

Views of Sanctification

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney's sermon explores the meaning, implications, and attainability of Sanctification in the Christian life.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Charles Finney discusses the concept of sanctification, emphasizing that it is a state of complete consecration to God, which is attainable in this life. He distinguishes between entire sanctification, which involves the full devotion of one's being to God, and permanent sanctification, which is a continuous state of holiness. Finney clarifies what entire sanctification does not imply, such as the annihilation of human traits or the impossibility of future sin, and stresses the importance of understanding the law of God as the standard for holiness. He encourages believers to pursue this state of sanctification through reliance on God's grace and the indwelling of Christ, while also acknowledging the ongoing need for vigilance and prayer.

Transcript

PREFACE.

The substance of this treatise has formerly appeared in the Oberlin Evangelist, in the form of a course of lectures. Its publication in a more permanent form is thought by many to be important, and in preparing it for the press, I have been obliged, for want of time, to suffer it to remain very nearly in the same form in which it at first appeared, with only a few such additions as I have been able to make under the pressure of other and multiplied engagements. These lectures were originally prepared in great haste, amid the labors and responsibilities of a powerful revival of religion, in which I was at the time employed by the Great Head of the Church. They were sent to the press from a rough draft, as it was entirely out of my power to re-write and throw them into a more acceptable form.

This treatise contains but a skeleton view of the subject, to which very extensive additions might be made, and perhaps profitably made, had I time to bestow upon such a labor.

I have hoped to receive such suggestions concerning the lectures as they appeared in the Evangelist, either from those who oppose or maintain the doctrine advocated in them, as would enable me, should they be called for in a book form, to make such explanations, answer such objections, and make such

additions or subtractions, as the interests of truth might demand. As, however, I have been able to gain no additional light upon the subject from any of these sources, and have heard or seen but very few things worthy of notice in respect to them, I give them to the public, as I have said, almost entirely as they were at first written.

As I am not at all interested in their sale, and have nothing to hope or fear in respect to loss or gain in the event of their publication, in a pecuniary point of view, it matters nothing to me whether they are read or not, any farther than the cause of truth is concerned. For the sake of truth alone, I at first wrote them. For the sake of what I regard to be truth alone, I have consented to their publication in this form.

I commit the little treatise to the Great Head of the Church. And if these thoughts can be made instrumental in promoting his glory, and the interests of his kingdom, I shall feel myself happy to have had the honor of communicating thoughts which are owned and blessed of him.

THE AUTHOR.

SANCTIFICATION

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."--1 Thess. 5:23, 24.

In discussing the subject of Sanctification, I design to pursue the following order:

I. DEFINE THE MEANING OF THE TERM, SANCTIFICATION.

II. WHAT I UNDERSTAND BY ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

III. NOTICE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ENTIRE AND PERMANENT SANCTIFICATION.

IV. SHOW WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

VI. SHOW THAT A STATE OF ENTIRE AND PERMANENT SANCTIFICATION IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE.

VII. ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS.

VIII. SHOW WHEN IT IS ATTAINABLE.

IX. HOW IT IS ATTAINABLE.

It will be seen at once, that this outline is sufficiently extensive to fill a large volume, should I protract the discussion as I easily and perhaps profitably might. My design is to condense what I have to say as much as possible, and yet preserve sufficient perspicuity. I shall endeavor not to be tedious. And yet I hope to be understood, and to be able to "commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." I will,

I. Define the term Sanctification.

Here let me remark, that a definition of terms in all discussions is of prime importance. Especially is this true of this subject. I have observed that almost without an exception, those who have written on this subject dissenting from the views entertained here, do so upon the ground that they understand and define the terms, Sanctification, and Christian Perfection, differently from what we do. Every one gives his own definition, varying materially from others and from what we understand by the terms. And then they go on professedly opposing the doctrine as inculcated here. Now this is not only utterly unfair, but palpably absurd. If I oppose a doctrine inculcated by another man, I am bound to oppose what he really holds. If I misrepresent his sentiments, "I fight as one that beateth the air." I have been amazed at the diversity of definitions that have been given to the terms Christian Perfection, Sanctification, &c.; and to witness the diversity of opinion as to what is, and what is not, implied in these terms. One objects wholly to the use of the term Christian Perfection, because in his estimation it implies this and that and the other thing, which I do not suppose are at all implied in it. Another objects to our using the term Sanctification, because that implies, according to his understanding of it, certain things that render its use improper. Now it is no part of my design to dispute about the use of words. I must however use some terms; and I ought to be allowed to use Bible language, in its Scriptural sense as I understand it. And if I should sufficiently explain my meaning and define the sense in which I use the terms, this ought to suffice. And I beg that nothing more nor less may be understood by the language I use than I profess to mean by it. Others may, if they please, use the same terms and give a different definition of them. But I have a right to hope and expect, if they feel called upon to oppose what I say, that they will bear in mind my definition of the terms, and not pretend, as some have done, to oppose my views, while they have only differed from me in their definition of the terms used, giving their own definition varying materially and I might say infinitely from the sense in which I use the same terms, and then arraying their arguments to prove that according to their definition of it, Sanctification is not really attainable in this life, when no one here or any where else, that I ever heard of, pretended that in their sense of the term, it ever was or ever will be attainable in this life, and I might add, or in that which is to come.

Sanctification is a term of frequent use in the Bible. Its simple and primary meaning is a state of consecration to God. To sanctify is to set apart to a holy use--to consecrate a thing to the service of God. A state of sanctification is a state of consecration, or a being set apart to the service of God. This is plainly both the Old and the New Testament use of the term.

II. What is entire Sanctification.

By entire sanctification, I understand the consecration of the whole being to God. In other words it is that state of devotedness to God and his service, required by the moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more. Nothing more or less can possibly be Perfection or entire Sanctification, than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them. And nothing can possibly be perfection in any being short of this, nor can there possibly be any thing above it.

III. The distinction between entire and permanent Sanctification.

That a thing or a person may be for the time being wholly consecrated to God, and afterwards desecrated or diverted from that service, is certain. That Adam and "the angels who kept not their first estate" were entirely sanctified and yet not permanently so, is also certain.

By permanent sanctification, I understand then a state not only of entire but of perpetual, unending consecration to God.

IV. What is not implied in entire Sanctification.

As the law of God is the standard and the only standard by which the question in regard to what is not, and what is implied in entire Sanctification, is to be decided, it is of fundamental importance that we understand what is and what is not implied in entire obedience to this law. It must be apparent to all that this inquiry is of prime importance. And to settle this question is one of the main things to be attended to in this discussion. The doctrine of the entire sanctification of believers in this life, can never be satisfactorily settled until it is understood. And it cannot be understood until it is known what is and what is not implied in it. Our judgment of our own state or of the state of others, can never be relied upon till these inquiries are settled. Nothing is more clear than that in the present vague unsettled views of the Church upon this question, no individual could set up a claim to having attained this state without being a stumbling block to the Church. Christ was perfect, and yet so erroneous were the notions of the Jews in regard to what constituted perfection, that they thought him possessed with a devil instead of being holy as he claimed to be. It certainly is impossible that a person should profess this state without being a stumbling block to himself and to others unless he and they clearly understand what is not and what is implied in it. I will state then what is not implied in a state of entire sanctification, as I understand the law of God. The law as epitomized by Christ, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," I understand to lay down the whole duty of man to God and to his fellow creatures. Now the questions are, what is not, and what is implied in perfect obedience to this law. Vague notions in regard to these questions seem to me to have been the origin of much error on the subject of entire sanctification. To settle this question it is indispensable that we have distinctly before our minds just rules of legal interpretation. I will therefore lay down some first principles in regard to the interpretation of law, in the light of which, I think we may safely proceed to settle these questions.

Rule 1. Whatever is inconsistent with natural justice is not and cannot be law.

2. Whatever is inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is contrary to natural justice and therefore cannot be law.

3. That which requires more than man has natural ability to perform, is inconsistent with his nature and relations and therefore is inconsistent with natural justice, and of course is not law.

4. Law then must always be so understood and interpreted as to consist with the nature of the subjects, and their relations to each other and to the law giver. Any interpretation that makes the law to require more or less than is consistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is a virtual setting aside of law, or the same as to declare that it is not law. No authority in heaven or on earth can make that law, or obligatory upon moral agents, which is inconsistent with their nature and relations.

5. Law must always be so interpreted as to cover the whole ground of natural right or justice. It must be so understood and explained as to require all that is right in itself, and therefore immutably and unalterably right.

6. Law must be so interpreted as not to require any thing more than is consistent with natural justice or with the nature and relations of moral beings. Whatever will not bear such a construction is not law.

7. Of course laws are never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attributes or strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess. Take for illustration the second commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The simple meaning of this commandment seems to be that we are to regard and treat every person and interest according to its relative value. Now we are not to understand this commandment as expressly or impliedly requiring us to know in all cases the exact relative value of every person and thing in the universe: for this would imply the possession of the attribute of omniscience by us. No mind short of an omniscient one can have this knowledge. The commandment then must be so understood as only to require us to judge with candor of the relative value of different interests, and treat them according to their value so far as we understand it. I repeat the rule therefore. Laws are never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attribute or strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess.

8. Law is never to be so interpreted as to require that which is naturally impossible on account of our circumstances. E.g.: The first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c." is not to be so interpreted as to require us to make God the constant and sole object of attention, thought, and affection, for this would not only be plainly impossible in our circumstance but manifestly contrary to our duty.

9. Law is never to be so interpreted as to make one requirement inconsistent with another; e.g. if the first commandment be so interpreted that we are required to make God the only object of thought, attention, and affection, then we cannot obey the second commandment, which requires us to love our neighbor. And if the first commandment is to be so understood that every faculty and power is to be directed solely and exclusively to the contemplation and love of God, then love to all other beings is prohibited and the second commandment is set aside. I repeat the rule therefore: Laws are not to be so interpreted as to conflict with each other.

10. A law requiring perpetual benevolence must be so construed as to consist with, and require all the appropriate and essential modifications of this principle under every circumstance; such as justice, mercy, anger at sin and sinners, and a special and complacent regard to those who are virtuous.

11. Law must be so interpreted as that its claims shall always be restricted to the voluntary powers. To attempt to legislate over the involuntary powers would be inconsistent with natural justice. You may as well attempt to legislate over the beatings of the heart as over any involuntary mental actions.

12. In morals, actual knowledge is indispensable to obligation. The maxim, "ignorantia legis non excusat"--ignorance of the law excuses no one, applies in morals to but a very limited extent. That actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation, will appear,

(1.) From the following Scriptures:

James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Luke 12:47,48: "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." John 9:11[41]: "Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." In the first and second chapters of Romans, the Apostle reasons at large on this subject. He convicts the heathen of sin, upon the ground that they violate their own conscience, and do not live according to the light they have.

(2.) The principle is every where recognized in the Bible, that an increase of knowledge increases obligation. This impliedly, but plainly recognizes the principle that knowledge is indispensable to, and commensurate with obligation. In sins of ignorance, the sin lies in the ignorance itself, but not in the neglect of what is unknown. A man may be guilty of present or past neglect to ascertain the truth. Here his ignorance is sin. The heathen are culpable for not living up to the light of nature, but are under no obligation to embrace christianity until they have the opportunity to do so.

13. Moral laws are to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical laws. In other words, the application of the moral law to human beings, must recognize man as he is, as both a physical and intellectual being; and must be so interpreted as that obedience to it shall not violate the laws of the physical constitution, and prove the premature destruction of the body.

14. Law is to be so interpreted as to recognize all the attributes and circumstances of both body and soul. In the application of the law of God to human beings, we are to regard their powers and attributes as they really are, and not as they are not.

15. Law is to be so interpreted as to restrict its obligation to the actions, and not to extend it to the nature, or constitution of moral beings. Law must not be understood as extending its legislation to the nature, or requiring a man to possess certain attributes, but as prescribing a rule of action. It is not the existence or possession of certain attributes which the law requires, or that these attributes should be in a certain state of perfection; but the right use of all these attributes as they are, is what the law is to be interpreted as requiring.

16. It should be always understood that the obedience of the heart to any law, implies, and includes, general faith or confidence in the lawgiver. But no law should be so construed as to require faith in what the intellect does not perceive. A man may be under obligation to perceive what he does not; i.e., it may be his duty to inquire after, and ascertain the truth. But obligation to believe with the heart, does not attach until the intellect obtains a perception of the things to be believed.

Now, in the light of these rules, let us proceed to inquire,

1. What is not, and,

2. What is implied in perfect obedience to the law of God, or in entire sanctification.

1. Entire sanctification does not imply any change in the substance of the soul or body, for this the law does not require, and it would not be obligatory if it did, because the requirement would be inconsistent with natural justice. Entire sanctification is the entire consecration of the powers, as they are, to God. It does not imply any change in the powers themselves, but simply the right use of them.

2. It does not imply any annihilation of constitutional traits of character, such as constitutional ardor or impetuosity. There is nothing, certainly, in the law of God that requires such constitutional traits to be annihilated, but simply that they should be rightly directed in their exercise.

3. It does not imply the annihilation of any of the constitutional appetites, or susceptibilities. It seems to be supposed by some, that the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities, are in themselves sinful, and that a state of entire sanctification would imply their entire annihilation. And I have often been astonished at the fact that those who array themselves against the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, assume the sinfulness of the constitution of men. And I have not been a little surprised to find that some persons who I

had supposed were far enough from embracing the doctrine of physical depravity, were, after all, resorting to this assumption to set aside the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. But let us appeal to the law. Does the law any where, expressly or impliedly, condemn the constitution of man, or require the annihilation of any thing that is properly a part of the constitution itself? Does it require the annihilation of the appetite for food, or is it satisfied merely with regulating its indulgence? In short, does the law of God any where require any thing more than the consecration of all the appetites and susceptibilities of the body and mind, to the service of God?

In conversing with me upon this subject not long since, a brother insisted that a man might perpetually obey the law of God and be guilty of no actual transgression, and yet not be entirely sanctified: for he insisted that there might be that in him which would lay the foundation for his sinning at a future time. When questioned in regard to what that something in him was, he replied, "that which first led him to sin at the beginning of his moral existence." I answered that that which first led him to sin, was his innocent constitution, just as it was the innocent constitution of Adam, to which the temptation was addressed, that led him into sin. Adam's innocent constitutional appetites, when excited by the presence of objects fitted to excite them, were a sufficient temptation to lead him to consent to prohibited indulgence, which constituted his sin. Now just so it certainly is with every human being. This constitution, the substance of his body and soul, cannot certainly have any moral character. But when these appetites, which are essential to his nature and have no moral character in themselves, are excited, they lead to prohibited indulgence, and in this way every human being is led into sin. Now if a man cannot be entirely sanctified until that is annihilated which first occasioned his sin, it does not appear that he ever can be entirely sanctified while he possesses either body or soul. I insist upon it, therefore, that entire sanctification does not imply the annihilation of any constitutional appetite or susceptibility, but only the entire consecration of the whole constitution as it is, to the service of God.

4. Entire sanctification does not imply the annihilation of natural affection or resentment. By this I mean that certain persons may be naturally pleasing to us. Christ appears to have had a natural affection for John. By natural resentment I mean, that, from the laws of our being, we must resent or feel opposed to injustice or ill treatment. Not that a disposition to retaliate or revenge ourselves is consistent with the law of God. But perfect obedience to the law of God, does not imply that we should have no sense of injury and injustice when we are abused. God has this, and ought to have it, and so does every moral being. To love your neighbor as yourself does not imply that if he injure you, you feel no sense of the injury or injustice, but that you love him and would do him good, notwithstanding his injurious treatment.

5. It does not imply any unhealthy degree of excitement of mind. Rule thirteenth lays down the principle that moral law is to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical law. God's laws certainly do not clash with each other. And the moral law cannot require such a state of constant mental excitement as will destroy the physical constitution. It cannot require any more mental excitement and action than is consistent with all the laws, attributes, and circumstances of both soul and body, as stated in rule fourteenth.

6. It does not imply that any organ or faculty is to be at all times exerted to its full strength. This would soon exhaust and destroy any and every organ of the body. Whatever may be true of the mind when separated from the body, it is certain, while it acts through a material organ, that a constant state of excitement is impossible. When the mind is strongly excited, there is of necessity, a great determination of blood to the brain. A high degree of excitement cannot long continue, certainly, without producing inflammation of the brain, and consequent insanity. And the law of God does not require any degree of

emotion, or mental excitement, that is inconsistent with life and health. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not appear to have been in a state of continual excitement. When he and his disciples had been in a great excitement, for a time, they would turn aside, "and rest awhile."

Who, that has ever philosophized on this subject, does not know that the high degree of excitement which is sometimes witnessed in revivals of religion, must necessarily be short, or that the people must become deranged. It seems sometimes to be indispensable that a high degree of excitement should prevail for a time, to arrest public and individual attention, and to draw people off from other pursuits to attend to the concerns of their souls. But if any suppose that this high degree of excitement is either necessary, or desirable, or possible to be long continued, they have not well considered the matter. And here is one grand mistake of the Church. They have supposed that the revival consists mostly in this state of excited emotion, rather than in conformity of the human will to the will of God. Hence, when the reasons for much excitement have ceased, and the public mind begins to grow more calm, they begin immediately to say that the revival is on the decline; when, in fact, with much less excited emotion, there may be vastly more real religion in the community.

Excitement is often important and indispensable. But the vigorous actings of the will are infinitely more important. And this state of mind may exist in the absence of highly excited emotions.

7. Nor does it imply that the same degree of emotion, volition, or intellectual effort, is at all times required. All volitions do not need the same strength. They cannot have equal strength, because they are not produced by equally powerful reasons. Should a man put forth as strong a volition to pick up an apple, as to extinguish the flames of a burning house? Should a mother, watching over her sleeping nursling, when all is quiet and secure, put forth as powerful volitions, as might be required to snatch it from the devouring flames? Now, suppose that she was equally devoted to God, in watching her sleeping babe, and in rescuing it from the jaws of death. Her holiness would not consist in the fact that she exercised equally strong volitions in both cases; but, that in both cases, the volition was equal to the accomplishment of the thing required to be done. So that persons may be entirely holy, and yet continually varying in the strength of their affections, according to their circumstances--the state of their physical system--and the business in which they are engaged.

All the powers of body and mind are to be held at the service and disposal of God. Just so much of physical, intellectual, and moral energy are to be expended in the performance of duty as the nature and the circumstances of the case require. And nothing is further from the truth, than that the law of God requires a constant, intense state of emotion and mental action on any and every subject alike.

8. Entire sanctification does not imply, as I have said, that God is to be at all times the direct object of attention and affection. This is not only impossible in the nature of the case, but would render it impossible for us to think of, or love our neighbor or ourselves: Rule 9.

Upon this subject I have formerly used the following language: The law of God requires the supreme love of the heart. By this is meant, that the mind's supreme preference should be of God--that God should be the great object of its supreme love and delight. But this state of mind is perfectly consistent with our engaging in any of the necessary business of life--giving to that business that attention--and exercising about it all those affections and emotions which its nature and importance demand.

If a man love God supremely, and engage in any business for the promotion of his glory, if his eye be single, his affections and conduct are entirely holy, when necessarily engaged in the right transaction of

his business, although for the time being, neither his thoughts, or affection, are upon God.

Just as a man who is supremely devoted to his family may be acting consistently with his supreme affection, and rendering them the most important and perfect service, while he does not think of them at all. As I have endeavored to show in my lecture on the text, "Make to yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit," I consider the moral heart to be the mind's supreme preference. As I there stated, the natural, or fleshy heart is the seat of animal life, and propels the blood through all the physical system. Now there is a striking analogy between this and the moral heart. And the analogy consists in this, that as the natural heart, by its pulsations diffuses life through the physical system; so the moral heart, or the supreme governing preference of the mind, is that which gives life and character to man's moral actions. E.g., suppose that I am engaged in teaching Mathematics, and that the supreme desire of my mind is to glorify God in this particular calling. Now in demonstrating some of its intricate propositions, I am obliged, for hours together, to give the entire attention of my mind to that object. Now, while my mind is thus intensely employed in this particular business, it is impossible that I should have any thoughts directly about God, or should exercise any direct affections, or emotions, or volitions towards him. Yet if in this particular calling, all selfishness is excluded, and my supreme design is to glorify God, my mind is in a sanctified state, even though, for the time being, I do not think of God.

It should be understood, that while the supreme preference of the mind has such efficiency as to exclude all selfishness, and to call forth just that strength of volition, thought, affection, and emotion, that is requisite to the right discharge of any duty to which the mind may be called, the heart is in a sanctified state. By a suitable degree of thought and feeling, to the right discharge of duty, I mean just that intensity of thought, and energy of action, that the nature and importance of the particular duty to which for the time being I am called, demand.

In this statement, I take it for granted, that the brain, together with all the circumstances of the constitution, is such, that the requisite amount of thought, feeling, &c. are possible. If the physical constitution, be in such a state of exhaustion as to be unable to put forth that amount of exertion which the nature of the subject might otherwise demand, even in this case, the languid efforts, though far below the importance of the subject, would be all that the law of God requires. Whoever, therefore supposes that a state of entire sanctification, implies a state of entire abstraction of mind, from every thing but God, labors under a grievous mistake. Such a state of mind is as inconsistent with duty, as it is impossible while we are in the flesh.

The fact is that the language and spirit of the law have been and generally are grossly misunderstood, and interpreted to mean what they never did, or can mean consistently with natural justice. Many a mind has been thrown open to the assaults of Satan, and kept in a state of continual bondage and condemnation, because God was not, at all times, the direct object of thought, affection, and emotion; and because the mind was not kept in a state of most perfect tension, and excited to the utmost at every moment.

9. Nor does it imply a state of continual calmness of mind. Christ was not in a state of continual calmness. The deep peace of his mind was never broken up, but the surface or emotions of his mind were often in a state of great excitement, and at other times in a state of great calmness. And here let me refer to Christ, as we have his history in the Bible, in illustration of the positions I have already taken. Christ had all the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities of human nature. Had it been otherwise, he could not have been "tempted in all points like as we are;" nor could he have been tempted in any point as we are, any further than he possessed a constitution similar to our own. Christ also manifested natural affection for his

mother, and for other friends. He showed that he had a sense of injury and injustice, and exercised a suitable resentment when he was injured and persecuted. He was not always in a state of great excitement. He appears to have had his seasons of excitement and of calm,--of labor and rest,--of joy and sorrow, like other good men. Some persons have spoken of entire sanctification as implying a state of uniform and universal calmness, and as if every kind and degree of excited feeling, except as the feelings of love to God are excited, were inconsistent with this state. But Christ often manifested a great degree of excitement when reproving the enemies of God. In short, his history would lead to the conclusion that his calmness and excitement were various, according to the circumstances of the case. And although he was sometimes so pointed and severe in his reproof, as to be accused of being possessed of a devil, yet his emotions and feelings were only those that were called for and suited to the occasions.

10. Nor does it imply a state of continual sweetness of mind without any indignation or holy anger at sin or sinners. Anger at sin is only a modification of love. A feeling of justice, or a desire to have the wicked punished for the benefit of the government, is only another of the modifications of love. And such feelings are essential to the existence of love, where the circumstances call for their existence. It is said of Christ that he was angry. He often manifested anger and holy indignation. "God is angry with the wicked every day." And holiness, or a state of sanctification, instead of being inconsistent with, always implies the existence of anger, whenever circumstances occur, which demand its exercise: Rule 10.

11. It does not imply a state of mind that is all compassion, and no feeling of justice. Compassion is only one of the modifications of love. Justice, or a desire for the execution of law, and the punishment of sin is another of its modifications. God, and Christ, and all holy beings, exercise all those affections and emotions that constitute the different modifications of love, under every possible circumstance.

12. It does not imply that we should love or hate all men alike, irrespective of their value, circumstances, and relations. One being may have a greater capacity for happiness, and be of much more importance to the universe than another. Impartiality and the law of love require us not to regard all beings and things alike; but all beings and things according to their nature, relations, and circumstances.

13. Nor does it imply a perfect knowledge of all our relations: Rule 7. Now such an interpretation of the law, as would make it necessary, in order to yield obedience, for us to understand all our relations, would imply in us the possession of the attribute of omniscience; for certainly there is not a thing in the universe to which we do not sustain some relation. And a knowledge of all these relations, plainly implies infinite knowledge. It is plain that the law of God cannot require any such thing as this; and that entire sanctification or entire obedience to the law of God therefore implies no such thing.

14. Nor does it imply perfect knowledge on any subject. Perfect knowledge on any subject, implies a perfect knowledge of its nature, relations, bearings, and tendencies. Now as every single thing in the universe, sustains some relation to, and has some bearing upon every other thing, there can be no such thing as perfect knowledge on any one subject, that does not embrace universal or infinite knowledge.

15. Nor does it imply freedom from mistake on any subject whatever. It is maintained by some that the grace of the gospel pledges to every man perfect knowledge, or at least such knowledge as to exempt him from any mistake. I cannot stop here to debate this question, but would merely say the law does not expressly or impliedly require infallibility of judgment in us. It only requires us to make the best use of all the light we have.

16. Nor does entire sanctification imply the knowledge of the exact relative value of different interests. I have already said, in illustrating Rule 7, that the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," does not imply that we should, in every instance, understand exactly the relative value and importance of every interest. This plainly cannot be required, unless it be assumed that we are omniscient.

17. It does not imply the same degree of knowledge that we might have possessed, had we always improved our time in its acquisition. The law cannot require us to love God or man as well as we might have been able to love them, had we always improved all our time in obtaining all the knowledge we could, in regard to their nature, character, and interests. If this were implied in the requisition of the law, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that is or ever can be perfect. What is lost in this respect is lost, and past neglect can never be so atoned for as that we shall ever be able to make up in our acquisitions of knowledge, what we have lost. It will no doubt be true to all eternity, that we shall have less knowledge than we might have possessed, had we filled up all our time in its acquisition. We do not, cannot, nor shall we ever be able to love God as well as we might have loved him, had we always applied our minds to the acquisition of knowledge respecting him. And if entire sanctification is to be understood as implying that we love God as much as we should, had we all the knowledge we might have had, then I repeat it, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven, nor ever will be, that is entirely sanctified.

18. It does not imply the same amount of service that we might have rendered, had we never sinned. The law of God does not imply or suppose that our powers are in a perfect state; that our strength of body or mind is what it would have been, had we never sinned. But it simply requires us to use what strength we have. The very wording of the law is proof conclusive, that it extends its demands only to the full amount of what strength we have. And this is true of every moral being, however great or small.

19. It does not require the same degree of love that we might have rendered, but for our ignorance. We certainly know much less of God, and therefore are much less capable of loving him, i.e. we are capable of loving him with a less amount, and to a less degree, than if we knew more of him, which we might have done but for our sins. And as I have before said, this will be true to all eternity; for we can never make amends by any future obedience or diligence, for this any more than for other sins. And to all eternity, it will remain true, that we know less of God, and love him less than we might and should have done, had we always done our duty. If entire sanctification therefore, implies the same degree of love or service that might have been rendered, had we always developed our powers by a perfect use of them, then there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that is or ever will be in that state. The most perfect development and improvement of our powers, must depend upon the most perfect use of them. And every departure from their perfect use, is a diminishing of their highest development, and a curtailing of their capabilities to serve God in the highest and best manner. All sin then does just so much towards crippling and curtailing the powers of body and mind, and rendering them, by just so much, incapable of performing the service they might otherwise have rendered.

To this view of the subject it has been objected that Christ taught an opposite doctrine, in the case of the woman who washed his feet with her tears, when he said, "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." But can it be that Christ intended to be understood as teaching, that the more we sin the greater will be our love and our ultimate virtue? If this be so I do not see why it does not follow that the more sin in this life, the better, if so be that we are forgiven. If our virtue is really to be improved by our sins, I see not why it would not be good economy both for God and man, to sin as much as we can while in this world. Certainly Christ meant to lay down no such principle as this. He undoubtedly meant to teach, that a person who was truly sensible of the greatness of his sins, would exercise more of the love of gratitude, than

would be exercised by one who had a less affecting sense of ill-desert.

20. Entire sanctification does not imply the same degree of faith that might have been exercised but for our ignorance and past sin.

We cannot believe any thing about God of which we have no evidence or knowledge. Our faith must therefore be limited by our intellectual perceptions of truth. The heathen are not under obligation to believe in Christ, and thousands of other things of which they have no knowledge. Perfection in a heathen would imply much less faith than in a christian. Perfection in an adult would imply much more and greater faith than in an infant. And perfection in an angel would imply much greater faith than in a man, just in proportion as he knows more of God than man. Let it be always understood that entire sanctification never implies that which is naturally impossible. It is certainly naturally impossible for us to believe that of which we have no knowledge. Entire sanctification implies in this respect nothing more than the heart's faith or confidence in all the truth that is perceived by the intellect.

21. Nor does it imply the conversion of all men in answer to our prayers. It has been maintained by some that a state of entire sanctification implies the offering of prevailing prayer for the conversion of all men. To this I reply:

(1.) Then Christ was not sanctified; for he offered no such prayer.

(2.) The law of God makes no such demand either expressly or impliedly.

(3.) We have no right to believe that all men will be converted in answer to our prayers, unless we have an express promise to that effect.

(4.) As therefore there is no such promise, we are under no obligation to offer such prayer. Nor does the non-conversion of the world, imply that there are no sanctified saints in the world.

22. It does not imply the conversion of any one for whom there is not an express or implied promise in the word of God. The fact that Christ did not pray in faith for the conversion of Judas, and that Judas was not converted in answer to his prayers, does not prove that Christ was not in a state of entire sanctification.

23. Nor does it imply that all those things which are expressly or impliedly promised, will be granted in answer to our prayers, or in other words, that we should pray in faith for them, if we are ignorant of the existence or application of those promises. A state of perfect love implies the discharge of all known duty. And nothing strictly speaking can be duty of which the mind has no knowledge. It cannot therefore be our duty to believe a promise of which we are entirely ignorant, or the application of which to any specific object we do not understand.

If there is sin in such a case as this, it lies in the ignorance itself. And here no doubt, there often is sin, because there is present neglect to know the truth. But it should always be understood that the sin lies in the ignorance, and not in the neglect of that of which we have no knowledge. A state of sanctification is inconsistent with any present neglect to know the truth; for such neglect is sin. But it is not inconsistent with our failing to do that of which we have no knowledge. James says: "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "If ye were blind," says Christ, "ye should have no sin, but because ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth."

24. Entire sanctification does not imply the impossibility of future sin. Entire and permanent sanctification does imply the fact, that the sanctified soul will not sin. But the only reason why he will not, is to be ascribed entirely to the sovereign grace of God. Sanctification does not imply, as I have already said, any such change in the nature of the subject, as to render it impossible or improbable that he will again sin. Nay, I do not suppose there is a man upon earth, or perhaps in heaven, who would not fall into sin but for the supporting grace of God.

25. It does not imply that watchfulness, and prayer, and effort, are no longer needed. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that, either in this or any other state of being, there will be no faith called for, or watchfulness against temptation. Just so long as the susceptibilities of our soul exist, temptation in some sense and to some extent must exist, in whatever world we are. Christ manifestly struggled hard with temptation. He found watchfulness, and the most powerful opposition to temptation, indispensable to his perseverance in holiness. "Is the servant above his master, or the disciple above his Lord?"

26. Nor does it imply that we are no longer dependent on the grace of Christ, but the exact opposite is implied. A state of entire and permanent sanctification implies the most constant and perfect reliance upon the grace and strength of an indwelling Christ. It seems to have been supposed by some that entire sanctification implies that something has been done which has so changed the nature of the sanctified soul, that ever after he will persevere in holiness in his own strength. I suppose this to be as far as possible from the truth, and that no change whatever has occurred in the nature of the individual, but simply that he has learned to confide in Christ at every step. He has so received Christ's strength as to lean constantly upon his supporting grace.

27. Nor does it imply that the Christian warfare is ended. I understand the Christian warfare to consist in the mind's conflict with temptation. This certainly will never end in this life.

28. Nor does it imply that there is no more growth in grace. Many persons seem to understand the command "Grow in grace," as implying the gradual giving up of sin. They suppose that when persons have done sinning, there is no more room for growth in grace. Now it is said of Christ that he grew in grace, where the same original word is used as in the command. "He increased in stature, and in wisdom, and in favor (chariti, grace) with God and man." If growth in grace implies the gradual giving up of sin, then God has commanded men not to give up their sins at once. They must give them up gradually. The truth is that growth in grace implies the relinquishment of sin to begin with. To grow in grace is to grow in the favor of God. And what would the Apostle have said, had he supposed that the requirement to grow in grace, would have been understood by an orthodox Church to require only the gradual relinquishment of their sins? I suppose that saints will continue to grow in grace to all eternity, and in the knowledge of God. But this does not imply that they are not entirely holy, when they enter heaven, or before.

29. Nor does it imply that others will recognize it to be real sanctification. With the present views of the Church in regard to what is implied in entire sanctification, it is impossible that a really sanctified soul should be acknowledged by the Church as such. And with these views of the Church, there is no doubt but sanctified believers would be set at nought, and denounced by the great mass of christians as possessing any other than a sanctified spirit.

It was insisted, and positively believed by the Jews, that Jesus Christ was possessed of a wicked, instead of a holy spirit. Such were their notions of holiness, that they no doubt supposed him to be actuated by any other than the Spirit of God. They especially supposed so on account of his opposition to the current

orthodoxy, and the ungodliness of the religious teachers of the day. Now, who does not see that when the Church is in a great measure conformed to the world, that a spirit of holiness in any man would certainly lead him to aim the sharpest rebukes at the spirit and life of those in this state, whether in high or low places. And who does not see that this would naturally result in his being accused of possessing a wicked spirit?

The most violent opposition that I have ever seen manifested to any persons in my life, has been manifested by members of the Church, and even by some ministers of the gospel, towards those who I believe were among the most holy persons I ever knew. I have been shocked, and wounded beyond expression, at the almost fiendish opposition to such persons, that I have witnessed.

I have several times of late observed that writers in newspapers were calling for examples of Christian Perfection or entire sanctification. Now I would humbly inquire, of what use it is to point the Church to examples so long as they do not know what is, and what is not implied in a state of entire sanctification? I would ask, are the Church agreed among themselves in regard to what constitutes this state? Are any considerable number of ministers agreed among themselves as to what is implied in a state of entire sanctification? Does not everybody know that the Church and the ministry are in a great measure in the dark upon this subject? Why then call for examples? No man can possess this state without being sure to be set at naught as a hypocrite, and a self-deceiver.

30. It is not implied in this state that the sanctified soul will himself, always and at all times, be sure that his feelings and conduct are perfectly right. Cases may occur in which he may be in doubt in regard to the rule of duty; and be at a loss, without examination, reflection, and prayer, to know whether in a particular case he has done and felt exactly right. If he were sure that he understood the exact application of the law of God to that particular case, his consciousness would invariably inform him whether or not he was conformed to that rule. But in any and every case where he has not a clear apprehension of the rule, it may require time and thought, and prayer, and diligent inquiry to satisfy his mind in regard to the exact moral quality of any particular act or state of feeling; for example, a man may feel himself exercised with strong indignation in view of sin. And he may be brought into doubt whether the indignation, in kind or degree, was not sinful. It may therefore require self-examination and deep searching of heart to decide this question. That all indignation is not sinful is certain. And that a certain kind and degree of indignation at sin is a duty, is also certain. But our most holy exercises may lay us open to the assaults of Satan. And he may so turn our accuser as for a time to render it difficult for us to decide in regard to the real state of our hearts. And thus a sanctified soul may be "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

31. Nor does it imply the same strength of holy affection that Adam may have exercised before he fell, and his powers were debilitated by sin. It should never be forgotten that the mind in this state of existence, is wholly dependent upon the brain and physical system for its development. In Adam, and in any of his posterity, any violation of the physical laws of the body, resulting in the debility and imperfection of any organ or system of organs, must necessarily impair the vigor of the mind, and prevent its developing itself as it otherwise might have done. It is therefore entirely erroneous to say that mankind are or can be, in this state of existence, perfect in as high a sense as they might have been had sin never entered the world, and had there been no such thing as a violation of the laws of the physical constitution. The law of God requires only the entire consecration of such powers as we have. As these powers improve, our obligation is enlarged, and will continue to be to all eternity. For myself, I have very little doubt that the human constitution is capable of being very nearly, if not entirely renovated or recovered from the evils of intemperance, by a right understanding of, and an adherence to the laws of life and health. So that after a

few generations the human body would be nearly if not entirely restored to its primitive physical perfection. If this is so, the time may come when obedience to the law of God, will imply as great strength and constancy of affection as Adam was capable of exercising before the fall. But if on the other hand, it be true that any injury of the physical constitution can never be wholly repaired--that the evils of intemperance in respect to its effect upon the body, are, in some measure at least, to descend with men to the end of time, then no such thing is implied in a state of entire sanctification, as the same strength and permanency of holy affection in us that Adam might have exercised before the fall.

To this it is objected, that the Son of God requires of us now, all that strength and perfection of service which we might have rendered, had we never sinned. It is said that, although man has, by his own, or by Adam's act, lost the power or ability to render the same degree of service which he might have rendered had he never sinned, yet God's right to require this now impossible service, is not effected by this inability--that although man has rendered himself unable to do all that he might have done but for his sin, yet God has not lost the right to require this service, notwithstanding this inability. If this is not so, it is said that if man were utterly to annihilate his ability, his obligation would cease. So that a man by sinning, might annihilate his obligation to obedience. To this I reply:

Had this objection come from that class of divines who deny the natural ability of men to obey the law of God, and who maintain that no ability whatever is implied in obligation, it had not been so surprising. But coming as it does from those who maintain the natural ability of men to comply with all the requirements of God, and that natural ability is indispensable to obligation, and who hold the attainableness of entire sanctification on the ground of natural ability, this objection is truly wonderful. What consistency, I beg leave to ask, is there in maintaining the natural ability of sinners to do their whole duty, and the instantaneous attainableness of a state of entire sanctification on the ground of natural ability, and at the same time, asserting that although man has lost the power to render that degree of service to God which he might have rendered but for sin, yet the law holds him bound to render all that service, notwithstanding. Now what is this but both affirming and denying natural ability at the same breath? It cannot be pretended with the least shadow of truth, that man is able to render to God, as high and perfect a service at the present time, as if he had never sinned--as if he had never neglected to know all that might be known of God--as if he had fully developed his powers by universal and perfect obedience. And if he is under obligation to do so, notwithstanding this inability, or that men are naturally able to comply with all the requirements of God, is absurd and a contradiction. For certainly man is naturally able to do that only which, under the circumstances, is possible. And nothing is possible to him which he cannot accomplish by willing and honestly endeavoring to do it. But who will maintain, that, by willing, a drunkard can so restore his shattered constitution, as in a moment to have all those bodily energies, upon which the mind is naturally dependent, restored to perfect health, so as to render it possible for him to exercise the same degree of mental vigor that he might have exercised, but for his intemperance. Or who will say that by willing, he can instantaneously possess himself of all that degree of knowledge of God, and of divine things which he might have had, but for his past neglect. Who will say, that by willing, he can instantaneously put forth as fresh, and vigorous, and powerful, and constant exercise of holy affections, as if his powers had been fully developed by universal, and perfect obedience, ever since he has had a being? Certainly no man will take it upon him to affirm this. Then, as a matter of fact, man is unable to render to God what he might have done but for his past sin.

And now the inquiry is, is he under obligation to render the same service in degree as if his powers were in that state of perfection in which they would have been, had he never sinned? That this question should be

answered in the affirmative, by those who maintain the natural ability of sinners, perfectly to obey God, is passing strange.

But it seems, they feel themselves called upon to take this ground, to escape the necessity of adopting what they conceive to be a wholly untenable position, viz., that if a man's impairing his ability, does commensurately annihilate obligation, then it follows, that should he utterly destroy his ability to obey, his ability to sin would cease. But here let me inquire, if this is not really the fact. Cases often occur, in which men destroy, for the time being, their own moral agency, by rendering themselves insane? Now is it not universally admitted that a person in a state of mental derangement, is as incapable of moral action as a brute? Is a man in a state of insanity, a moral agent? I answer, no. Can he sin? No. Nor does it matter, by what means he became deranged, if so that his insanity is real. It is true that courts of law hold insane persons, under certain circumstances, as civilly amenable for their conduct. When, for example, a man commits a crime in a fit of intoxication, although at the time, it should be manifest that he was deranged, yet they will punish him for the deed, as if he had committed it in the exercise of his reason. But the principle upon which they proceed in this case, is that that act, by which he became insane, viz., his becoming drunk, involves the guilt of the crime which was committed during the fit of intoxication. Not that courts of law ever maintain, that, in such cases, the criminal was a moral agent at the time of his insanity. But they hold him civilly responsible for his conduct, or rather punish him for drinking himself drunk. This they consider as the real thing in which his criminality consists, although in form he is condemned for the crime of which it was the cause.

Now just so in the case of sinners under the government of God, when by their own act, they abridge their capability to render to God, as high and perfect a service as they might have done, their sin lies in that act which abridged their ability. This act involves in it the whole guilt of all the default of which it is the cause. But their guilt does not lie at all in their neglect to do what, after this inability has occurred, they are utterly unable to do. When their powers of moral agency are either destroyed or impaired, by Adam's act--by their parents' act--or by their own act, they are not, and cannot, by any possibility, be under any obligation to use powers which they do not possess. And God has no right to require it of them. But he has a right to hold them responsible, and punish them to all eternity for the act, or neglect that impaired or annihilated their ability. And except they repent and are forgiven, for this abuse of their constitution, it is certain that he will punish them forever.

Now this view of the subject is not at all akin to that which sets aside the claims of the law, by introducing, through Christ, another rule of duty, less opposed to the sinful inclinations of man, than is the law of God. This sentiment, my soul abhors. The law of God, no doubt is, and always must remain the only rule of duty to moral agents, in whatever world, or under whatever circumstances they may exist.

But the question which we are all along debating is, does the law of God level its claims to the exact measure of the natural ability of every moral agent?--does it come to him as he is, and require the perfect use of his faculties as they are, in his service?--or does it require him to possess other faculties, and to possess them in a different state from what they really are? This would be plainly to require impossibilities. God might as well command a man to undo all his sins instead of repenting of them--to recall past time, now to perform those duties to those sinners who have long been dead, which might and ought to have been performed while they were living. Could God justly require this? I answer: No, no more than he could require a dead corpse to raise itself from the dead. To perform that which is naturally impossible, God never requires. To affirm that he does, is a slander, and a libel upon his character. When a sin has been committed, a duty neglected, and the opportunity and possibility of now performing it, has ceased, the only

requirement in respect to that is, that we repent. And he no longer possesses the right to require of us the performance of that which has become naturally impossible, nor does he in any instance claim or attempt to exercise any such authority as this.

32. Nor does it imply the formation of such holy habits as shall secure obedience. Some have said that it was absurd to profess a state of entire sanctification, on the ground that it implies not only obedience to the law of God, but such a formation and perfection of holy habits as to render it certain that we shall never again sin. And that a man can no more tell when he is entirely sanctified, than he can tell how many holy acts it will take to form holy habits of such strength that he will never again sin. To this I answer:

(1.) The law of God has nothing to do with requiring this formation of holy habits. It is satisfied with present obedience. It only demands at the present moment the full devotion of all our powers to God. It never in any instance, complains that we have not formed such holy habits as to render it certain that we shall sin no more.

(2.) If it be true that a man is never wholly sanctified, until his holy habits are so fixed as to render it certain that he will never sin again, then Adam was not in a state of entire sanctification previously to the fall, nor were the angels in this state before their fall.

(3.) If this sentiment be true, there is not a saint nor an angel in heaven so far as we can know, that can with the least propriety profess entire sanctification; for how do they know that they have performed so many holy acts as to have created such habits of holiness, as to render it certain that they will never more sin?

(4.) Entire sanctification does not consist in the formation of holy habits, nor at all depend upon this. Both entire and permanent sanctification are based alone upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And perseverance in holiness is to be ascribed alone to the influence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, instead of being secured by any habits of holiness which we have or ever shall have formed.

33. Nor does it imply exemption from sorrow or mental suffering.

It was not so with Christ. Nor is it inconsistent with our sorrowing for our own past sins, nor sorrowing that we have not now the health and vigor, and knowledge, and love, that we might have had if we had sinned less; or sorrowing for those around us--sorrowing in view of human sinfulness, or suffering. These are all consistent with a state of entire sanctification, and indeed are the natural results of it.

34. Nor is it inconsistent with our living in human society--with mingling in the scenes, and engaging in the affairs of this world. Some have supposed that to be holy, we must withdraw from the world. Hence the absurd and ridiculous practices of papists in retiring to monasteries, and convents--in taking the veil, and as they say, retiring to a life of devotion. Now I suppose this state of voluntary exclusion from human society, to be utterly inconsistent with any degree of holiness, and a manifest violation of the law of love to our neighbor.

35. Nor does it imply moroseness of temper and manners. Nothing is farther from the truth than this. It is said of Xavier, than whom, perhaps, few holier men have ever lived, that "he was so cheerful as often to be accused of being gay." Cheerfulness is certainly the result of holy affections. And sanctification no more implies moroseness in this world than it does in heaven.

Before I proceed to the next head of my discourse, (having said these things, and given these rules of interpretation so that you can apply the principle to many things I have not time to notice) I wish to make the following remark:

In all the discussions I have seen upon this subject, while it seems to be admitted that the law of God is the standard of perfection, yet in defining what constitutes christian perfection or entire sanctification, men entirely lose sight of this standard, and seldom or never raise the distinct inquiry, what does obedience to this law imply, and what does it not imply. Instead of bringing every thing to this test, they seem to lose sight of it. On the one hand they bring in things that never were required by the law of God, of man in his present state. Thus they lay a stumbling block and a snare for the saints, to keep them in perpetual bondage, supposing that this is the way to keep them

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