

## **Finney's Lectures on Theology** by Charles Hodge (1823-1886)

This article is an evaluation of Charles Finney's book entitled, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (1846). It was first published in the *Princeton Review* (April, 1847) and subsequently in a collected volume of Hodge articles titled *Essays & Reviews* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857) pp. 245-284. The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for *Reformation Ink*. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed. Original pagination has been kept for purposes of reference (however, footnotes have been converted to endnotes).

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This is in more senses than one a remarkable book. It is to a degree very unusual an original work; it is the product of the author's own mind. The principles which he holds, have indeed been held by others; and the conclusions at which he arrives had been reached before; but still it is abundantly evident that all the principles here advanced are adopted by the writer, not on authority, but on conviction, and that the conclusions presented have all been wrought out by himself and for himself. The work is therefore in a high degree logical. It is as hard to read as Euclid. Nothing can be omitted; nothing passed over slightly. The unhappy reader once committed to a perusal is obliged to go on, sentence by sentence, through the long concatenation. There is not one resting-place; not one lapse into amplification, or declamation, from beginning to the close. It is like one of those spiral staircases, which lead to the top of some high tower, without a landing from the base to the summit; which if a man has once ascended, he resolves never to do the like again. The author begins with certain postulates, or what he calls first truths of reason, and these he traces out with singular clearness and strength to their legitimate conclusions. We do not see that there is a break or a defective link in the whole chain. If you grant his principles, you have already granted his conclusions. Such a work must of course be reckless. Having committed himself to the guidance of the discursive understanding, which

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he sometimes calls the intelligence, and sometimes the reason, and to which he alone acknowledges any real allegiance, he pursues his remorseless course, regardless of any protest from other sources. The Scriptures are throughout recognized as a mere subordinate authority. They are allowed to come in and bear confirmatory testimony, but their place is altogether secondary. Even God himself is subordinate to "the intelligence;" his will can impose no obligation; it only discloses what is obligatory in its own nature and by the law of reason. There can be no positive laws, for nothing binds the conscience but the moral law, nothing is obligatory but what tends to the highest good, and as a means to that end, which must be chosen not out of regard for God, not for the sake of the moral excellence implied in it, but for its own sake as what alone has any intrinsic value. All virtue consists "in obedience to the moral law as revealed

in the reason." P. 301. "Benevolence (i. e., virtue) is yielding the will up unreservedly to the demands of the intelligence." P. 275. Moral law "is the soul's idea or conception of that state of heart or life which is exactly suited to its nature and relations. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that moral law is nothing more or less than the law of nature, that is, it is the rule imposed on us, not by the arbitrary will of any being, but by our own intelligence." P. 6. 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. "To pursue a course of conduct suited to their nature and relations, is necessarily and self-evidently obligatory, the willing or nilling of any being to the contrary notwithstanding." P. 5. As man's allegiance is to the universe—to being in general, and the rule of his obedience his own intelligence, God is reduced to the same category. He is "under moral law," he is bound to seek the highest good of being, and as the highest well-being of the universe demands moral government, and as God is best qualified, "it is his duty to govern" P. 19. "His conscience must demand it." P. 20. Our obligation, however, to obey him rests neither on our dependence, nor on his infinite superiority, but simply on "the intrinsic value of the interests to be secured by government, and conditioned upon the fact, that government is the necessary

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means or condition of securing that end." P. 24. God's right is therefore limited by its foundation, "by the fact, that thus far, and no further, government is necessary to the highest good of the universe. No legislation in heaven or earth—no enactment can impose obligation, except upon 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." P. 24. The question is not, what form of truth may be conveyed under these expressions; we quote them as exhibiting the animus of the book; we bring, them forward as exhibiting what we have called the recklessness of the writer; his tracing out his principles to conclusions which shock the ordinary sensibilities of Christians; which assume, to say the least, principles inconsistent with the nature of religion as presented in the Bible and as avowed by the vast body of the people of God. The Scriptures assume that our allegiance is to God, and not to being in general; that the foundation of our obligation to obey him, is his infinite excellence, and not the necessity of obedience to the highest happiness of moral agents; and that the rule of our obedience is his will, and not "the soul's conception" of what is suited to our nature and relations. According to the doctrine of this book, there is no such thing as religion, or the service of God as God. The universe has usurped his place, as the supreme object of love; and reason, or "the intelligence," has fallen heir to his authority. A very slight modification in the form of statement, would bring the doctrine of Mr. Finney, into exact conformity to the doctrine of the modern German school, which makes God but a name for the moral law or order of the universe, or reason in the abstract. It is in vain, however, to tell Mr. Finney that his conclusions shock the moral and religious consciousness; what right, he asks, has "the empirical consciousness" to be heard in the premises. "If the intelligence affirms it, it must

be true or reason deceives us. But if the intelligence deceives in this, it may also in other things. If it fail us here, it fails us on the most important of all questions. If reason gives us false testimony, we can never know truth from error upon any moral subject; we certainly can never know what religion is, if the testimony of reason can be set aside. If the intelligence cannot be safely appealed to, how are we to know what the Bible

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means? for it is the only faculty by which we get at the truth of the oracles of God." P. 171.<sup>1</sup>

Our object at present, however, is not to discuss principles, but to state the general character of this work. It is eminently logical, rationalistic, reckless and confident. Conclusions at war with the common faith of Christians, are not only avowed without hesitation, but "sheer nonsense," "stark nonsense," "eminently nonsensical," are the terms applied to doctrines which have always had their place in the faith of God's people, and which will maintain their position undisturbed, long after this work is buried in oblivion.<sup>2</sup> Men have other sources of knowledge than the understanding, the feeble flickering light burning in the midst of misty darkness. If deaf to the remonstrance of our moral nature, to the protests even of the emotional part of our constitution, we follow that light, it belongs to history and not to prophecy to record the issue. It really seems strange when the first sentence of his preface informs the reader that "the truths of the blessed gospel have been hidden under a false philosophy," that the author, instead of presenting those truths free from that false ingredient, should write a book which hardly pretends to be anything else than philosophy. The attempt to cure philosophy by philosophy is a homoeopathic mode of treatment in which we have very little confidence. The gospel was intended for plain people. Its doctrines admit of being plainly stated. They imply indeed a certain psychology, and a certain moral system. The true and Christian method is to begin with the doctrines, and let them determine our philosophy, and not to begin with philosophy and allow it to give law to the doctrines. The title page of this book is not plainer than the fact that the doctrines which it inculcates are held, not on the authority of God speaking in his word, but on the authority of reason. They are

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almost without exception first proved, demonstrated as true, as the necessary sequences of admitted or assumed principles, before the Bible is so much as named. It is by profession a philosophy, or a philosophical demonstration of certain doctrines of morals and religion, and which might be admitted, and adopted as true by a man who did not believe one word of the Scriptures, or who had never heard of their existence. The only doctrines which are assumed as facts, and not deduced from assumed premises, are the atonement as a fact, and the influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind, and as to the former its nature, design, and effect are all proved *a*

*priori*; and as to the latter the writer professes "to understand the philosophy of the Spirit's influence." P. 28. It is altogether a misnomer to call such a book "Lectures on Systematic Theology." It would give a far more definite idea of its character, to call it, "Lectures on Moral Law and Philosophy." Under the former title, we are authorized to expect a systematic exhibition of the doctrines of the Bible, as resting on the authority of a divine revelation; under the latter we should expect to find, what is here presented, a regular evolution from certain radical principles of a code of moral laws. We wish it to be distinctly understood, that we neither deny nor lightly estimate works of the kind just described. There can be no higher or more worthy subject of study, apart from the word of God, than the human soul, and the laws which regulate its action and determine its obligations. Nor do we suppose that these subjects can ever be divorced from theology. They occupy so much ground in common, that they never have been and never can be kept distinct. But still, it is very important that things should be called by their right names, and not presented to the public for what they are not. Let moral philosophy be called moral philosophy and not Systematic Theology.

While we admit that the philosophical and theological element, in any system of Christian doctrine, cannot be kept distinct, it is of the last importance that they should be kept, as already remarked, in their proper relative position. There is a view of free agency and of the grounds and extent of moral obligation, which is perfectly compatible with the doctrines of original sin, efficacious grace, and divine sovereignty; and there is another view of those subjects, as obviously incompatible with these doctrines. There are two courses which a theologian may adopt.

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He may either turn to the Scriptures and ascertain whether those doctrines are really taught therein. If satisfied on that point, and especially if he experience through the teachings of the Holy Spirit their power on his own heart, if they become to him matters not merely of speculative belief but of experimental knowledge, he will be constrained to make his philosophy agree with his theology. He cannot consciously hold contradictory propositions, and must therefore make his convictions harmonize as far as he can; and those founded on the testimony of the Spirit, will modify and control the conclusions to which his own understanding would lead him. Or, he may begin with his philosophy and determine what is true with regard to the nature of man and his responsibilities, and then turn to the Scriptures and force them into agreement with foregone conclusions. Every one in the slightest degree acquainted with the history of theology, knows that this latter course has been adopted by errorists from the earliest ages to the present day. Our own age has witnessed what must be regarded as, on the whole, a very beneficial change in this respect. Rationalists, instead of coercing Scripture into agreement with their philosophy, have agreed to let each stand on its own foundation. The modern systems of theology proceeding from that school, give first the doctrines as they are presented in the Bible, and then examine how far those doctrines agree with, and how far they contradict the teachings of philosophy, or—as they are commonly regarded—the deductions of reason. As soon as public

sentiment allows of this course being pursued in this country, it will be a great relief to all concerned. We do not, however, mean to intimate that those who among ourselves pursue the opposite course, and who draw out that system of moral and religious truth, as they sometimes express it, which every man has in the constitution of his own nature, before they go to the Bible for instruction, and whose system is therefore essentially rationalistic, are insincere in their professions of faith in the Bible. It is too familiar a fact to be doubted, that if a man is previously convinced the Scriptures cannot teach certain doctrines, it is no difficult task to persuade himself that they do not in fact teach them. Still there is a right and a wrong method of studying and teaching theology; there is a healthful and unhealthful posture of mind to be preserved towards the word of God. And we confess, that when we see a system of theology

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beginning with moral government, we take it for granted that the Bible is to be allowed only a very humble part in its construction.<sup>3</sup>

There is one other general remark we would make on the work before us. We object not only to the method adopted, to the assumption that from a few postulates the whole science of religion can be deduced by a logical process, but to the mode in which the method has been carried out. As all truth is consistent; as some moral and religious truths are self-evident, and as all correct deductions from correct premises, must themselves be correct, it is of course conceivable that an *a priori* system of morals and religion might be constructed, which, as far as it went, would agree exactly with the infallible teachings of the Bible. But apart from the almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of the successful execution of such a task, and the comparatively slight authority that could be claimed for any such production, everything depends upon the manner in which the plan is executed. Now we object to Mr. Finney's mode of procedure that he adopts as first principles, the very points in dispute. He postulates what none but a limited class of his readers are prepared to concede. His whole groundwork, therefore, is defective. He has built his tower on contested ground. As a single example of this fundamental logical error, we refer to his confounding liberty and ability. In postulating the one, he postulates also the other. It is a conceded point that man is a free agent. The author therefore is authorized to lay down as one of his axioms that liberty is essential to moral agency; but he is not authorized to assume as an axiom that liberty and ability are identical. He defines free will to be "the power to choose in every instance, in accordance with moral obligation, or to refuse so to choose. This much," he adds, "must be included in free will, and I am not

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concerned to affirm anything more." P. 32. "To talk of inability to obey moral law, is to talk sheer nonsense." P. 4. Mr. Finney knows very well that he has thus taken for granted what has

been denied by nine tenths of all good men since the world began, and is still denied by no small portion of them as we verily hope and believe. This is a point that cannot be settled by a definition *ex cathedra*. He is guilty of a *petitio principii* when he lays it down as an axiom that liberty implies ability to obey moral law, and consequently that responsibility is limited by ability. This is one of the assumptions on which his whole system depends; it is one of the hooks from which is strung his long concatenation of sequences. We deny the right of Mr. Finney to assume this definition of liberty as a "first truth of reason," because it lacks both the essential characteristics of such truths; it neither forces assent as soon as intelligibly stated, nor does it constitute a part of the instinctive (even if latent) faith of all mankind. On the contrary, it is intelligently denied, not only by theorists and philosophers, but by the great mass of ordinary men. It is one of the most familiar facts of consciousness, that a sense of obligation is perfectly consistent with a conviction of entire inability. The evidence of this is impressed on the devotional language of all churches and ages, the hymns and prayers of all people recognize at once their guilt and helplessness, a conviction that they ought and that they cannot, and a consequent calling upon God for help. It is a dictum of philosophers, not of common people, "I ought, therefore, I can." To which every unsophisticated human heart, and especially every heart burdened with a sense of sin, replies, "I ought to be able, but I am not."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Finney would doubtless say to such people, this is "sheer nonsense," it is all a false philosophy; no man is bound to do or to be what is not completely, and at all times, in his own power. This does not alter the case. Men still feel at once their obligation and their helplessness, and calling them fools for so doing, will not destroy their painful conviction of their real condition. As the doctrine, the very opposite of Mr. Finney's assumed axiom, is thus deeply and indelibly impressed on the heart of man, so it is constantly asserted or

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assumed in Scripture. The Bible nowhere asserts the ability of fallen man to make himself holy; it in a multitude of places asserts just the reverse, and all the provisions and promises of grace, and all the prayers and thanksgivings for holiness, recorded in the Scriptures, take for granted that men cannot make themselves holy. This therefore has been and is the doctrine of every Christian church, under the sun, unless that of Oberlin be an exception. There is no confession of the Greek, Romish, Lutheran, or Reformed churches, in which this truth is not openly avowed. It was, says Neander, the radical principle of Pelagius's system that he assumed moral liberty to consist in the ability, at any moment, to choose between good and evil,<sup>5</sup> or, as Mr. Finney expresses it, "in the power to choose, in every instance, in accordance with moral law." It is an undisputed historical fact that this view of liberty has not been adopted in the confession of any one denominational church in Christendom, but is expressly repudiated by them all. We are not concerned, at present, to prove or disprove the correctness of this definition. Our only object is to show that Mr. Finney had no right to assume as an axiom or a first truth of reason, a doctrine which nine-tenths of all Christians intelligently and constantly reject. He himself tells us that "a first truth" is one "universally and necessarily assumed by all moral agents, their speculations to the contrary notwithstanding." Now it has rather too much the appearance of effrontery, for any

man to assert (in reference to any thing which relates to the common consciousness of men), that to be a truth universally and necessarily believed by all moral agents, which the vast majority of such agents, as intelligent and as capable of interpreting their own consciousness as himself, openly and constantly deny. This is only one illustration of the objection to Mr. Finney's method, that he gratuitously assumes controverted points as first truths or axioms.

A second objection to his mode of executing his task is, that he gives himself up to the exclusive guidance of the understanding. We do not mean that he neglects the Scriptures or makes them subordinate to reason. On that characteristic of his work we have already remarked. We now refer to the fact that it is not the informed and informing soul of man, which he studies, and whence he deduces his principles and conclusions. He will

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listen to nothing but the understanding. He spurns what he calls the "empirical consciousness," and denies its right to bear any testimony in relation to what is truth. It is not easy indeed to determine by his definitions, what he means by the intelligence to which he so constantly appeals and to which he ascribes such supremacy. He tells us at times, that it includes Reason, Conscience, and Self-consciousness. Of Reason, he says, it is the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect; that which gives us the knowledge of the absolute, the infinite, the perfect, the necessarily true. It postulates all the *a priori* truths of science. "Conscience is the faculty or function of the Intelligence that recognizes the conformity or disconformity of the heart or 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." "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 and states." To complete the view of his psychology, we must repeat his definition of the two other constituent faculties of our nature, viz.: the sensibility and will. The former "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 is commonly used, is a phenomenon of this faculty." The Will, as before stated, is defined to be the power to choose, in every instance, in accordance with the moral obligation, or to refuse so to choose. "The will is the voluntary power. In it resides the power of causality. As consciousness gives the affirmation that necessity is an attribute of the phenomena of the intellect and the sensibility, so it just as unequivocally gives the affirmation that liberty is an attribute of the phenomena of the will." "I am as conscious of being free in willing, as I am of not being free or voluntary in my feelings and intuitions." Pp. 30, 32. Here is an analysis of the faculties of the soul in which the understanding finds no place. It is not included in the Intellect, for that is said to embrace only Reason, Conscience, and Consciousness; and Reason so defined as to distinguish it from the understanding. Here is Vernunft, but where is the Verstand? The fact is that Mr. Finney has for this once, and for once only, lapsed into transcendentalism. He has taken the definition of

the Reason from Cousin, or some other expounder of the modern philosophy, without remembering that according to that philosophy, reason is something very different from the understanding. This latter faculty has thus been dropped out of his catalogue. This, however, is only a momentary weakness. Mr. Finney is the last man in the world to be reproached with the sin of taking his doctrines at second hand from any school or individual. We do not find in this analysis, however, what we are searching for. The reader of this book perceives, on perusing the first page, that he is about to enter on a long and intricate path. He naturally wishes to know who is to be his guide. It is not Reason, as here defined; for that only gives him the point of departure, and tells him the bearing. Of course it is neither the susceptibility nor the will. What then is it? Why, under the new name of the Intelligence, it is the old faculty, familiar to all Englishmen and Americans, as the understanding. Nothing more nor less. Not reason, in its transcendental sense, as the faculty for the absolute, but the discursive understanding. The ordinary New England faculty, which calculates, perceives, compares, infers and judges. No man can read a dozen pages in any part of the book, without perceiving that it is the product of the speculative understanding, to the exclusion, to a most wonderful degree, of every other faculty. This is its presiding genius. This is the organ which is "phrenologically" developed most disproportionately in the head of the writer, and which gives character to his philosophy and theology. Now we earnestly protest against the competency of this guide. It does not belong to the understanding, as described above, and as it domineers in this book, to speak with authority on questions of religion and morals. It is not the informing faculty; nor can it be trusted as a guide. Let a man attempt to write a work on aesthetics, putting as Mr. Finney does, his mailed foot on the susceptibilities, not allowing them any voice in determining the principles of taste, and he will produce a work which no cultivated man could recognize as treating on the subject. Every such man would say, the writer had purposely put out the light in order to see by the sparks struck by his iron-bound feet. In like manner if any man undertakes the task of writing on morals and religion, unchecked and unguided by the emotional part of our nature, by the susceptibilities, the "empirical consciousness," he will most

assuredly find the heart, conscience, and consciousness of all sane and good men against him. This task has been attempted long before Mr. Finney was born, and with much the same results. The understanding, which has neither heart nor conscience, can speak on these subjects only as informed, and guided by the moral and religious susceptibilities, which are themselves the instinctive impulses of our higher nature. They belong to a far higher sphere than the speculative understanding, to the pneuma as distinguished from the nouß; and are masters and not slaves. The understanding, if divorced from the other faculties, may demonstrate, just as it demonstrates that there is no external world, that there is no such thing as sin, or virtue, or good, or justice;



what is that to the conscience? What becomes of all its syllogisms, when the skeptic comes to die? Are they unravelled, and answered by the understanding? Or do they drop from its palsied hand, the moment conscience affirms the truth? We consider it as the radical, fatal error of the "method" of this book, that it is a mere work of the understanding: the heart, the susceptibilities, the conscience, are allowed no authority in deciding moral questions; which is as preposterous as it would be to write a mathematical treatise on poetry. The whole history of the church teems with illustrations of the fact, that when men write on morals without being guided by the moral emotions; or on religion, uncontrolled by right religious feeling, they are capable of any extravagance of error. But such men say, as Mr. Finney does in a passage, already quoted, if they do not follow the intelligence they have nothing else to follow; if reason gives false testimony, or deceives them, they can never know truth from error. This is all a mistake. It is not reason deceiving them, but the understanding making fools of them, as the apostle says, *faskonteb einai sofoi emwranqhsan*. This is no disparagement of the understanding. It is only saying that it is of no authority out of its legitimate sphere. It receives and gives light. It guides and is guided. It cannot be divorced from the other faculties, and act alone, and give the law to them, as a separate power. Conscience is intelligent, feeling is intelligent, the soul is an intelligent and feeling agent, and not like a threefold cord, whose strands can be untwisted and taken apart. It is one indivisible substance, whose activity is manifested under various forms, but not through faculties as distinct from each

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other as the organ of sight is from that of hearing. Hence intelligence may be predicated of the susceptibilities, and moral character of the acts of the intelligence. No emotion, or mental passion, or feeling, is a mere phenomenon of the susceptibility. Is there no difference between feeling in a brute, and feeling in a man? Nothing but error can result from this absolute divorce of one faculty of the soul from the others; and especially from setting the intelligence in a state of perfect isolation, and then making it, in that state, the law-giver of man.

If Mr. Finney will take the trouble to look into the books of casuistry common among Romanists, or into works on what they call Moral Theology, he will be convinced that the most demoralizing of all studies is the study of morals, under the exclusive guidance of the understanding. The Romish practice of confession has created a demand for the consideration of all possible cases of conscience; and has led to the subjection of the soul to the scalpel of the moral anatomist, laying open to the cold eye of the "Intelligence" all the curious net-work of the feelings and emotions, to be judged not by their nature, but their relations. The body, when dead, may stand this; the living soul cannot. And hence no set of men have the moral sense so perverted as these same casuists. Jesuitism, theoretical and practical, is the product of this method of making the soul a mere anatomical subject for the understanding; and therefore stands as a lesson and a warning.

Apart then from the radical error of making theology a science to be deduced from certain primary principles, or first truths, we object to Mr. Finney's work that it assumes as axioms

contested points of doctrine; and that it makes the mere understanding, as divorced from the other faculties, the law-giver and judge on all questions of moral and religious truth. The result is that he has produced a work, which though it exhibits singular ability for analysis and deduction, is false as to its principles and at variance with Scripture, experience, and the common consciousness of men. We feel on reading it just as a man feels who resigns himself to the arguments of an idealist who leads him step by step to the conclusion that there is no external world, that all things are nothing. Such a reader sees no flaw in the argument but feels no force in the conclusion. He knows it to be false, just as much after it has been proved to be true, as he did

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before. There is this difference between the cases however. They are disposed to smile at the world of phantasms to which idealism leads us; but where the conclusions arrived at are such as are urged in this book, we feel that all true religion, the very essence and nature of piety, are at stake. It is not a question, whether the world is real or phenomenal; but whether God or being is to be worshipped; whether sin is sin, and holiness is a good; whether religion consists in loving God for his divine excellence, or in purposing the happiness of moral agents; whether men are responsible for their feeling or only for their intentions; whether there is any other regeneration than a change of purpose, or any possibility of salvation for the imperfectly sanctified. These and similar questions obviously concern the very vitals of Christianity, and if Mr. Finney is right, it is high time the church knew that religion is something essentially different from what has been commonly supposed.

As it would be impossible to discuss the various questions presented in such a work as this, within the compass of a review, we propose to do little more than to state the principles which Mr. Finney assumes, and show that they legitimately lead to his conclusions. In other words, we wish to show that his conclusions are the best refutation of his premises. Our task would be much easier than it is, if there were any one radical principle to which his several axioms could be reduced, and from which the whole system could be evolved, but this is not the case. No one principle includes all the others, nor leads to all the conclusions here deduced; nor do the conclusions admit of being classed, and some referred to one principle and some to another, because the same conclusions often follow with equal certainty from different premises. We despair, therefore, of giving anything like unity to our exhibition of Mr. Finney's system, but we shall try not to do him injustice. We regard him as a most important laborer in the cause of truth. Principles which have been long current in this country, and which multitudes hold without seeing half their consequences, he has had the strength of intellect and will, to trace out to their legitimate conclusions, and has thus shown the borderers that there is no neutral ground; that they must either go forward to Oberlin or back to the common faith of Protestants.

We are not sure that all Mr. Finney's doctrines may not be

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traced to two fundamental principles, viz.: that obligation is limited by ability; and that satisfaction, happiness, blessedness, is the only ultimate good, the only thing intrinsically valuable. As to the former of these principles, his doctrine is that free will is one of the essential conditions of moral agency, and of course of moral obligation. By free will is meant "the power of choosing or refusing to choose in compliance with moral obligation in every instance. 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 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 which 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." P. 26.

"It should be observed that all acts of the will consist in choices or willings. These actions are generally regarded as consisting in choice and volition. By choice is intended the selection or choice of an end. By volition is intended the executive efforts of the will to secure the end intended. ... All intelligent choices or actions of the will, must consist either in the choice of an end or of means to secure that end. To deny this is the same as to deny that there is any object of choice. If the will acts at all, it wills, chooses. If it chooses, it chooses something—there is an object of choice. In other words, it chooses something for some reason, and that reason is truly the object of choice. Or at least, the fundamental reason for choosing a thing, is the object chosen." P. 44.

"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 moral obligation. For example: no man affirms, or can affirm his moral obligation to undo 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 can affirm, and indeed cannot but affirm his obligation to repent and obey God for the future, because he is conscious of affirming his ability to do this. Consciousness of the 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." P. 33.

Practicability is therefore an attribute of moral law. "That which the precept demands, must be possible to the subject. ... To talk of inability to obey moral law is to talk sheer nonsense." P. 4.

"By what authority do you affirm, that God requires any more of any moral agent, and of man in his present condition, than he is able to perform." P. 8. In the commands to love God with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, it is said, God "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." P. 8. "If a man has willingly remained in ignorance of God, is his ignorance a moral or natural inability? If it is a moral inability, he can instantly overcome it, by the right exercise of his own will. And nothing can be a moral inability that cannot be instantaneously removed by our own volition." P. 9.

"The will is always free to choose in opposition to desire. Thus every moral agent is as conscious of this as of his own existence. The desire is not free, but the choice to gratify it is and must be free." "Desire is constitutional. It is a phenomenon of the sensibility. It is a purely involuntary state of the mind, and can in itself produce no action, and can in itself have no moral character." Pp. 300, 301.

These extracts present with sufficient clearness Mr. Finney's doctrine on this point. With him it is a "first truth" or axiom

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that freedom of the will is essential to moral agency, moral obligation, and moral character; that free-will consists in the power to choose, in every instance, in conformity with moral obligation, and consequently that no man can be responsible for any thing but the acts of his will, or what is under the immediate control of the will. Before proceeding to the second general principle on which his system rests, it may be proper to remark, in reference to the extracts given above and the doctrine they inculcate. 1) That Mr. Finney obviously uses the word will, in its strict and limited sense. Every one is aware that the word is often used for everything in the mind not included under the category of the understanding. In this sense all mental affections, such as being pleased or displeased, liking and disliking, preferring, and so on, are acts of the will. In its strict and proper sense, it is the power of self-determination, the faculty by which we decide our own acts. This is the sense in which the word is uniformly and correctly used in the work before us. 2) Mr. Finney is further correct in confining causality to the will, i.e., in saying that our ability extends no further than to voluntary acts. We have no direct control over our mental states beyond the sphere of the will. We can decide on our bodily acts and on the course of our thoughts, but we cannot govern our emotions and affections by direct acts of volitions. We cannot feel as we will. 3) In confounding liberty and ability, or in asserting their identity, Mr.

Finney, as remarked on the preceding page, passes beyond the limits of first truths, and asserts that to be an axiom which the common consciousness of men denies to be a truth. 4) The fallacy of which he is guilty is very obvious. He transfers a maxim which is an axiom in one department, to another in which it has no legitimate force. It is a first truth that a man without eyes cannot be under an obligation to see, or a man without ears to hear. No blind man ever felt remorse for not seeing, nor any deaf man for not hearing. Within the sphere therefore of physical impossibilities, the maxim that obligation is limited by ability, is undoubtedly true. But it is no less obviously true that an inability which has its origin in sin, which consists in what is sinful, and relates to moral action, is perfectly consistent with Continued obligation. Such is the instinctive judgment of men, such is the testimony of conscience, such the plain doctrine of the Bible, which no vehemence or frequency of contradiction or

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denial, has ever been able to convince sinful men is not true They would often give the world to be assured they were not bound to be better than an act of the will would make them.

The second radical principle of Mr. Finney's system is: That enjoyment, happiness, blessedness is the only intrinsic good, which is to be chosen for its own sake. This is the only absolute ultimate good: other things are only relatively good as means to this end. Hence "the highest good of being as such" is the ultimate end to be chosen. As this doctrine is asserted or implied on every page of the book, we hardly know what particular assertion to quote. The following passages must suffice as a statement of the author's doctrine. "The well-being of God and the universe is the absolute and ultimate good, and therefore it should be chosen by every moral agent." "It is a first truth of reason, that whatever is intrinsically valuable should be chosen for that reason or as an end. It is and must be a first truth of reason, that whatever is intrinsically and infinitely valuable ought to be chosen as the ultimate end of existence by every moral agent." "The moral law then must require moral agents to will good, or that which is intrinsically valuable to God and the universe of sentient existences for its own sake or as an ultimate end." P. 43. "Good may be natural or moral. Natural good is synonymous with valuable. Moral good is synonymous with virtue." P. 45. "The law proposes to secure moral worth, not as an ultimate end, not as the ultimate and absolute good of the subject, but as the condition of his being rewarded with absolute good. The law-giver and the law propose ultimate and perfect satisfaction and blessedness as a result of virtue and of moral worth. This result must be the ultimate and absolute good." May it not with just as much reason be said a teacher proposes a good medal as the reward of proficiency in scholarship, therefore, the attainment of a good medal is the ultimate end of education? Our author, however, proceeds: "The reason why virtue and moral excellence or worth has been supposed to be a good in themselves, and intrinsically and absolutely valuable, is, that the mind necessarily regards them with satisfaction." P 47. "If neither the subject of moral excellence or worth nor any one else experienced any satisfaction in contemplating it—if it did not meet a demand of our being or of any being so as to afford the least satisfaction to any sentient existence, to whom

or to what would it be a good? ... We are apt to say it 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." P. 48. "This satisfaction is a good in itself. But that which produces this satisfaction, is in no proper sense a good in itself" "It is absurd to make that an ultimate good [viz.: virtue] and to affirm that to be intrinsically and ultimately valuable, whose whole value consists in its relations to an ultimate good" P. 49. "In what sense of the term good, can it be ultimate? Not in the sense of moral good or virtue. This has been so often shown that it needs not be repeated here. ... Good can be ultimate, only in the sense of natural and absolute, that is, that only can be an ultimate good, which is naturally and intrinsically valuable to being. ... I come now to state the point upon which issue is taken, to wit: That enjoyment, blessedness, or mental satisfaction is the only ultimate good." P. 120. "Of what value is the true, the right, the just, &c., aside from the pleasure or mental satisfaction resulting from them to sentient existences?" P. 122. "The Bible knows but one ultimate good. This, as has been said, the moral law has forever settled. The highest well-being of God, and the universe is the only end required by the law. ... 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 neighbor 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 an ultimate good. Disinterested benevolence to God and man is the whole of virtue, and every modification of love 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." P. 123 "The idea of good, or of the valuable, must exist before virtue can exist It is and must be the development of the idea of the valuable, that develops 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, regard it as intrinsically valuable, before it can have the idea of moral obligation to choose it as an end. That object of choice cannot be virtue

or moral beauty, for this would be to have the idea of virtue or moral beauty before the idea of moral obligation, or right or wrong. This were a contradiction." P. 125. That is, virtue consists in the choice of what is intrinsically valuable; hence the idea of the valuable must exist before virtue; hence virtue can not be the thing chosen, but the intrinsically valuable, which it is virtue to choose. Therefore enjoyment and not virtue must be the ultimate object of choice.

The theory, which maintains that there are several distinct grounds of moral obligation, that not only the good of being in general, but truth, justice, moral excellence, are each to be chosen for

its own sake, he says, "Virtually flatly contradicts the law of God and the repeated declaration that love to God and our neighbor is the whole of virtue. What, does God say that all law is fulfilled in one word, Love, that is, love to God and our neighbor; and shall a Christian philosopher overlook this, and insist that we ought to love not only God and our neighbor, but to will the right and the true, and the just and the beautiful, and multitudes of such like things for their own sakes? The law of God makes and knows 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? Nay verily." P. 147. "I might here insist upon the intrinsic absurdity of regarding right, justice, virtue, the beautiful as the ultimate good, instead of mental satisfaction or enjoyment; but I waive this point at present, and observe that either this theory resolves itself into the true one, namely, that the valuable to being, in whatsoever that value be found, is the sole foundation of moral obligation, or it is pernicious error. If it be not the true theory, it does not and cannot teach aught but error on the subject of moral law, moral obligation, and of course of morals and religion. It is either then, confusion and nonsense, or it resolves itself into the true theory just stated." P. 148.

From all this it is abundantly evident that the writer teaches, 1) That enjoyment, satisfaction, happiness, is the only intrinsic good to be chosen for its own sake. 2) That moral excellence is only a relative good having no value but as the means or condition of enjoyment.

On this doctrine we remark, 1) That it is readily admitted that happiness is a good. 2) That it is consequently obligatory

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on all moral agents to endeavor to promote it. 3) That the highest happiness of the universe, being an unspeakably exalted, and important end, to make its attainment the object of life is a noble principle of action. 4) Consequently this theory of moral obligation is inconceivably more elevated than that which makes self-love the ultimate principle of action, and our own happiness the highest object of pursuit. 5) That the error of the theory is making enjoyment the highest and the only intrinsic or real good. 6) That this error derives no countenance from the fact that the Bible represents love to God and love to our neighbor as the fulfilling of the law. To derive any argument from this source Mr. Finney must first take the truth of his theory for granted. To prove that all love is benevolence, it must be assumed that happiness is the only good. If love is vastly more than benevolence, if a disposition to promote happiness is only one and that one of the lowest forms of that comprehensive excellence which the Scriptures call love, his argument is worth nothing. In accordance with that meaning of the term, which universal usage has given it, any out-going of the soul, whether under the form of desire, affection, complacency, reverence, delight towards an appropriate object, is in the Bible called love. To squeeze all this down, and wire-draw it through one pin-hole, is as impossible as to change the nature of the human soul. Every man, not a slave to some barren theory of the understanding, knows that love to God is not benevolence; that it is approbation, complacency, delight in his moral excellence, reverence,

gratitude, devotion. The reason then why the Scriptures represent love as the fulfilling of the law, is twofold. First, because love to an infinitely perfect Being, involves in it approbation of all conceivable forms of moral excellence, and consequent Congeniality of soul with it under all those forms. He who really loves a God of truth, justice, purity, mercy, and benevolence, is himself truthful, just, holy, merciful, and kind. Secondly, because love to God and man will secure all obedience to the precepts of the law. We may admit, therefore, that love is the fulfilling of the law, without being sophisticated into believing or rather saying, that faith is love, justice is love, patience love, humility love. Nothing is more foreign to the whole character of the Bible, than to make it speak the language of a theory. It speaks the language of the common consciousness of men, expecting

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to be understood as men would understand each other. Who can believe that any man undisciplined by metaphysics would believe that faith or humility is benevolence, the love of being as such, willing happiness for its own sake? We promised, however, not to discuss Mr. Finney's principles. We propose to rely on the *reductio ad absurdum*, and make his doctrines the refutation of his principles.

The two principles to which all the important doctrines contained in this work, may be traced, are, First, that obligation is limited by ability; and secondly, that enjoyment, satisfaction, or happiness is the only ultimate good, which is to be chosen for its own sake.

If these principles are correct, then it follows, FIRST, that moral obligation, or the demands of the moral law can relate to nothing but intention, or the choice of an ultimate end. If that is right, all is right. The law can demand nothing more. That this is a fair sequence from the above principles is plain, as appears from the following statement of the case. The law can demand nothing but what is within the power of a moral agent. The power of such an agent extends no further than to the acts of the will. All the acts of the will are either choices of an end, or volitions designed to attain that end; the latter of course having no moral character except as they derive it from the nature of the end in view of the mind. Therefore all moral character attaches properly to the intention or ultimate choice which the agent forms.

This is one of the conclusions which Mr. Finney draws from the principles above stated, and which is perhaps more frequently and confidently asserted than any other in his book. "It is generally agreed that moral obligation respects strictly only the ultimate intention or choice of an end for its own sake." P. 26. "I have said that moral obligation respects the ultimate intention only. I am now prepared to say still further that this is a first truth of reason." P. 36. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, love. Now this cannot be true if the spirit of the law does not 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?" P. 31. "Let it be remembered that moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate

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end." P. 90. "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. ... It is right for him to intend the highest good of being as an end. If he honestly does this, he cannot, doing this, mistake his duty, for in doing this he really performs his whole duty." P. 149. "Moral character belongs solely to the ultimate intention of the mind, or to choice, as distinguished from volitions. P. 157. "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." P. 134. How strangely does this sound like the doctrine, the end sanctifies the means! Every thing depends on the intention; if that is right, all is right. We fear Mr. Finney has not recently read Pascal's Provincial Letters: a better book for distribution at Oberlin, we should be at a loss to select. When Pascal innocently begs his instructor in the mysteries of the new morality to explain to him how it was possible to reconcile with the gospel, many things which the Jesuits allowed, the venerable father answered: "Understand then that this wonderful principle consists in directing the intention, the importance of which in our system of morality, is such that I should almost venture to compare it with the doctrine of probability. You have already in passing seen some features of it, in a few of the maxims already mentioned; for when I showed you how servants might, with a safe conscience, manage certain troublesome messages, did you not observe that it was simply taking off the intention from the sin itself, and fixing it on the advantage to be gained? This is what we term directing the intention. You saw, at the same time, that those who gave money to obtain benefices, would be really guilty of simony, without giving some such turn to the transaction. But, that You may judge of other cases, let me now exhibit this grand expedient in all its glory, in reference to the subject of murder which it justifies in a thousand cases.' 'I already perceive,' replied Pascal, 'that in this way, one may do anything without exception.' 'You always go from one extreme to another,' returned the father, 'pray stop your impetuosity. To convince you that we do not permit everything, take this as a proof, that

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we never suffer the formal intention of sinning for the sake of sinning, and whoever persists in having no other design in his wickedness than wickedness itself, we instantly discard. ... When we cannot prevent the action, we at least aim to purify the intention. ... Do you understand me now?' 'O yes, perfectly well,' says Pascal, 'you allow men the external material action, and give to God the internal spiritual intention; and by this equitable division you aim to harmonize divine

and human laws.' " To prove that he correctly stated the principles of his society the father appeals first to Reginaldus, who says: "A warrior may instantly pursue a wounded enemy not indeed with the intention of rendering evil for evil, but to maintain his own honor." This is not exactly the direction of the intention Mr. Finney would prescribe, but we are only illustrating the principle. Again, Lessius says: "He who receives a blow must not indulge a spirit of revenge, but he may cherish a wish to avoid disgrace, and for this purpose repel the assault even with sword." "If your enemy be disposed to injure you," says Escobar, "you ought not to wish for his death through hatred, but you may to avoid injury." Hurtado de Mendoza says: "When a gentleman who is challenged to fight a duel is known not to be remarkably pious, but daily commits sins, without the least scruple, plainly evincing that his refusal to accept the challenge does not proceed from the fear of God but from timidity, he may be called a chicken and not a man. He may, in order to preserve his honor, proceed to the appointed place, not indeed with the express intention of fighting, but only of defending himself if his enemy should attack him." Sanchez goes still farther; for he not only allows a man to accept but to give a challenge, if he direct his intention aright and Escobar agrees with him in this. "It is allowable," says Molina, "to kill false witnesses brought against us." "According to our celebrate! Father Launey, it is lawful for priests and monks to kill others to prevent their design of injuriously calumniating them. A priest or monk is allowed to kill a calumniator who threatens to publish scandalous crimes of their society or themselves, if there exists no other means of prevention; as when just ready to propagate his malignities, if not instantly killed. For in such a case, as it would be lawful for a monk to kill a person who was desirous of taking away his life, so it is to kill him who wishes to take away

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his honor, or that of his fraternity, in the same manner as it is for the people of the world in general."

From these examples the doctrine of the Jesuits is very plain. Moral character pertains to the intention alone; and all other things are right or wrong as they proceed from a right or wrong intention. This is the doctrine by which they sapped the foundations of morals and social order, and which procured, more than any other cause, their indignant rejection from the civilized world. How does Mr. Finney's doctrine differ from theirs? On p. 134, he says, in the passages just quoted, "Let it be borne in mind [it is a matter at once plain and important] 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." The only difference here arises from the insertion of the word 'ultimate.' But we cannot see that this makes any real difference in the doctrine itself. Both parties (i.e., the Jesuits and Mr. Finney), agree that the intention must be right, and if that is right, every thing which proceeds from it is right. The former say that the honor and welfare of the church is the proper object of intention, Mr. Finney says, the highest good of being is the only proper object. The latter however may include the former, and the Jesuit may well say, that in intending the welfare of the church he intends the glory of God and the highest good of the

universe. In any event, the whole poison of the doctrine lies in the principle common to both, viz.: That whatever proceeds from a right intention is right. If this is so then the end sanctifies the means, and it is right to do evil, that good may come; which is Paul's *reductio ad absurdum*.

An objection so obvious and so fatal to his system could not escape Mr. Finney's sagacity. He frequently notices it, and pronounces it self-contradictory and absurd. On P. 124, he says, "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

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end without willing also the indispensable and therefore 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 and right, but holiness and universal conformity to the law of our being. As we said in a former lecture, 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 conditioned on holiness. It is therefore naturally impossible for a moral agent to be satisfied with the happiness or enjoyment of moral agents except on the condition of their holiness."

The objection is, that if moral character attaches only to intention, then it follows that if the intention is right all that proceeds from it, must be right, and consequently that the end sanctifies the means, no matter what those means in themselves may be. Mr. Finney's answer to the objection is, 1) That it is nonsense. 2) That it cannot bear against his doctrine because he teaches that enjoyment or happiness is the only proper object of intention. 3) That it is a law of reason that virtue is the condition of happiness. 4) And therefore, as it is impossible that a man should will the end without willing the means, it is impossible for him to will enjoyment without willing virtue which his reason tells him is its indispensable condition.

On this answer, which is substantially repeated in several parts of the work, we remark, 1) That it overlooks his own fundamental principle, viz.: that nothing is virtue but intending the highest good. There is no moral excellence in truth, justice, holiness, except so far as they are forms of that intention; anything therefore which is a form or expression of that intention, or as he says himself, that proceeds from it, is virtue. If therefore killing a man proceeds from that intention, it is a virtuous act. 2) Mr. Finney cannot say certain things are prohibited by the law of God, and are therefore wrong, no matter with what intention they are performed, because his doctrine is that law relates only to the intention; its authority extends no further. The will of God is not the foundation of any obligation. Here he has got into a deeper slough even than the Jesuits, for they hold that the law of God is not a mere declaration of what is Obligatory, and so far as we know

they never substitute obedience to the intelligence, as a synonymous expression with obedience to

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God. 3) Nor will it avail to say that if a man's intention is right, he cannot err as to the appropriate means of attaining it, because those means are infallibly revealed in the reason. For this is notoriously not the fact. The intelligence makes known only to a very limited extent, the means appropriate to secure the highest good. Hence this is a point on which men differ as much as on any other that could well be mentioned. 4) It is a favorite doctrine of Mr. Finney and a necessary consequence of the maxim, that obligation is limited by ability, that a man's responsibility is limited by the degree of knowledge, or light, which he possesses. Does it not then follow that if he has been perverted by education, or brought honestly to believe that persecution, private assassination, or any other abomination is an appropriate means to the greatest good, he is virtuous in employing those means? If the horrors of the French revolution were perpetrated with a right intention, with a purpose to promote happiness, they were lofty specimens of virtue, and Robespierre, Marat, and Danton must be enrolled as saints. Mr. Finney himself says: "No moral being can possibly blame or charge himself with any default, when he is conscious of honestly willing, or choosing, or 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." P. 162. He does not seem to have any conception of that lowest state of moral degradation of which the prophet speaks, when he says of the wicked, they put good for evil, and evil for good, sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet; or when a man is brought to the pass of saying, Evil, be thou my good. On the page last quoted he asserts that conscious honesty of intention, according to the light possessed, is entire obedience to moral law. And on P. 165, "If the intention is what it ought to be for the time being nothing can be morally wrong." This, as far as we can see, is the precise doctrine of the Jesuits. It is the doctrine which led to the justification of the murder of Henry the Fourth of France, of the massacre of the Huguenots, and of thousands of similar enormities. We mean no disrespect when we say it would be well for Mr. Finney to read the works of the Jesuit fathers; let him see what his principles come to in the hands of wicked men who are his equals in logical acumen and boldness, and know nothing of the restraints which his moral and religious feelings impose on him.

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We consider this a fair refutation. If the principle that obligation is limited by ability, leads to the conclusion, that moral character is confined to intention, and that again to the conclusion that where the intention is right nothing can be morally wrong, then the principle is false. Even if we could not detect its fallacy, we should know it could not be true. But we have already said the fallacy lies in applying a principle which is true in reference to physical incapacity, such as want

of sight, to an inability which, though natural in one sense, is as to its character moral, i.e., arises out of the moral state of the soul. A fallacy just as gross as it would be to argue that because two portions of matter cannot occupy at one time, the same portion of space, therefore two thoughts cannot co-exist in the same mind.

A SECOND doctrine which flows from Mr. Finney's principles and which characterizes his whole system, concerns the foundation of moral obligation. We have seen that he holds that obligation is limited to intention, but on what does that obligation rest? Why is a man bound to intend one thing rather than another? Mr. Finney answers this question by denying, 1st. That the will of God is the foundation of this obligation. Against this doctrine he urges such reasons as the following, 1) "This theory makes God's willing, commanding, the foundation of the obligation to choice or intent an ultimate end. If this is so then the willing of God is the end to be intended. For the end to be intended and the reason of the obligation are identical." 2) God himself is under moral obligation, and therefore there is some reason independent of his own will, which imposes upon him the obligation to will as he does. 3) If the will of God is the foundation of obligation, he can by willing it change virtue into vice. 4) If the will of God is the foundation of moral obligation, we have no standard by which to judge of the moral character of his acts. 5) The will of no being can be law. Moral law is an idea of the reason.

Mr. Finney's book is made up of half-truths. It is true that the will of God divorced from his infinite wisdom and excellence, mere arbitrary will, is not the foundation of moral obligation. But the preceptive will of God, is but the revelation of his nature, the expression of what that nature is, sees to be right, anti approves. It is also true that some things are right because God wills or commands them, and that he wills other things because they are right. Some of his precepts, therefore, are founded on his own immutable nature, others on the peculiar relations of

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man, and others again upon his simple command. We can have no higher evidence that a thing is right, than the command of God, and his command creates an obligation to obedience, whether we can see the reason of the precept or not, or whether it have any reason apart from his good pleasure. Mr. Finney is right so far as saying that the will of God, considered as irrational groundless volition, is not the ultimate foundation of moral obligation, but his will as the revelation of the infinitely perfect nature of God, is not merely the rule, but ground of obligation to his creatures. So that their obedience does not terminate on the universe, nor on Reason, in the abstract, but upon God, the personal Reason, the infinitely perfect, and because he is the infinitely perfect.

2nd. Our author denies that the divine moral excellence is the ground of moral obligation. This he pronounces to be absurd Moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate end. The reason of the obligation and the end chosen must be identical. Therefore, what is chosen as an end, must be chosen for its own sake. But virtue being chosen as a means to an end, viz.: enjoyment, cannot

be the end chosen. This of course follows from the principle that enjoyment is the only intrinsic good, the only thing that should be chosen for its own sake, and other things only as they are the means or conditions of attaining that end.

We should like to ask, however, how Mr. Finney knows that happiness is a good, and a good in itself to be chosen for its own sake? If he should answer, that is a first truth of reason; is it not a first truth of reason, that moral excellence is a good, and a far higher good to be chosen for its own sake? It is degraded and denied, if it be chosen simply as a means of enjoyment. If the idea of moral excellence, is not a primary, independent one, then we have no moral nature, we have a sentient and rational nature; a capacity for enjoyment, and the power of perceiving and adapting means to its attainment. We may be wise or foolish, but the ideas of wrong as wrong, and right as right, are lost. They are merged into those of wise and unwise. If God and reason affirm obligation, they affirm that virtue and vice are not terms to express the relations of certain things to enjoyment they affirm that the one is a good in itself and the other an evil in itself; and this is the loudest affirmation in the human soul, and woe to the man in whom it ceases to be heard. No sophistry

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can render the conscience permanently insensible to the authority of God asserting that virtue is to be chosen for its own sake, and that it is not chosen at all, unless it be so chosen. Let this not be supposed to conflict with the assertion that the will of God is also the ground of obligation. For what is the will of God? what is God, but the sum of all excellence, almighty self conscious reason and holiness. In choosing virtue for its own sake we choose God. It is one of Mr Finney's hobbies that the ground of obligation must be one and simple. If it is the will of God, it is not his moral excellence; if his moral excellence it is not his will. This, however, may be safely referred to the common judgment of men. They are conscious that even entirely distinct grounds of obligation may concur; as the nature of the thing commanded, the authority of him who gives the command, and the tendency of what is enjoined. If these are considerations which affect the reason, they bind the conscience. They are the bond or ligament which "binds a moral agent to the moral law."

3rd. Mr. Finney's own theory of the foundation of moral obligation is of course involved in his principle that enjoyment is the only intrinsic good. The fourth lecture is devoted to the consideration of this subject. In that lecture, after arguing to prove that the highest well-being of God and the universe is the ultimate and absolute good, and that their highest good, must be natural good or happiness, and not moral good or virtue, he comes to the conclusion that the intrinsic value of happiness is the sole foundation of the obligation to will it as the ultimate end. The conclusions from this doctrine, as stated on page 148, are, 1) "Upon this theory moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate end. 2) This end is an 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 intended with all the heart and 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. 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."

We briefly remark on this theory, that it changes the whole nature of religion. Our whole and sole obligation is to the universe, and to God only as one of the constituent members of universal

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being. There is and can be no allegiance to God as God and hence Mr. Finney substitutes perpetually, "obedience to the Intelligence," to an "idea of the Reason," as synonymous with obedience to God, or the moral law. In his whole system and of necessity God is subordinate to the universe. Again, it is of the essence of religion that love to God should include congeniality, complacency, reverence, and delight in his divine perfections. In other words, that his moral excellence should be loved and chosen for its own sake. Mr Finney's system will not allow him to attach any other meaning to love than "good-will," i.e., willing good or happiness to any one. Love of God, therefore, can, according to his doctrine, be nothing more than willing his happiness; and this obligation is entirely independent of his moral excellence. He admits that his moral goodness is the condition of our willing his actual happiness, but it is not the ground of our obligation to love him, or to will his good. As far as our feelings are concerned, there ought to be no difference between God and Satan—we are bound to will the happiness of each according to their intrinsic value—good-will being the whole of virtue, and good-will having no respect to the moral character of its object, there is no more virtue in loving God (willing his good) than in loving Satan.<sup>6</sup> No one of course denies that benevolence is a virtue, but the slavery to system, to the miserable logic of the understanding, consists in asserting that it is the only virtue; that love to Christ, does not differ in its nature from benevolence to the devil, nor the love of the brotherhood from benevolence to the wicked.<sup>7</sup> As the essential nature of religion is changed,

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perverted, and destroyed by this theory, so also of course is the nature of sin. But this may be more appropriately noticed under the following head:

A third doctrine which flows from the two radical principles of this book, is that there is no moral character in the feelings or affections. This, indeed, is necessarily involved in what has already been said, but it is in itself so important, and so characteristic a part of the system, that it deserves a more distinct exhibition. If obligation is limited by ability, and therefore confined to acts of the will; and if the affections are neither acts of the will nor under its immediate control, it follows of course that we cannot be responsible for them, they lie "without the pale of legislation

and morality." Again, if enjoyment is only intrinsic good, then all virtue consists in benevolence, or in willing the happiness of sentient beings, and consequently there is no virtue in any state of the affections. So the same conclusion is reached in two different ways.

This consequence of his principles Mr. Finney presents on almost every page of his book. Moral obligation he says cannot directly extend to any "states of the sensibility. I have already remarked that we are conscious that our feelings are not voluntary but involuntary states of the mind. Moral obligation therefore cannot directly extend to them." P. 35. They have no more of a moral nature than outward actions. A man is responsible for his outward acts only as they are determined by the will, and in like manner he is responsible for his feelings only as they are produced or cherished by the will, or rather as the will yields to them. The whole of sin consists in allowing the will to be determined by them. In the feelings themselves there is nothing good or bad. "If any outward action or state of the feeling exists in opposition to the intention or choice of the mind, it cannot by possibility, have moral character. Whatever is beyond the control of a moral agent, he cannot be responsible for" P. 164. And therefore, "if from exhaustion, or any cause beyond our control the emotion does not arise from the consideration of the subject which is calculated to produce it, we are no more responsible for the weakness or absence of the emotion,

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than we should be for the want or weakness of motion in our muscles, when we willed to move them." P. 165. Of course all self-condemnation for coldness, or hardness of heart, or want of right affections towards God, rests on a false philosophy, that is, arises from overlooking "that in which moral character consists." "Love may, and often does exist, as every one knows, in the form of a mere feeling or emotion. ... This emotion or feeling, as we are aware, is purely an involuntary state of the mind; because it is a phenomenon of the sensibility, and of course a passive state of mind, it has in itself no moral character." P. 213. "Gratitude as a mere feeling or phenomenon of the sensibility, has no moral character." P. 278. The same thing is said of benevolence, compassion, mercy, conscientiousness, &c., &c. The doctrine is: "That no state of the sensibility has any moral character in itself." P. 521.

On this subject we would remark, 1) That there is a form of truth in this as in most other parts of this system; but a half-truth when presented as the whole, and especially when accompanied with the denial of the other elements which enter into the proposition, becomes a dangerous error. It is true that character depends more upon fixed purposes and principles, than it does on feelings. It is also true that the tenor of a man's life, as evincing his governing principles, is a better test of his character than mere emotions. But then what determines these fixed purposes of the soul? Unless they are determined by moral and religious considerations, they are not themselves either moral or religious. Unless our fixed determination to obey God, to devote ourselves to the promotion of his glory, flows from a due appreciation of his excellence, and from a sense of our obligations to him, it is not a religious purpose. And unless our determination that it shall be



Christ for us to live, arises from an apprehension of the glory of his person and of our relation to him as the purchase of his blood, it is not a Christian purpose. It may be philanthropic or benevolent, but it is neither religious nor Christian. But 2) The Scriptures, our own consciousness, and the universal judgment of men, recognize those affections which terminate on moral objects as having a moral character, and therefore any theory Which denies this must be false. The love of God, is essentially the love of the divine perfections, complacency and delight in him as the infinitely good, which leads to adoration alla Obedience. It can hardly be denied that this is the constant

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representation of the Bible, and especially of its devotional parts. The Psalmist speaks of himself as longing after God as a hart pants for the cooling waters. Whom have I in heaven, he exclaims, but thee, and there is none on earth I desire besides thee. All this Mr. Finney pronounces delusion or selfishness. "When a moral agent," he says, "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 and delight in the sensibility But this being altogether an involuntary state of the mind, has no moral character." P. 224. "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." P. 224. "It is remarkable to what extent religion is regarded as a phenomenon of the sensibility and as consisting in feeling." P 225. "Nothing is of greater importance than forever to understand that religion is a phenomenon of the will." P. 227. The legitimate and sufficient answer to all this is that it contradicts the common consciousness of men. They know it cannot be true. If Mr. Finney says it is a first truth of reason, that it is right to will the highest good, which we admit, we say, it is a first truth of reason that compassion, benevolence, love of God, conscientiousness, gratitude, devotion, reverence, humility, repentance, as states of feeling, have a moral character. He is forced to admit that this is the common judgment, and recognized in what he calls "the popular language of the Bible." A philosophy which leads to a denial of this plain fact of consciousness, this first truth of reason, is a false philosophy.

It is obvious that a theory which reduces all virtue and religion to a simple act of the will, must lead to the same view as to the nature of sin. If virtue has no place in the affections, neither can sin have. If all religion is centred in one intention, all sin must be confined to another. If all virtue is benevolence, all sin is selfishness But as benevolence is not an affection, but a purpose, so selfishness must be an intention. It cannot consist, the author tells us, in malevolence; "it cannot consist in any state of the intelligence or sensibility, for these, as we have seen, are involuntary and depend on acts of the will." P. 286 "It must consist in the choice of self-gratification as an end." Or "sin

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consists in being governed by the sensibility instead of being governed by the law of God as it lies revealed in the reason." P. 287. This is a frequently recurring definition. "Benevolence is yielding the will up unreservedly to the demands of the intelligence." P. 275. "As the will must either follow the law of reason, or the impulses of the sensibility, it follows that moral agents are shut up to the necessity of being selfish or benevolent." P. 290. "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." P. 290. Of course it makes no manner of difference what the nature of the feeling is that determines the will. The sin does not lie in the nature of the feeling, but in the will's being determined by any feeling. "It matters not what kind of desire it is, if it is desire that governs the will, this is selfishness." P. 301.<sup>8</sup> It may be a desire of our own salvation, the desire of holiness, of the salvation of others, of the good of the world, of the glory of God, of the triumphs of the Lord Jesus. It matters not. It is just as selfish and as wicked to have the will determined by such desires, as by avarice, envy, or malice. "The choice of any thing because it is desired, is selfishness and sin." P. 305. "Some writers have fallen into the strange mistake of making virtue to consist in the gratification of certain desires, because, as they say, those 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 neighbors' happiness, and the public happiness, is virtue, because these are good desires, while the selfish desires are evil. Now this 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 terminate on their correlated objects. To yield the will to the control of any one of them, no matter which, is sin." P. 503 Mr. Finney is beautifully consistent in all this, and in the consequences which of necessity flow from his doctrine. He admits that if a man pays his debts from a sense of justice, or feeling of conscientiousness, he is therein and just as

wicked as if he stole a horse.<sup>9</sup> Or if a man preaches the gospel from a desire to glorify God and benefit his fellow men, he is just as wicked for so doing as a pirate.<sup>10</sup> We may safely challenge Hurtado de Mendoza, Sanchez, or Molina to beat that.

It passes our comprehension to discover why the will being determined by the desire to honor God is selfishness and sin, while its being determined by the desire of the highest good is virtue. It is as much determined by desire in the one case as in the other. Mr. Finney says indeed that in the one case it is determined by the intelligence, and in the other, by the sensibility. But reason as much dictates that we should honor God, as that we should seek the happiness of the universe. And the will is as much decided by the intelligence in the one case as in the other. The only way

in which the intelligence can determine the will is, that the truth which the intelligence contemplates, whether it be the value of the well-being of the universe, or the excellence of God, awakens the corresponding desire or feeling of right, fitness, or obligation, and that determines the will. If the will is not determined by a desire to secure the happiness of the universe, what benevolence is there in such a determination?

Mr. Finney's principles lead him to assert that there is no difference in their feelings between the renewed and the unrenewed, the sinner and the saint. "The sensibility of the sinner," he says, "is susceptible of every kind and degree of feeling that is possible to saints." P. 521. He accordingly goes on to show that sinners may desire sanctification, delight in the truth, abhor sin, have complacency in good men, entertain feelings of love and gratitude to God, and in short, be, as to feeling and conduct, exactly what saints are. The only essential difference is in the will, in their ultimate purpose or intention. The sinner's ultimate intention may be to promote the glory of God, from a sense of duty, or from appreciation of the loveliness of moral

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excellence, and he be no better than a pirate; if his ultimate end is to promote happiness because happiness is intrinsically valuable, he is a saint.<sup>11</sup>

A FOURTH doctrine flowing from Mr. Finney's fundamental principles, is that every man must, at any given moment, be either totally depraved, i.e., as wicked as it is possible for him, with his knowledge, to be, or perfectly holy. This is a conclusion which it would appear he finds some difficulty in persuading his friends to adopt. They receive the premises, they admit the validity of many other sequences from them, but this is rather more than they are prepared for. Mr. Finney is right, and he knows it. He has them in his power, and he commands them to follow wherever he and the "Intelligence" lead. If the Intelligence deceives us here, we can never know truth from error. If obligation is limited by ability; if ability extends only to acts of the will; if the acts of the will are confined to the choice of ends and means; and if the choice of means has no moral character but from the nature of the end chosen, it follows that all morality is confined to the choice of an end. If the right end is chosen, the agent discharges his whole duty; he fulfills the single command of law and reason. If he chooses the wrong end, he commits all the sin of which he is capable. The only respect in which one moral agent can be either better or worse than another, is as one has more ability than another. A child has not the knowledge or strength of a man, nor a man of an angel. It is not required, therefore, of the child to have so high an estimate of the value of "the good of being," as a man should have, nor of a man that he should have the comprehensive and consequent strength of intention of an angel. If ability limits obligation, all that can be required is, that a moral agent should will the highest good with an intensity proportioned to his honest conviction of its value. That is, "with conscious honesty of intention." This is all an angel can do, and it is perfection

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in him. It is all a converted pirate can do, and it is perfection in him.

Again, if happiness or enjoyment be the only real good, to intend the highest enjoyment of sentient beings is the whole of virtue, to intend our own gratification is the whole of sin. It is impossible that these intentions should co-exist in the mind. If a man intends the one, he does not intend the other. If all morality centres in this ultimate intention, he must, therefore, at any given moment, be perfectly sinful or perfectly holy. This is a severe dose of logic, but Mr. Finney will not tolerate even a wry face in swallowing it.

"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 absurdity 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. 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." P. 310. This is sound logic, and therefore we must either admit that every man is either perfectly holy or entirely sinful, at any given time, or we must deny that moral obligation is confined to intention; and if we deny that, we must of course admit, that feelings or states of the sensibility may have a moral character, and if we concede that point, we must concede that obligation is not limited by ability, and then the great Diana of the Ephesians has fallen.

This doctrine of the simplicity or unity of moral character is very prominently presented in this work. In Lecture xi. the main proposition contended for is: "Moral character is wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time." P. 156. In Lecture xxviii., he says: "This conducts us to the conclusion or truth to be demonstrated, namely: That moral agents are at all times either as holy or sinful as with their knowledge they can be." P. 354.

We have little space to devote to remarks on this subject, and

surely little need be said. The doctrine of course rests on a false apprehension of the nature of sin and holiness, and of the grounds and extent of our obligations. Our own conscience and the Bible teach us that we are bound to be completely conformed to the law or image of God; that in whatever respect or degree we fall short of that standard of excellence, we sin; and that the law of God exhibits what rational beings ought to be, not what they can be, not what they have

plenary power at any moment to make themselves, but what they would be and would at all times have power to be, were it not for their sinfulness. No man, according to the standard of conscience and of the Bible, is perfect, who is not perfectly like Christ, or has not attained to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" who has not the same love, reverence, humility, patience, long-suffering, mercy, that were in him. It shocks the moral sense of men to say that a pirate, with all his darkness of mind as to God, and divine things, with all his callousness, with all the moral habits of a life of crime, becomes perfectly holy, by a change of will, by forming a new intention, by mere honesty of purpose. If the demands of God thus rapidly sink with the increasing depravity of men, as has often been remarked, the shortest road to perfection is the most debasing course of crime. 2) Need any reader of the Bible be reminded that the consciousness of sin, of present corruption and unworthiness, is one of the most uniform features of the experience of God's people as there recorded? 3) Or is there any one point in which Christian experience in all ages of the church is more strongly pronounced, than in this sense of sin and consequently humiliation under it? In opposition to the common consciousness of men, to the plainest teachings of the Scriptures, and to the experience of the people of God, we are; called upon to believe that "honest intention" is the whole of duty and religion; if we have that, we are perfect. If this is a false doctrine, no one can fail to see what its effects must be. If a man thinks himself perfect, if he says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, his situation is most deplorable. Mr. Finney is well aware that his doctrine changes the whole nature of religion; and hence his frequent denunciations of the false philosophy and pretended orthodoxy, by which religion has been perverted and the church corrupted. And certain it is that religion,

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as represented by him, is something exceedingly different from what good people in all ages have commonly regarded it. We should have to provide a new language, new hymns, new prayers, and especially a new Bible. It is useless however to continue these remarks. If a man can believe that every human being is either perfectly sinful or perfectly holy, he can believe anything. And a theory that leads to this conclusion, is thereby exploded, and its fragments are not worth looking after.

Of course Mr. Finney teaches that full or perfect obedience to the moral law is the condition of salvation, now and ever: There is not a passage in the Bible, he says, which intimates that men are saved or justified "upon conditions short of personal holiness or a return to full obedience to the moral law." P. 366. Any man, therefore, conscious of coming short of perfection, has sure evidence that he is not justified. "As the moral law is the law of nature, it is absurd to suppose that entire obedience to it should not be the unalterable condition of salvation." P. 364. Regeneration therefore is declared to be "AN INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE FROM ENTIRE SINFULNESS TO ENTIRE HOLINESS." P. 500.

This work has interested us principally on two accounts. First, as an illustration of the abject slavery to which the understanding, when divorced from the Bible, and from the other constituents of our nature, reduces those who submit themselves to its authority. One should think that history furnished examples enough of the consequences of following such a guide, to deter others from repeating the experiment. Secondly, Mr. Finney's book is the best refutation that can well be given of the popular theology current in many parts of our country. How long have we been accustomed to hear that inability is incompatible with obligation, and that happiness is the highest good. Grant Mr. Finney these principles, and he need ask you no further favors. You must follow him to all his conclusions. He has had the strength and the boldness to carry them out to their legitimate consequences. And here they are. You must either take them, or give up the principles whence they flow. We heartily thank our author for having brought matters to this alternative.

## Notes

1. The remarks quoted in the text are made in immediate reference to the author's doctrine that "moral character is always wholly right or wholly wrong," or, that every moral agent is always either perfectly free from sin or totally depraved; or, that "they are at all times as sinful or holy as with their knowledge they can be." P. 554.
2. On p. 499 after referring to Dr. Griffin's assertion that until the heart is changed by the Holy Spirit, the gospel excites its enmity to God, Mr. Finney exclaims, "O orthodoxy, falsely so galled, how absurd and false thou art; what an enemy thou art to God; what a stumbling-block to man; what a leaven of unrighteousness and hell is such a dogma as this!"
3. We were struck with an amusing illustration of Mr. Finney's reigning passion, in the last number of the Oberlin Quarterly Review. It seems a physician, Dr. Jennings has written a medical work, which he submitted to Mr. Finney for his inspection. The latter gentleman tells the Doctor that he has long been convinced that there must be some a priori method in medicine; some self-evident principle, from which the whole science of disease and cure may be logically deduced, and he encourages his friend in his attempts to discover and establish that principle. All patients have reason to rejoice that Mr. Finney is not a physician. To be doctored on a priori principles, would be as bad for the body, as it is for the soul to be dosed with a priori theology.
4. Kant's favorite maxim, Ich soil, also, kann ich, for which Julius Mueller would substitute, sollte freilich konnen, aber ich kann nicht. Muller's Lehre von der Sunde, vol. ii., p. 116.
5. Kirchengeschichte, B. ii., p. 1259
6. In answer to the objection that we are under obligation "to love God because he is good, and that this affirmation has no reference to the good of God," he answers, Such an affirmation if it is made is most nonsensical. What is it to love God? Why, as is agreed, it is not to exercise a mere emotion of complacency in him. It is to will something to him," which of course is happiness. P. 64. "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? It cannot be a mere emotion of complacency, for emotions be. rig involuntary states of mind and mere phenomena of the sensibility are without the pale of legislation and morality "P. 91. The moral perfections of God do not even Crease our obligation to love him. "We are under infinite obligation to love God and will his good with all our power because of the intrinsic value of his well-being, to whether he is sinful or holy. Upon condition that he is holy, we are under obligation will his actual blessedness, but certainly we are under obligation to will it with '°; 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 may be." P. 93

7. Hence Mr. Finney says, "The command is, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This says nothing about the character of my neighbor. it is the value of his interests, of his well-being, that the law requires me to regard. It does not require me to love my righteous neighbor merely, nor to love my righteous neighbor better than I do my wicked neighbor." P. 95.

8. The sinner may "feel deeply malicious and revengeful feelings towards God; but does not consist in these feelings or necessarily imply them. P 296.

9. He may be prevented (committing commercial injustice) 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." P. 317.

10. 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. . . . Whichever course he takes, he takes it for precisely the same reason; and with the same degree of light it must involve the same degree guilt." P. 366.

11 Whether he [the unrenewed man] preach and pray, or rob and plunder upon the high seas, he does it only for one end, that is, for precisely the same reason, [viz. to gratify some feeling ;] and of course his sinfulness is complete in the sense that it can only be varied by varying light. This I know is contrary to the 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." P. 355. On the same page we are taught, that if a man abstains from any thing "because it is wicked" it is selfish, because the will is determined by "phrenological conscientiousness."

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How Charles Finney's Theology Ravaged the Evangelical Movement. Copyright © 1998, 1999 by Phillip R. Johnson. All rights reserved. Finney's ministry was founded on duplicity from the beginning. He obtained his license to preach as a Presbyterian minister by professing adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith. But he later admitted that he was almost totally ignorant of what the document taught. Charles g. finney, Professor of theology in the oberlin collegiate institute, ohio, america. The whole work revised, enlarged, and partly re-written by the author, during his late visit to england. Edited and revised, with an introduction, by the. The only source for these lectures came from the printed 1851 English edition of SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY by Charles Finney. This is 100% Finney with no deletions or additions. This version has been out of print for over 150 years. Read Lectures on Systematic Theology from author C.G. Finney. Find more Christian classics for theology and Bible study at Bible study tools. Please enter your email address associated with your Salem All-Pass account, then click Continue. We'll send you an email with steps on how to reset your password.