whether all virtue consist in benevolence, or not, still it must be admitted, that all forms of virtue must be consistent with benevolence, unless it be admitted, that there can be a law of right inconsistent with, and opposed to, the law of benevolence. But this would be to admit, that two moral laws might be opposed to each other; which would be to admit, that a moral agent might be under an obligation to obey two opposing laws at the same time, which is a contradiction. Thus it appears, that there can be no law of right opposed to, or separate from, the law of benevolence. Benevolence and right must then always be as one. If this be so, it follows, that whatever benevolence demands, cannot be wrong, but must be right. But the law of benevolence demands, not only the choice of the highest good of being as an end, but also demands the choice of all the known necessary occasions, conditions, and means with a design to promote that end.

It is naturally impossible to sin, in using means designed and known to be necessary to the promotion of the end of benevolence. It is therefore naturally impossible to do evil, or to sin that good may come, or with the design to promote good thereby. To deny this, and to maintain, that a man can possibly sin in intending to promote the highest good of being, and in fulfilling the necessary conditions, and in using what he regards as the necessary means, is, I say again, to hold, that there is a law of right separate from, and opposed to, the law of benevolence;--which is, as before said, to hold, that two moral laws are opposed to each other, and require opposite courses of conduct in the same agent at the same time;--which is to hold, that there are two opposing laws of nature and of God at the same time;--which is to hold, that a moral agent may justly be required, on pain of eternal death, to choose, design, and act in opposite directions at the same time;--which is to hold, that it is his duty to sin and not to sin at the same time;--which is to hold, that a moral agent might sin in doing his duty, or in obeying moral law.

Let those who hold that right and benevolence may be opposed to each other, and that a moral agent can sin with a benevolent intention, see what their doctrine amounts to, and get out of the absurdity as best they can. The fact is, if willing the highest good of being is always virtuous, it must always be right to will all the necessary occasions, conditions, and means to that end. It is therefore a contradiction to say that sin can be among the necessary and intended occasions, conditions, and means; that is, that any one could sin intending thereby to promote the highest good.

But it is not pretended by those who hold this dogma, that sin sustains to the highest good the same relations that holiness does. Holiness has a natural tendency to promote the highest good; but the supposition now under consideration is, that sin is hateful in itself, and that it therefore must dissatisfy and disgust all moral agents, and that its natural tendency is to defeat the end of moral government, and to prevent rather than promote the highest good; but that God foresees that, notwithstanding its intrinsically odious and injurious nature, he can so overrule it as to make it the condition, occasion, or instrument of the highest good of himself and of his universe, and that for this reason he really upon the whole is pleased that it should occur, and prefers its existence, in every instance in which it does exist, to holiness in its stead. The supposition is, that sin is in its own nature infinitely odious and abominable to God, and perfectly odious to all holy moral agents, yet it is the occasion of calling into developement and exercise such emotions and feelings in God and in holy beings, and such modifications of benevolence, as do really more than compensate for all the disgust and painful emotions that result to holy beings, and for all the remorse, agony, despair, and endless suffering, that result to sinners.

It is not supposed by any one that I know of, that sin naturally tends to promote the highest good at all, but only that God can, and does, so overrule and counteract its natural tendency, as to make it the occasion or condition of a greater good, than holiness would be in its stead. Now in reply to this, I would say, that I pretend not to determine to what extent God can, and will, overrule and counteract the naturally evil and injurious tendency of sin. It surely is enough to say, that God prohibits it, and that it is impossible for creatures to know that sin is the necessary occasion, or condition, or means of the highest good.

'If sin is known by God to be the necessary occasion, condition, or means of the highest good of himself and of the universe, whatever it may be in itself, yet viewed in its relations, it must be regarded by him as of infinite value, since it is the indispensable condition of infinite good.' According to this theory, sin in every instance in which it exists, is and must be regarded by God as of infinitely greater value than holiness would be in its stead. He must then, upon the whole, have infinite complacency in it. But this leads me to attend to the principal arguments by which it is supposed this theory is maintained. It is said, for example:--

(1.) That the highest good of the universe of moral agents is conditionated upon the revelation of the attributes and character of God to them; that but for sin these attributes, at least some of them, could never have been revealed, inasmuch as without sin there would have been no occasion for their display or manifestation; that neither justice nor mercy, nor forbearance, nor self-denial, nor meekness, could have found the occasions of their exercise or manifestation, had sin never existed.

To this I reply, that sin has indeed furnished the occasion for a glorious manifestation of the moral perfections of God. From this we see that God's perfections enable him greatly to overrule sin, and to bring good out of evil; but from this we are not authorized to infer, that God could not have revealed these attributes to his creatures without the existence of sin. Nor can we say, that these revelations would have been necessary to the highest perfection and happiness of the universe, had all moral agents perfectly and uniformly obeyed. When we consider what the moral attributes of God are, it is easy to see that there may be myriads of moral attributes in God of which no creature has, or ever will have, any knowledge; and the knowledge of which is not at all essential to the highest perfection and happiness of the universe of creatures. God's moral attributes are only his benevolence, existing and contemplated in its various relations to the universe of beings. Benevolence in any being must possess as many attributes as there are possible relations under which it can be contemplated, and should their occasions arise, these attributes would stand forth in exercise. It is not at all probable, that all of the attributes of benevolence, either in the Creator or in creatures, have yet found the occasions of their exercise, nor, perhaps, will they ever. As new occasions rise to all eternity, benevolence will develope new and striking attributes, and manifest itself under endless forms and varieties of loveliness. There can be no such thing as exhausting its capabilities of developement.

In God benevolence is infinite. Creatures can never know all its attributes, nor approach any nearer to knowing all of them than they now are. For it is infinite, and there can be no end to its capabilities of developing in exercise new forms of beauty and loveliness. It is true, that God has taken occasion to show forth the glory of his benevolence through the existence of sin. He has seized the occasion, though mournful in itself, to manifest some of the attributes of his benevolence by the exercise of them. It is also true, that we cannot know how or by what means God could have revealed these attributes, if sin had not existed; and it is also true, that we cannot know that such a revelation was impossible without the existence of sin; nor that, but for sin, the revelation would have been necessary to the highest good of the universe.

God forbids sin, and requires universal holiness. He must be sincere in this. But sin exists. Shall we say that he secretly chooses that it should, and really, though secretly, prefers its existence to holiness, in the circumstances in which it occurs? Or shall we assume, that it is an evil, that God regards it as such, but that he cannot wisely prevent it; that is, to prevent it would introduce a still greater evil? It is an evil, and a great evil, but still the less of two evils; that is, to suffer it to occur, under the circumstances, is a less evil than such a change of circumstances, as would prevent it, would be. This is all we can justly infer from its existence. This leaves the sincerity of God unimpeached, and sustains his consistency, and the consistency and integrity of his law. The opposite supposition represents God and the law as infinitely deceitful.

(2.) It has been said, that the Bible sustains the supposition, that sin is the necessary means of the highest good. I trust the passages that have been quoted, disprove this saying.

(3.) It is said, that to represent sin as not the means of the highest good, and God as unable to prevent it, is to represent God as unable to accomplish all his will; whereas he says, he will do all his pleasure, and that nothing is too hard for him.

I answer: God pleases to do only what is naturally possible, and he is well pleased to do that and nothing more. This he is able to do. This he will do. This he does. This is all he claims to be able to do; and this is all, that in fact infinite wisdom and power can do.

(4.) But it is said, that if sin is an evil, and God can neither prevent nor overrule it, so as to make it a means of greater good than could be secured without it, he must be unhappy in view of this fact, because he cannot prevent it, and secure a higher good without it.

I answer: God neither desires nor wills to perform natural impossibilities. God is a reasonable being, and does not aim at nor desire impossibilities. He is well content to do as well as, in the nature of the case, is possible, and has no unreasonable regrets because he is not more than infinite, and that he cannot accomplish what is impossible to infinity itself. His good pleasure is, to secure all the good that is possible to infinity: with this he is infinitely well pleased.

Again: does not the objection, that the view of the subject here presented limits the divine power, lie with all its force against those who make this objection? To hold that sin is the necessary means or condition of the highest good, is to hold that God was unable to promote the highest good without resorting to such vile means as sin. Sin is an abomination in itself; and do not they, as really and as much limit the power of God, who maintain his inability to promote the highest good without it, as they do who hold, that he could not wisely so interfere with the free actions of moral agents as to prevent it? Sin exists. God abhors it. How is its existence to be accounted for? I suppose it to be an evil unavoidably incidental to that system of moral government which, notwithstanding the evil, was upon the whole the best that could be adopted. Others suppose, that sin is the necessary means or condition of the greatest good; and account for its existence in this way:--that is, they suppose that God admits or permits its existence as a necessary occasion, condition, or means of the highest good; that he was not able to secure the highest good without it. The two explanations of the admitted fact that sin exists, differ in this:--

One method of explanation holds, that sin is the necessary occasion, condition, or means of the highest good; and that God actually, upon the whole, prefers the existence of sin to holiness, in every instance in which it exists; because, in those circumstances, it is a condition or means of greater good than could have been secured by holiness in its stead. This theory represents God as unable to secure his end by other means, or upon other conditions, than sin. The other theory holds, that God really prefers holiness to sin in every instance in which it occurs; that he regards sin as an evil, but that while he regards it as an evil, he suffers its existence as a less evil than such a change in the administration of his government as would prevent it, would be. Both theories must admit, that in some sense God could not wisely prevent it. Explain the fact of its existence as you will, it must be admitted, that in some sense God was not able to prevent it, and secure his end.

If it be said, that God could neither wisely prevent it, nor so overrule it as to make it the means or condition of the highest good, he must be rendered unhappy by its existence; I reply, that this must be equally true upon the other hypothesis. Sin is hateful, and its consequences are a great evil. These consequences will be eternal and indefinitely great. God must disapprove these consequences. If sin is the necessary condition or means of the greatest good, must not God lament that he cannot secure the good without a resort to such loathsome, and such horrible means? If his inability wisely to prevent it will interfere with and diminish his happiness, must not the same be true of his inability to secure the highest good, without such means as will prove the eternal destruction of millions?

VI. *Wisdom and benevolence of the purposes of God.*

We have seen that God is both wise and benevolent. This is the doctrine both of reason and of revelation. The reason intuitively affirms that God is, and is perfect. The Bible assumes that he is, and declares that he is perfect. Both wisdom and benevolence must be attributes of the infinite and perfect God. These attributes enter into the reason's idea of God. The reason could not recognize any being as God to whom these attributes did not belong. But if infinite wisdom and benevolence are moral attributes of God, it follows of course that all his designs or purposes are both perfectly wise and benevolent. God has chosen the best possible end, and pursues it in the use of the best practicable means. His purposes embrace the end and the means necessary to secure it, together with the best practicable disposal of the sin, which is the incidental result of his choosing this end and using these means; and they extend no further; they are all therefore perfectly wise and good.

VII. *The immutability of the divine purposes.*

We have seen that immutability is not only a natural, but also a moral attribute of God. The reason affirms, that the self-existent and infinitely perfect God is unchangeable in all his attributes. The ground of this affirmation it is not my purpose here to inquire into. It is sufficient here to say, what every one knows, that such is the affirmation of the reason. This is also everywhere assumed and taught in the Bible. God's moral attributes are not immutable in the sense of necessity, but only in the sense of certainty. Although God is not necessarily benevolent, yet he is as immutably so, as if he were necessarily so. If his benevolence were necessary, it would not be virtuous, for the simple reason that it would not be free. But being free, its immutability renders it all the more praise-worthy.

VIII. *The purposes of God are a ground of eternal and joyful confidence.*

That is, they may reasonably be a source of eternal comfort, joy, and peace. Selfish beings will not of course rejoice in them, but benevolent beings will and must. If they are infinitely wise and good, and sure to be accomplished, they must form a rational ground of unfailing confidence and joy. God says:--

Isa 46:10 : "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Psa 33:11 : "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

Pro 19:21 : "There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

Act 5:39 : "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

These, and many parallel passages are reasonably the source of perpetual confidence and joy to those who love God, and sympathize with him.

IX. *The relation of God's purposes to his prescience or foreknowledge.*

We have seen that God is omniscient, that is, that he necessarily and eternally knows whatever is, or can be, an object of knowledge. His purposes must also be eternal and immutable, as we have seen. In the order of time, therefore, his purposes and his foreknowledge must be coeval, that is, they must be co-eternal.

But in the order of nature, God's knowledge of what he could do, and what could be done, must have preceded his purposes: that is, he could not, so to speak, in the order of nature, have formed his purpose and made up his mind what to do, until he had considered what could be done, and what was best to be done. Until all possible ends, and ways, and means, were weighed and understood, it was of course impossible to make a selection, and settle upon the end with all the necessary means; and also settle upon the ways and means of overruling any evil, natural or moral, that might be seen to be unavoidably incidental to any system. Thus it appears, that, in the order of nature, fore-knowledge of what could be done, and what he could do, must have preceded the purpose to do. The purpose resulted from the prescience or fore-knowledge. He knew what he could do, before he decided what he would do. But, on the other hand, the purpose to do must, in the order of nature, have preceded the knowledge of what he should do, or of what would be done, or would come to pass as a result of his purpose. Viewed relatively to what he could do, and what could be done, the Divine prescience must in the order of nature have preceded the Divine purposes. But viewed relatively to what he would do, and what would be done, and would come to pass, the Divine purposes must, in the order of nature, have preceded the Divine prescience. But I say again, as fore-knowledge was necessarily eternal with God, his purposes must also have been eternal, and therefore, in the order of time, neither his prescience could have preceded his purposes, nor his purposes have preceded his prescience. They must have been contemporaneous and co-eternal.

X. *God's purposes are not inconsistent with, but demand the use of means both on his part, and on our part, to accomplish them.*

The great end upon which he has set his heart necessarily depends upon the use of means, both moral and physical, to accomplish it. The highest well-being of the whole universe is his end. This end can be secured only by securing conformity to the laws of matter and of mind. Mind is influenced by motives, and hence moral and physical government are naturally necessary means of securing the great end proposed by the Divine mind.

Hence also results the necessity of a vast and complicated system of means and influences, such as we see spread around us on every hand. The history of the universe is but the history of creation, and of the means which God is using to secure his end, with their natural and incidental results. It has already been shown, that the Bible teaches that the purposes of God include and respect both means and ends. I will only add, that God's purposes do not render any event, dependent upon the acts of a moral agent, necessarily certain, or certain with a certainty of necessity. Although, as was before said, all events are certain with some kind of certainty, and would be and must be, if they are ever to come to pass, whether God purposes them, or whether he fore-knows them or not; yet no event, depending upon the will of a free agent, is, or can be, certain with a certainty of necessity. The agent could by natural possibility do otherwise than he will do, or than God purposes to suffer him to do, or wills that he shall do. God's purposes, let it be understood, are not a system of fatality. They leave every moral agent entirely free to choose and act freely. God knows infallibly how every creature will act, and has made all his arrangements accordingly, to overrule the wicked actions of moral agents on the one hand, and to produce or induce, the holy actions of others on the other hand. But be it remembered, that neither the Divine fore-knowledge nor the Divine purpose, in any instance, sets aside the free agency of the creature. He, in every instance, acts as freely and as responsibly, as if God neither knew nor purposed anything respecting his conduct, or his destiny.

God's purposes extend to all events in some sense, as has been shown. They extend as really to the most common events of life as to the most rare. But in respect to the every day transactions of life, men are not wont to stumble, and cavil, and say, Why, if I am to live, I shall live, whatever I may do to destroy my health and life; and if I am to die, I cannot live, do what I will. No, in these events they will not throw off responsibility, and cast themselves upon the purposes of God; but on the contrary, they are as much engaged to secure the end they have in view, as if God neither knew nor purposed anything about it. Why then should they do as they often do, in regard to the salvation of their souls, cast off responsibility, and settle down in listless inactivity, as if the purposes of God in respect to salvation were but a system of iron fatality, from which there is no escape? Surely "madness is in their hearts while they live." But let them understand, that, in thus doing, they sin against the Lord, and be sure their sin will find them out.

The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (1851)

LECTURE LXXX. - continued

PERSEVERANCE PROVED.

(8.) The inhabitants of heaven seem to believe that there is a certain connexion between repentance and salvation.

Luk 15:7 : "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

Now surely this joy is premature, unless they expect the penitent to be saved. If, after all, there is an uncertainty about the result, in their estimation, and if it may be, or there is a probability, that the penitent will fall, and suffer a vastly more aggravated damnation than if he had never been enlightened, one would think that they would at least suspend their triumph until the result was known. To be sure they might rejoice, if the sinner broke off temporarily from his sin, and rejoice at the bare prospect of his salvation; but to me this passage reads just as it might be expected to read, if they regarded repentance as certainly connected with ultimate salvation.

Again: there are several parables that seem to take the perseverance of the saints for granted, or to assume its truth. The one immediately preceding the verse upon which I have just remarked is one of them.

Luk 15:3-7 : "And he spake this parable unto them, saying: What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

Now, why this joy at the return of a strayed or lost sheep, if there is no certainty, or scarcely any probability, that he will not stray again, and be finally lost with an aggravated destruction? Immediately following this is another parable of the same import.

Luk 15:8-10 : "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found that which was lost. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Here again it may be asked, why this great joy at finding the sinner, unless his conversion is to result in his salvation?

I do not quote these passages as proving the doctrine in question, but only as specimens of the class of passages that seem to assume the truth of the doctrine, and as being just what might be expected, if the doctrine is true, and just what might not be expected if the doctrine is not true.

To this it may be, and has been replied, that there are many passages that are just what we could not expect, if the perseverance of the saints were true. The following are relied upon as examples of this class:--

Heb 6:1-6 : "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God; Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; And have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Eze 18:24 : "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

Eze 33:13 : "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."

Mat 10:22 : "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Joh 15:6 : "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

1Co 10:12 : "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Heb 3:6, Heb 3:12-14 : "But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Heb 4:1, Heb 4:11 : "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

2Pe 1:10 : "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if we do these things, ye shall never fall."

In reply to this objection I remark, that instead of these passages being otherwise than might be expected if the doctrine in question were true, and therefore implying that the doctrine is not true, they are precisely what might be expected, if the doctrine as I have stated it, were true. If the certainty be but a moral certainty, even when the fact of conversion is settled beyond all doubt, or possibility of mistake, if the final salvation of the truly regenerate be as really conditioned upon perseverance as if there was no certainty about it; and if, moreover, the fact of conversion is seldom settled in this life beyond the possibility of mistake, then these passages, instead of implying any real uncertainty in regard to the final salvation of the saints, are just as and what might be expected, because they are just what is needed, upon the supposition, that the doctrine in question is true. They do not affirm that any true saints are, or will be, lost. They do imply the natural possibility, and, humanly speaking, the danger of such an event. They further imply, that without watchfulness and perseverance salvation is impossible. They also imply, that caution, warning, and threatening, are needed. They also imply, that some men, to say the least, are not certain of their own salvation, and that they do not certainly know that they are saints, beyond all possibility of mistake.

Now, these things that are fairly implied in this class of passages are really true: hence these passages just meet the necessities of the church, and are therefore just what might be expected when all the facts in the case are considered. I do not intend that this class of passages imply the truth of the doctrine under consideration, but that they are consistent with it, and might be expected, if the doctrine, as I have stated it, be true.

(9.) Regeneration is represented as securing perseverance in obedience:--

First, In those passages that make it the condition of salvation.

Secondly, In those passages that expressly affirm, that the truly regenerated do not, and cannot, live in sin.

1Jo 3:9 : "Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

1Jo 4:7 : "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

1Jo 5:1, 1Jo 5:4, 1Jo 5:18 : "Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him. 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

These and similar passages expressly teach the persevering nature of true religion, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: in other words, they teach that the truly regenerate do not sin, in the sense at least of living in anything like habitual sin. They teach, that with all truly regenerate souls, holiness is at least the rule, and sin only the exception; that instead of its being true, that regenerate souls live a great majority of their days subsequent to regeneration in sin, it is true that they so seldom sin, that in strong language it may be said in truth, they do not sin. This language so strongly and expressly teaches that perseverance is an unfailing attribute of Christian character, that but for the fact that other passages constrain us to understand these passages as strong language used in a qualified sense, we should naturally understand them as affirming that no truly regenerate soul does at any time sin. But since it is a sound rule of interpreting the language of an author, that he is, if possible, to be made consistent with himself; and since John, in other passages in this same epistle and elsewhere, represents that Christians, or truly regenerate persons, do sometimes sin; and since this is frequently taught in the Bible, we must understand these passages just quoted as only affirming a general and not a universal truth; that is, that truly regenerate persons do not sin anything like habitually, but that holiness is the rule with them, and sin only the exception. Certainly these passages cannot be reasonably understood as affirming and meaning less than this. I know that it has been said, that being born of God is used by John in these cases in a higher sense, and as meaning more than simple conversion or regeneration, as representing a higher state than can be predicated of all true Christians. But observe, he especially affirms that all who truly believe are born of God.

1Jo 5:1 : "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Again: Christ speaks as if he regarded those only as having truly believed who persevere in obedience. Joh 8:31 : "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The parable of the sower appears to have been designed expressly to teach the persevering nature of true religion.

Luk 8:5-8, Luk 8:11-15 : "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bear fruit a hundred fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

If this parable was not designed to distinguish true religion from its counterfeits, and to illustrate the persevering nature of true religion, I do not know, and cannot conceive, what was its design. I need not enlarge upon it. Let any one read and consider the parable for himself.

Again: the parable of the leaven seems designed also to teach the progressive and persevering nature of true religion.

Mat 13:33 : "Another parable spake he unto them: the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

This parable I understand to represent or teach the aggressive nature of true faith and piety, as it exhibits itself both in the hearts and lives of individual Christians, and also as it progresses and extends itself in the world. It is in its nature persevering and aggressive, and when it once truly exists, it will through grace triumph. When I speak of the persevering nature of true religion, I do not mean, that religion as it exists in the hearts of the saints in this life would of itself, if unsupported by the grace and indwelling Spirit of God, prevail and triumph over its enemies; but the thing intended is, that through the faithfulness of God, he that has begun or shall begin a good work in any heart, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. The persevering character of true religion is owing to the indwelling Spirit of God. This leads me to remark,

Again, that repentance is made the condition of receiving the Holy Spirit; and when this Spirit is received, it is with the express promise and pledge that he shall abide in the heart for ever.

Joh 7:37-39 : "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.")

Here we learn that water represents the Holy Spirit. This is abundantly taught in the Bible. Now let us hear what Christ said to the woman of Samaria.

Joh 4:13-14 : "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The prominent truth taught in this text is, that whosoever shall drink of this water shall never thirst. In this particular respect the Saviour contrasts it with the water of Jacob's well, and says, Joh 4:13-14 : "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This Christ plainly states as a fact.

That is, he shall never perish for lack of this Spirit or water, but it shall abide in him, and spring up into eternal life. The Spirit shall remain in him, and secure him against falling and perishing. The fact that the Spirit shall abide with and in all who ever receive him, and shall prevail to secure their salvation, seems to be plainly taught in this passage.

Again, Rom 8:9-11 : "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Here it is expressly declared, that none are Christians who have not the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, and that they who are Christ's do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that they who are Christ's have crucified, that is killed, the lusts of the flesh. This is the real character of all true saints. Such like passages, observe, are designed to distinguish true religion from its counterfeits, and to teach that perseverance in true obedience is a characteristic of all real saints.

The Bible everywhere represents professors who do not persevere and abide steadfast, as hypocrites, or as self-deceived. Job says:

Job 27:8-10 : "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"

Here he represents the failing to "always call upon God" as a demonstration of hypocrisy. Christ expressly represents perseverance as the characteristic of true believers. "My sheep hear my voice and follow me." This must relate at least to habitual character.

(10.) Christ represents it as impossible to deceive the elect. Mat 24:24 : We have seen that the elect unto salvation includes all true Christians; that is, that all Christians are the elect children of God. They have come to Christ. Observe, the Saviour himself teaches, as we have seen:

(i.) That no one can come to, or believe in him, unless the Father draw him.

(ii.) That the Father draws those, and only those to Christ, whom he has given to him.

(iii.) That all whom the Father has given to him shall come to him, and of those that come to him he will lose none, but will raise them up at the last day.

Joh 6:44-45, Joh 6:37-40 : "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39. And this is the father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

False theories are represented as permitted to test the piety of true and false professors. 1Co 11:19 : "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Those that are of the elect, or are true children of God, will not follow heresies. Christ says, Joh 10:4-5, Joh 10:27-28 : "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep will follow him; for they know his voice. 5. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

But those who are not true believers will not, and do not hear and know his voice, and follow him. Joh 10:26 : "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."

(11.) The eighth chapter of Romans seems to settle the question, or rather is, of itself a clear proof of the doctrine we are examining. We need to read and ponder prayerfully the whole chapter, to apprehend distinctly the scope of the apostle's teaching upon this subject. He had in the seventh chapter been dwelling upon and portraying a legal experience. He begins this eighth chapter by asserting, Rom. 8:1-18 : "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. 5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. 11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18. For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Here he describes the character of true believers as distinguished from mere legalists, of whom he had been speaking. True believers, he here asserts, are justified; they are in Christ Jesus; they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, that is, the law is written in their hearts; they have the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of adoption; the Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the adopted children of God; "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;" the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in them. Rom 8:24, he says: "For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

He then proceeds to notice the ground of this hope. The first particular he notices is, that the Spirit which he had just said, dwells in all true believers; and of which, as we have seen Christ says, that when he is once given, the soul that has received him shall never thirst, but that he shall be in him like a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Paul says of this Spirit, Rom 8:26-27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This, observe, he affirms to be true of all who are Christ's, or who are true believers. Of this Spirit he affirms the following things: (1.) That all Christians possess this Spirit. (2.) That this Spirit bears witness with the spirits of Christians that they are the children of God. Rom 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (3.) That he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God; that is, that he prays in them or excites them to pray, and to pray aright, for those things which it is the will of God to grant to them. He then in Rom 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Here he represents those who love God, and those who are the called according to his purpose, as the same persons; and affirms, that we know that all things shall work together for their good. This he notices as a second ground of hope. He next proceeds to state, how we know that all things work together for the good of those that love God; or, which he regards as the same thing, to those who are the elect, called according to the election or purpose of God. He says, Rom 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren:" that is, we know it, because they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. Not if they will be, but to be, and therefore, all things must directly or indirectly contribute to this result. He then says, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." That is, furthermore, we know this, and have good ground of hope from the fact, that whom he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, them, that is the same persons, he also called; and whom, that is, the same persons whom he had predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, and had called, them he also justified; and whom he predestinated, and called, and justified, them, that is, the same persons, he also glorified.

Here then, he concludes, is a firm foundation for the hope of which he had spoken, the grounds of which he had been pointing out. He accordingly proceeds to say in a spirit of triumph:--

Rom 8:31-34 : "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Here he says, "if God be for us, who can be, against us?" and then proceeds to point out several other considerations that enter into this ground of confidence. All who love God are his elect. God justifies them, and who is he that condemns them? God is for them, and who shall be against them? God freely gave his Son for all of them, how much more shall he freely give them all things? If he did not withhold his Son, surely he would withhold nothing else from them that was necessary to secure their salvation. Furthermore, it was Christ that died, and still more and rather, that had risen again, and maketh intercession for them. If these things are so, we may well inquire:--

Rom 8:35-36 : "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.)"

He then triumphantly affirms, Rom 8:37-39 : "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If Paul in the eighth of Romans does not settle the question, that all true saints will be saved, how could it be settled? Let us in few words sum up the argument, as he here presents it:--

(i.) We are saved already in anticipation, or in hope; and only by hope, for as yet we have not received our crown.

(ii.) The grounds of this hope are, that we are in Christ Jesus, have the spirit of Christ, spirit of adoption. We walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. This spirit witnesses that we are children and heirs of God. He makes intercession for us according to the will of God. We also know, that all things work together for good to them who love God, for they are the called according to his purpose. They who are called, that is, effectually called, are called in conformity with their predestination to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. Hence those who are thus predestinated are called, and justified, and glorified. Therefore, no one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. God justifies, and who shall condemn them? Christ died for them, yea, rather, has risen and makes intercession for them. God withheld not his Son, and of course will withhold from Christians nothing that is essential to secure their salvation. Wherefore he concludes, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

I know that to this it has been replied, that although nothing else can separate us from the love of God, yet we may separate ourselves from his love.

To this I answer, true; we may, or can do so; but the question is, shall we, or will any of the elected and called do so? No, indeed; for this is the thing which the apostle intended to affirm, namely, the certainty of the salvation of all true saints. The apostle manifestly in this passage assumes, or affirms, that all who ever truly loved God are elect, or are chosen to be conformed to the image of his Son; and are called, and sanctified, and justified, in conformity with such predestination.

If this is not his meaning, what is? If this is not his meaning, what ground of hope do we, after all, find in what he says?

The apostle seems to have had the same thought in his mind in writing to the Hebrews.

Heb 6:17-20 : "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high-priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

There are a great many other passages of scripture, of the same import as those I have quoted in support of this doctrine, as every one knows who has taken the trouble to examine for himself.

But I have pursued this investigation far enough. If what has been said fails to satisfy any mind, it is presumed that nothing which might be added would produce conviction. I will therefore, after replying to some further objections, conclude the discussion of this subject.