

# Thy Will Be Done

by Charles Finney

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*This sermon explores the relationship between theology, mental philosophy, and human liberty, arguing that human liberty consists in the sovereign power of choosing in any direction, in view of any motive or object of choice.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 40:8, Matthew 6:10, Romans 12:2, Galatians 5:13-14, Ephesians 6:6, Philippians 2:13, Colossians 3:23-24, James 4:17, 1 Peter 2:15, 1 John 5:14-15

**Topics:** "Moral Responsibility", "Divine Will"

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## Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the profound implications of the prayer 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' exploring the relationship between human will, moral responsibility, and divine law. He argues that true religion requires a state of will that aligns with God's will, which is characterized by universal benevolence. Finney critiques both old and new theological schools for their inconsistent views on free will and moral obligation, asserting that genuine obedience to God's law is rooted in a sincere desire to do His will. He concludes that nothing short of a heart fully devoted to God can truly offer this prayer, highlighting the necessity of a transformative change in one's will to achieve true holiness.

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## Transcript

'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.' Mat. 6:10.

1. EVERY system of Theology assumes the truth of some system of Mental Philosophy, and indeed every theological opinion takes for granted, or assumes as true, some principle of Mental Philosophy. And however much any man may rail against metaphysics, still it is true that the railer himself has his system of metaphysics, by which he interprets the Bible, and in consistency with which he frames his theological opinions. It is very common, however, when any attempt is made to overthrow any theological error, or to establish any theological truth, by an appeal to our own consciousness of the laws of mind, and to the Bible as interpreted in view of these laws, for the objector to cry out vehemently against metaphysics, as if this were a conclusive objection to all such argumentation, that it is metaphysical. Now who does not know that the objector himself, in attempting to establish an opposing theory, assumes as true an opposite system of Mental Philosophy, and is no less metaphysical than his opponent, notwithstanding his violent zeal against metaphysics?

2. The fundamental point of difference between the Old and New schools in Theology, respects the freedom of the will. From this point they diverge; and when consistently carried out, the two schemes or

schools differ fundamentally on most of the important questions in theology. It is in vain to attempt to cover up this fact; for any one who has not seen it to be true, is yet ignorant of the great principles and legitimate bearing of the points at issue. Few men, however, of either school, are consistent throughout, and nothing is more common than to find old school men zealously contending for doctrines that properly belong only to the scheme of the new school theologians--when it is perhaps just as common to find new school men, as they call themselves, zealously defending dogmas that properly belong to the scheme of the old school, and can, with no consistency whatever, be embraced by a new school man as truth. And thus a strange confusion and inconsistency prevails among theologians of both schools, and it is remarkable, and even wonderful, that there should be so little consistency in the theological views of so great a majority of theologians of all schools.

3. I have stated that the point of divergence between the old and new schools is the freedom or necessity of the will. Upon this point, the old school maintain that the will always is as the greatest apparent good is; or, in other words, that the mind always chooses that which appears to be upon the whole the most agreeable--and that the choice is always determined by the objective motive, or that which is presented to the mind as a reason for choice. Many of them will not say, that choice is necessitated by motive, while at the same time they maintain that motive is the cause of choice as absolutely as a physical cause produces its effect. And that the difference between the determination of choice by motive and the production of an effect by a physical cause does not lie in the nature of the connection but in the nature of the terms connected--that the certainty is just as absolute in the one case as in the other. And when they explain themselves, it is manifest and self-evident, that the necessity is just as great in the one case as in the other.

4. Those who are truly consistent old school men maintain, and ever have, since the days of Augustine, that men are wholly and naturally unable to do any thing good--that their will is necessarily determined to evil by what they call original sin, or native depravity. They maintain that moral obligation implies no power whatever to act right, or to do the will of God. With them, sin is a necessity of human nature since the fall of Adam. And free agency amounts only to the power of committing sin.

If, according to their view, the will is necessitated by motives, then it follows that all action is necessary as opposed to free, and the doctrine of universal fatalism is true. But if the will is free, as is maintained by the new school, and all moral depravity belongs to moral action, then a system of theology directly the opposite of that of the old school, in nearly every important point, must be true.

That I may give this subject as fundamental a discussion as my time and the nature of the case admits, I will, the Lord willing, as briefly as I can, discuss the following propositions:

I. HOW WE KNOW ANY THING.

II. WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY FACULTIES OF THE HUMAN MIND.

III. WHEREIN HUMAN LIBERTY CONSISTS.

IV. TO WHAT ACTS AND STATES OF MIND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY EXTENDS.

V. WHAT CONSTITUTES SIN.

VI. WHAT CONSTITUTES HOLINESS.

VII. WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS.

VIII. HOW IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN.

IX. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE SINCERE OFFERING OF THE PETITION I HAVE CHOSEN FOR A TEXT.

X. THAT NOTHING SHORT OF A STATE OF MIND THAT CAN SINCERELY OFFER THIS PETITION CAN BE VIRTUE, OR TRUE RELIGION.

I. How we know any thing.

1. Consciousness is the condition of all knowledge. I will therefore begin by giving what I suppose to be a correct definition of consciousness. Consciousness may be regarded as a power, or faculty, or an act or state of the mind. As a power or faculty, it is the capacity or ability which the mind has to recognize or know its own existence, acts, and states. As an act, or state of mind, it is the actual notice or knowledge of its own existence and states. Consciousness gives us the knowledge of our own existence. By it we certainly know that we exist. It also gives us the phenomena of our mental states and acts. It also gives us the knowledge of the liberty or necessity of our acts or states. In short, every thing that we do know is given by consciousness.

2. Whatever we know by consciousness we know with certainty. Consciousness gives me the fact of my existence. This is the highest evidence of the fact of my existence. It also gives me the fact of certain sensations, volitions, mental states and acts, and it gives me these with certainty. Whether there be in reality any thing without corresponding with the sensations and mental states within or not, yet the mental states themselves, as given by consciousness, are matters of fact, of which I have absolute knowledge, by my own consciousness. When I think or reason, whether I think or reason according to truth or not, may be doubtful; but it cannot be doubtful whether I think or reason, as I am conscious of thinking and reasoning; for my thoughts and reasonings are matters of fact given me by my own consciousness, of which I am therefore absolutely certain. In short, every mental phenomenon is given by consciousness. Every act and state of mind is a reality, just as is given by consciousness. And whatever else is true or false, the phenomena of mind given by consciousness must be facts--must be incontrovertible verities--because they are perceived by the mind to be facts.

II. What are the primary faculties of the mind.

Consciousness does not directly give us the faculties themselves, but the mind infers them from phenomena perceived by consciousness. Every phenomenon, act, or state of mind implies a corresponding faculty; that is, that the mind possesses the power of performing that act. In other words, it is able to act in that manner. When, therefore, consciousness gives us certain classes of actions, we affirm with intuitive certainty that the mind possesses corresponding faculties.

There are three primary or fundamental classes of actions, namely--acts or states of the Intellect--acts or states of the Sensibility--and acts or states of the Will. By this language I mean--

1. That men certainly possess a faculty by which they think, reason, judge, and affirm certain truths. The faculty which does these things I call Intellect, and suppose it to include Understanding, Reason, Conscience.

2. By the Sensibility I mean the faculty of feeling. This comprehends emotions, desires, affections, and, in short, whatever we mean by feeling.

3. By Will I mean, the power of choice, or ability to choose or refuse whatever is an object of choice.

Let it be understood, then, that the primary faculties, as implied in the phenomena given by consciousness are Intellect, or Intelligence, Sensibility, and Will.

III. Wherein human liberty consists.

1. This is a fundamental inquiry. And to this question two very different answers are given by the different schools in theology. The old school give this answer--it consists in the power of doing as you will; that is, in carrying out and accomplishing the object of your volitions. With them, human liberty does not consist in an ability to choose in any direction in view of an object of choice; but simply in acting according to your choice--while they maintain that choice itself is invariably and necessarily determined by motive. But to this definition of free agency or human liberty it is justly objected that it is no liberty at all. Action is necessitated by volition or choice; and a man cannot but do as he wills or chooses. If I will to move, my muscles move of necessity, and there is no liberty between the volition and the action. The will moves the muscles, and a man cannot act against his will; for his will is the cause of his actions. This every man knows by his own consciousness, with absolute certainty. Human liberty, then, does not and cannot consist in doing as you will, irrespective of the question how it comes to pass that we will as we do.

2. Human liberty does not consist in a self-determining power in the will. For the will is not an agent, but only a capacity or power of an agent. It is not the will, therefore, that determines its own choices, but it is the agent himself that wills or chooses.

3. It does not consist in the power to decline all choice in view of motives or objects of choice. The mind is under a necessity of choosing in some way in view of an object of choice, and a refusal to choose, could this be, would be itself a choosing not to choose.

4. Human liberty does not consist in the power to choose without a motive, or object of choice. The mind must necessarily have some object of choice, or it cannot choose; for choice implies that something is chosen; and therefore, to choose without a motive or object of choice is absurd.

5. It does not lie in the necessity of choosing what, in the judgment of the mind, is most worthy of choice. For this we have the testimony of our own consciousness, as we certainly know that very often we do not choose that which in the judgment of our mind is most worthy of choice.

6. Nor does it lie in the necessity of choosing that which appears the most agreeable to the mind. For, as a matter of fact, we certainly know that we often do choose that which, in no proper sense, can be called agreeable to us.

7. But human liberty does consist in the sovereign power of choosing in any direction, in view of any motive or object of choice. In proof of this, I observe--

1. Nothing else than this can be liberty. For we are conscious that action is compelled or necessitated by choice.

2. To force or necessitate volition (were this possible) is as inconsistent with liberty, as to force action against choice. If I should seize your hand and put a dagger in it, and compel you to stab a man, this action is not yours, but mine. But suppose I had power to force your will to act on your muscles, and should compel you to will to stab a man, and the muscular action and stabbing should follow of necessity, from your volitions, this action would no more properly be your own than if I forced your muscles contrary to your will.

3. We just as certainly know that we are free in this sense as we know that we exist, or that we choose at all. Consciousness gives us not only our existence as a fact, our mental states and acts as facts, but it gives us absolutely the freedom or necessity of our acts. Hence of some acts and states of mind, we say with certainty I could not help it, because we are conscious of being in the most proper sense involuntary in those states of mind. Consciousness always gives us not only our acts and mental states, but also the fact of their freedom or their necessity. And every man knows, when he has chosen in any direction, in view of an object of choice, that, all the circumstances being the same, he was able to choose or might have chosen the opposite.

4. That this is true is manifest from the universal affirmation of praise and blame-worthiness in respect to our moral actions. No man can, by any possibility, blame or praise himself or any body else, except upon the assumption that under the circumstances he might have chosen differently.

5. No man can really doubt the liberty of the will in this sense, and still affirm praise or blame-worthiness of any act.

We have seen then that liberty cannot consist in outward action for, consciousness affirms that this is directly necessitated by choice.

6. Liberty cannot consist in feeling or emotion, for consciousness testifies that our feelings are involuntary states of mind--that feelings are not acts or states of the will, but of the sensibility. We cannot exercise feelings and emotions directly as we do volitions or choices. If we desire to feel upon any subject, we direct our attention to a consideration of that subject, and corresponding feelings exist in the mind of course, just as naturally as we experience the sensation of vision when we direct our eyes to an object of sight. But we can never directly will emotions or feelings into existence. Nor can we suppress them when they do exist, only by diverting our attention and thoughts from the objects that produce them. Feelings then are always indirectly necessitated or promoted by choice. Human liberty then cannot consist in the feelings.

It cannot consist in acts or states of the Intelligence, or in acts or states of the Sensibility, but must consist in the sovereign power of willing or choosing in any direction, in view of an object of choice.

IV. To what acts and states of mind moral responsibility extends.

1. The law of God is the rule of moral action, and the measure of its claims is the measure of moral responsibility.

2. The law of God levels its claims to the present ability of every subject of God's moral government. Its language is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." The true meaning of this law is that every moral being shall consecrate all his powers, whatever they are, at the present moment, to the service of God. Our consciousness informs us that by willing we control the acts

and states of the Intellect--that we think, reason, judge, and affirm by voluntarily controlling the attention of our mind. Consciousness also testifies that we feel by directing our attention to objects calculated to excite feeling, and that we act by willing to act. Thus by legislating over the voluntary power of the mind, the lawgiver proposes to secure the entire consecration of the whole being to the great ends of benevolence.

But the thought which I wish to impress here is, that the law levels its claims to present ability. The law does not say, love the Lord thy God with the strength you possessed when you was [sic.] a child, and serve Him only with the powers you then had, but with all the powers you at present have. If your capacity to serve God, and to promote the great ends of benevolence, has been increased, either by the grace of God or by their diligent use and development in the exercise of your own agency, the law does not satisfy itself with claiming the measure of obedience you might have rendered before this increase of ability, but requires that all your present strength and power shall be completely and unreservedly consecrated to God. So on the other hand, if your ability has been in any way diminished, either by your own act or in any other way, the law requires of you nothing more than that whatever power is left should be consecrated unreservedly and perfectly to God. If your ability has been abridged by your own fault, you are guilty for thus abridging it, and for this you may be punished. But you cannot be held responsible for not doing what you are no longer able to do. For example, suppose it were my duty last week to visit and warn a certain sinner to flee from the wrath to come, but the man is now dead and beyond my reach. For not warning him when I had opportunity I am guilty. But I am now under no obligation to warn him, for the simple reason that I am naturally unable to do so. I may justly be punished for my former neglect, but I cannot be held responsible for not warning him at the present time. If I cut off a hand, I can no longer be required to use it, though I may be guilty for cutting it off, and held responsible for that. In such cases, God requires repentance for the act that abridged our capacity, but in no case requires that which has become naturally impossible.

When a man loses the ability to pay his debts, and that too by his own fault, he is no longer under a moral obligation to pay them any faster than he has power to do so. He may be punished for rendering himself unable, but can no more be under a moral obligation to pay them while unable, than to warn a man who is dead, to flee from the wrath to come. The reason why he is no more under moral obligation in the one case than in the other is precisely the same, namely, that he has no power to do so.

So if a man becomes deranged by his own fault, he is not a moral agent while deranged, and his great sin lies in having made himself deranged.

The spirit of the legal maxim that a man shall not take advantage of his own wrong, is that the guilt of the act which incapacitates a man for duty, is equal to the guilt of all the default of which it is the cause.

It is maintained by some that the law of God does not limit its claims to present ability, but that it requires the same degree of service now, the same amount of love and zeal, and consequent usefulness in us that it might have required had we never curtailed our ability by sinning, but on the contrary had fully developed our powers by perfect and perpetual obedience. To this I answer,

(1.) That it must be, and so far as I know is admitted by those who hold this doctrine, that to render this degree of service is naturally impossible, in this state of existence.

(2.) That the law might just as reasonably require that we should undo all that we have done, or make up for our default by future works of supererogation, both of which are equally impossible. If the law may require the one, notwithstanding it is naturally impossible, it may with equal propriety and justice require

the other.

(3.) If the same degree of service could be required now that might have been rendered had we never sinned, obedience to the law of God is naturally impossible in this state. But there is no reason from the Bible or philosophy to believe, that that obedience, in the case of those who have lived in sin any portion of their lives, will ever be possible. Every one understands that men know much less of God, and are therefore naturally able to love Him much less and to render Him a much less effectual service than they might have done had they always employed their powers of moral agency aright. And if any one affirms that the saint in heaven will not be correspondingly unable to render the same amount of service that he might have done had he never sinned, the burden of proof is wholly upon him who makes the affirmation.

(4.) That the gospel or any thing else can so change our powers, as to make us able to perform, in any world, all that we might have done had we never sinned, is a sheer assumption.

So of our ignorance. We cannot be under obligation to do that of which we are entirely ignorant, although our ignorance is our fault. James 4:17; "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Here it is as fully implied as possible that if a man does not know to do good he is not under obligation to do it. Our obligation is first to know what duty is and then to do it. To do that of which we are entirely ignorant is naturally impossible and can no more be morally binding upon us than it is to warn a dead man. Nor does it alter the case if our ignorance is our fault. The sin lies in being ignorant, and not in omitting to do that of which we have no knowledge. Therefore the spirit of the legal maxim, "Ignorantia legis non excusat," is that the guilt of wilful ignorance is equal to all the default of which it is the cause, and not that a man can be under moral obligation to perform impossibilities.

If the law requires the same amount of love and service that we might have rendered had we acquired all the knowledge possible, I see not how any saint in heaven can ever perfectly obey, for it will always remain true that he might have known numerous truths and relations more than at any given time he will know, had he not sinned in neglecting to know the truth. So that if the law require at present, and will forever require, all of every moral being that might have been required had he never sinned, it must remain true forever, not only that every saint on earth, but for all that appears, that every saint in heaven, will forever continue to fall short of rendering the obedience the law requires, and therefore live eternally in sin.

It is not a little curious and wonderful, that the same mind, as is often the case, should maintain the doctrine of natural ability in man to do all his duty, and yet that it is the duty of every individual to render the same service to God, in kind and in degree, that might have been rendered had he never sinned, and still admit that this degree of service, in this state, is naturally impossible. I not unfrequently meet with persons who call themselves new school men, who strongly contend for the doctrine of natural ability to do all God requires, and who will insist on men's being entirely holy, and urge and command the Church to forsake all sin, and yet inconsistently and absurdly maintain that to forsake all sin, and entirely to obey the law would imply the rendering of the same degree of service that they might have rendered had they never sinned, which they themselves admit to be impossible. I had in substance, the following conversation with a brother.

Do you believe in the doctrine of natural ability--that men are able to do all that God requires of them? Yes, he replied, and I insist as much as you do, upon their doing all their duty and being entirely holy. I asked again--Do you believe that doing their whole duty and being entirely holy implies entire obedience to the

law of God? Yes, be sure I do. And you believe that men are naturally able to do this? Yes, was his reply, and I insist upon it as much as you do. I then asked, "Do you believe that the law of God levels its claims to the present ability of men, so that men are entirely able perfectly to obey? No, he replied, and I think there is your error. You so explain the law as to bring it down to the present ability of man. How else, I asked, should I do? If I insist upon man's natural ability perfectly to obey it, am I not bound so to expound it as to level its claims to their natural ability? But what do you do? Do you believe that the law of God requires of a man just that degree of love and service and efficiency that he might have rendered had he never sinned? Yes, said he, and this is the very point where we differ. I exalt the law, and maintain that God requires that every moral agent, however long he has sinned, however ignorant he may be, and how much soever he may have curtailed his natural ability by sin, should render the same degree of service he would have done had he never sinned; while you, he continued, still addressing me, so expound the law as to level its claims to the creature's present natural ability. And, my brother, I asked, which is most consistent. I so expound the law as to level its claims to the present natural ability of the subject, and then consistently urge him up to immediate and perfect obedience. You maintain that he is able perfectly to obey, but yet that the law requires that which you confess to be naturally impossible, and then absurdly call upon him to perform that which is by your own thus showing naturally impossible. Now what consistency or candor is there in your professing to believe in his natural ability to do all his duty, and then maintain that the law requires natural impossibilities, and all at the same breath denounce him for not keeping the whole law; maintaining that he is able to keep it, and yet inconsistently contending that it requires that which you confess to be naturally impossible? You are bound, as an honest man, to give up the doctrine of natural ability; to publish to the world that men are entirely unable to obey the law of God; and no longer insult their intelligence and outrage their sense of justice, by requiring them to perfectly obey it; or else so to interpret it as to bring obedience within the limit of their natural ability, and cease to denounce those as heretics who consistently and conscientiously do this. I say that you are bound to do this.

And here let me ask, if it is not a shame and a sin for persons to hold and teach the doctrine of natural ability perfectly to obey the law--that the law requires natural impossibilities--call upon men to universally and perfectly to obey the law on pain of eternal death--and accuse those of being heretics and far gone in error, who are consistent enough, while they maintain the doctrine of natural ability, to maintain also that the law levels its claims to the present ability of men, and for this reason call upon all men, every where, unreservedly and perfectly to obey it?

The very language and spirit of the law manifestly levels its claims to present human ability. The question therefore is what are men naturally able to do or avoid? Observe, the point of inquiry before us now is, to what acts and states of mind does moral responsibility extend. As I have shown that the law is the standard and that it levels its claims to present ability, the true inquiry is what acts and states of mind are possible to men, or what acts and states of mind can be avoided by them? We have already seen that consciousness gives us the phenomena of our own minds; and that whatever we know with certainty we know through the medium of our own consciousness. It teaches us that the will is the controlling faculty of the mind--that volition necessitates outward action. Volition also necessitates thought, feeling or emotion by directing the attention of the mind to subjects of thought and to objects calculated to excite emotion. Consciousness then teaches us that whatever is possible to man he can do by willing, and any thing that does not follow the act of his will is naturally impossible to him. If he cannot do it by willing and endeavor, and by sincerely intending and aiming to do it, it is naturally impossible to him. Consequently man cannot be responsible for any thing which he cannot do or avoid, by willing and endeavoring to do or avoid it. For

example: If I will to move and my muscles do not obey volition, muscular action is impossible to me. If I will to think and thought does not follow, if I will to feel and direct my attention to corresponding objects and emotion does not follow, thought and emotion at the time are impossible to me. In short, whatever does not follow volition directly or indirectly as the natural and necessary result of volition, is impossible to me. So if I will to avoid any thing whatever, and the thing follows in spite of my volition, it is unavoidable by me. If by will and endeavor I cannot avoid it, the thing is necessary in such a sense that I am not responsible for its occurrence. Man therefore is not responsible,

1. For his nature being what it is;
2. Nor for the existence of the constitutional appetites and propensities;
3. Nor for the existence of the appetites or propensities under the appropriate circumstances of our being;
4. But he is responsible for their guidance, control and subjection to the law of God so far as they are subject to the control of the will.

But to the law and the testimony. The law of God is the rule, and by it we know to what acts and states of mind moral responsibility extends.

1. The law of God is in spirit a unit. Love, or benevolence, is the fulfilling of the whole law. This is repeatedly asserted in the Bible, that all the law is fulfilled in one word.

2. The love which constitutes obedience to the law of God is an act or state of the will, and consists in supreme, disinterested benevolence. This is all that the law requires; and man is responsible, and can be responsible only for this state of the will. If he is perfectly, and universally, and disinterestedly benevolent, he perfectly obeys the law of God. Whatever emotions, thoughts, acts, or states of mind do not follow from this state of the will, as its natural and necessary sequence, are naturally impossible to him, and therefore moral obligation cannot extend to them. Whatever thoughts, emotions, acts, or states of mind come to pass, notwithstanding this perfectly benevolent state of the will, he has no power to avoid, and therefore such acts, emotions, and states of mind, can have no moral character. To maintain the contrary of these positions, is not only to set all true philosophy aside, but is also a flat denial of the Bible itself.

3. It is abundantly taught, and again and again asserted in the Bible, that love, or benevolence, is the fulfilling of the law--that all the law is fulfilled in one word, love. And it should ever be borne in mind, and well considered by all men, that the Bible takes the very same ground upon this subject with true philosophy. Benevolence is good-willing. It is willing the good of being for its own sake, and on account of its intrinsic value; and, consequently, it is the very nature of benevolence to will every good according to its relative value, as perceived by the mind.

4. Every mind is to be guided by its own best judgment in respect to the relative value of different interests, except where God has revealed their relative value; in which case, this revelation is to decide us. But in applying the great principle of the law of God to human conduct, we are manifestly to be guided, not by the views which God has, nor which angels have, nor which any other beings except ourselves have, of the relative value of different interests. But we must judge for ourselves, under the best light afforded us, what is the relative value of the different interests with which we are surrounded, and how the law of God requires us to demean ourselves in respect to them. And every being wills right, or just as the law of God requires him to will, when he regards and treats every interest just as its relative value, as understood by

his own mind, demands. When he wills every good for its own sake, and the promotion of every interest according to its relative value in his own best judgment, he fully obeys the law of God.

5. We have seen that the will necessitates thought, action, and feeling. Therefore, moral character cannot strictly belong to thought, action, or feeling. If I will to stab a man, moral character does not attach to the dagger--to the hand that holds it--to the muscle that moves it--but to the mind in the exercise of willing. The same is true of thought or feeling. Mind is strictly responsible only for its voluntary acts. And the moral character of all acts and states of mind is found in that act of the will that produced them by a natural necessity.

6. We have seen, and know by our own consciousness, that man is free and sovereign. He is, therefore, responsible for any act or state of mind that can be produced or avoided, directly or indirectly by willing and endeavor, and for nothing more or less. For the plain reason that every thing, more or less, is naturally impossible to him. Hence, the law of God makes all virtue to consist in benevolence. And if the Bible did not represent all virtue as consisting in benevolence, a correct philosophy, as learned from our own consciousness, would compel us to reject its authority.

7. If the will, then, is conformed to the law of God nothing can be morally wrong for the time being. For whatever does not follow by natural necessity, from this state of the will, is naturally impossible to us. So, on the other hand, if the will is wrong, nothing can be morally right; for, whatever acts or states of mind result from a wrong choice, by a natural necessity, have the same character, so far as they have any character at all, with the choice that produced them. This is the philosophy of total depravity. We truly say, that if a man's heart is wrong every thing that he does is wrong. By his heart we mean his choice, intention, purpose. If his intention or choice be selfish, nothing can be morally right; because his character is as his intention is; and it is naturally impossible that the emotions and actions which follow from a selfish intention should be morally right. If this is not true philosophy, then the doctrine of the total depravity of the unregenerate is not true.

8. The doctrine of total depravity as consisting in the selfish state of the will, and of entire holiness, as consisting in the benevolent state of the will, must stand or fall together. If any thing about a man can be sinful, while his will is in a perfectly benevolent state, it must be true that when the will is in a perfectly selfish state, some things or many things in the same mind may be at the same time truly holy. And if a man can be all the while sinning, while his heart or will is in a state of disinterested benevolence, he can all the while be partly holy, while his heart or will is unregenerate and in a state of entire selfishness. If the emotions and actions of a man whose will is in a perfectly benevolent state can be sinful, then the emotions or actions of a man who is in a perfectly selfish state can be holy. So also, if the actions and emotions which follow from a selfish state of the will must of necessity be sinful, so the actions which follow from a benevolent state of the will must in the same sense be holy.

9. Let it be remembered, therefore, that whoever maintains that present sinfulness can be predicated of a man in a perfectly benevolent state of the will, must also admit that holiness may be predicated of one in a perfectly selfish state of the will. This is the doctrine of the Bible, and the doctrine of true philosophy, that true benevolence, or the willing of every good according to its relative value, as perceived by the mind and for its own sake, is the whole of virtue. God's interest is to be willed as the supreme good, and every other interest according to its relative value, so far as we are capable of knowing. And this is holiness, and nothing else is.

## V. What constitutes sin.

1. We have seen that the primary faculties of the human mind are Intellect, Sensibility, and Will.
2. We have seen that the mind, in its voluntary actions, has respect to motives--that it is not compelled to choose, but that in every instance of choice it is free and sovereign.
3. We have seen also, that virtue and vice, or holiness and sin, lie in the choice, or voluntary actions of the mind, and not in outward actions or involuntary states of mind.
4. I now observe, that motives are addressed to the mind, either through the Intelligence or the Sensibility, and in no other way. By this I mean that by the use of the Intellect, or through the medium of the feelings, does the mind perceive any thing which it accounts an object of choice. The Sensibility or feelings, invite the will or mind to seek the gratification of the appetites or propensities as an end, or for the mere sake of the gratification. The Intelligence points to God, and his law, and the Reason affirms that the mind ought to obey God, rather than to seek the gratification of the Sensibility. Through the Intelligence is revealed to the mind the existence, character, and claims of God. And the law of universal benevolence is seen by the Intelligence to be obligatory. Now to will in accordance with the impressions of the Sensibility, and seek as the great end of life the gratification of the propensities, is what the Bible denominates the "carnal mind," or "minding of the flesh." This is the very essence of sin. It is enmity against God. Let it be understood, then, that sin consists in the committal of the will, or in the devotion by the will of the whole being to self-interest or self-gratification. This choice of our own gratification as the supreme end of life is the wicked heart, and all the forms of sin are only developments, and necessary results of this supreme choice or intention of the mind. This is total moral depravity--enmity against God--entire consecration to self-gratification.

## VI. What holiness is.

1. It is, in a word, the obedience of the will or heart to the law of God as this law lies revealed in the Intelligence. I have just said that sin consists in the supreme devotion of the will, and consequently of all the powers of the mind to self-gratification. On the contrary, holiness consists in the supreme devotion of the will, and consequently of the whole being to the glory of God, and the good of the universe. This entire consecration to the glory of God and the good of the universe is the whole of virtue in any being, and in every world.

I now come to a direct examination of the text, and inquire,

## VII. What the will of God is.

1. The will of God is expressed in his law. He is himself in the same state of mind in which He requires all moral beings to be; that is, in a state of universal and disinterested benevolence. Holiness is a term that expresses the moral character of this state of his will or heart. Love or benevolence is the fulfilling of the law; and conformity of will in any being to the law of universal love is holiness.
2. We have seen that the will of God as expressed in his law, is that every interest shall be willed for its own sake and according to its relative value. This is the will of God, that moral agents should be universally and perfectly benevolent.

## VIII. How is the will of God done in Heaven?

We are directed in the text to pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. In answer, then, to this inquiry, let me say,

1. Perfectly and universally, so far as it is known.
2. As they are not omniscient they must be of course continually learning new relations, and consequently their obligations must continually increase, corresponding to their increased knowledge.
3. The obedience of heaven, therefore, must keep pace with their increasing knowledge, and therefore its inhabitants must continually grow in holiness.

I come now to a fundamental inquiry,

IX. What is implied in a sincere offering of this petition to God?

What is the real state of mind in which an individual must be, sincerely to offer this prayer?

1. It implies that the petitioner has confidence in the wisdom of God. If he did not believe that God was wise he could not innocently pray that his will might be universally done.
2. It implies confidence in his benevolence. If God is not benevolent, we have no right to pray that his will may be universally done. And if we do not believe Him to be universally and perfectly benevolent, we have no right to offer such a petition.
3. It implies that the petitioner believes, that the petition is according to the will of God. In other words, that it is the will of God that his will should be done as perfectly on earth as it is done in heaven.
4. It implies a belief in the petitioner, that it is possible that the will of God should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. For if he does not believe it possible, he cannot sincerely pray that it may be so.
5. It implies the belief that grace has made provision for his doing the will of God in earth as it is done in heaven. If he does not believe that such a thing is possible or that grace has made provision for the attainment of any such state, he mocks God in making such a request. And if he does not believe it to be according to the will of God, that persons are to attain to such a state on earth, it is downright rebellion in him to ask it.
6. It implies a willingness that God should require of all men just what He does require, for surely if the petitioner does not heartily consent to the requirements of God, he cannot sincerely pray that He may be universally obeyed.
7. It implies that the petitioner is willing that God should require of him in all respects just what He does require. For how can he sincerely say thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, unless he is willing that God should require of him just what He does require.
8. As we have seen that willing and doing are connected by a natural necessity, and that a man naturally and necessarily acts as he wills, the sincere offering of this petition implies that the petitioner really does the will of God so far as he knows it, as really as they do in heaven. If the will is in sincere conformity with the true spirit of the petition, every thing else that is under the control of the will must of necessity correspond with this state of the will. Consequently whenever a soul is in such a state as to offer this petition to God sincerely, he must, for the time being, be really doing the will of God, as truly, and in his

measure as perfectly, as they are in heaven.

9. It implies that the petitioner holds himself and all that he has, as fully and sacredly and practically at the disposal of God as do the inhabitants of heaven, so far as he knows the will of God.

10. It implies that he actually does all in his power to promote this end, as really, so far as he has knowledge, as they do in heaven.

11. It implies a state of will or heart in perfect conformity with the will of God, so far as he knows his will.

12. It implies the same perfection for the time being, and according to his knowledge, that is in God, and in the inhabitants of heaven. Do not start at this, for the whole of God's moral perfection lies in the benevolent state of his will. And whoever wills in perfect accordance with his will, so far as his will is known, whether on earth or in heaven, is in his measure, as really perfect as God is.

13. This state of mind is not a submission to the will of God as an abstraction, but is true disinterested benevolence. It is the very state of mind required by the law of God.

X. Nothing short of a state of mind that can and does offer this petition sincerely, is true religion.

1. Nothing short of this state of will or heart is conformity to the nature of things.

2. Every thing short of this state of the will is rebellion, and is virtually saying, "Let not the will of the Lord be universally done."

3. As this state of mind consists in willing every good for its own sake, and according to its relative value, nothing more or less than this state of mind can, by any possibility, be virtue.

4. God cannot allow any thing less than this to be virtue, nor can He require any thing more. As his will is in all things perfectly right, He can require nothing less than that every moral agent should be entirely conformed to it, so far as he knows it. He can never discharge any being from this obligation, nor accept that as obedience and call it virtue, that is not precisely according to his will. If it is not according to his will, it must be opposed to his will, and can, by no possibility, be true religion.

5. Coming into this state of mind is what we mean by conversion or regeneration. It is a change in the ultimate choice or intention of the mind, in other words, from selfishness, or the choice of self-gratification as the great end of life, to disinterested benevolence. This and nothing short of this, is regeneration or the new birth. It is and must be the beginning of true religion. This is holiness. It is sanctification, and the uninterrupted continuance of it is what is intended by a state of sanctification. And if, as new relations are perceived, the will comes into immediate conformity to all these new relations, and remains in this state of conformity, such a mind is in entire harmony with the will of God, and can sincerely say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

#### REMARKS.

1. This petition in the mouth of a selfish being is hypocrisy. It must be in all cases downright hypocrisy for a selfish man to offer this petition to God.

2. This petition is hypocrisy on the lips of any one whose will is not in entire and universal harmony with the will of God so far as that will is known. If there be any thing in which the will is not entirely conformed to

the known will of God, in offering this petition, the petitioner is a hypocrite, and abuses, flatters, and mocks God.

3. We see what Christ intended by the command, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Many persons feel shocked at the idea of any one being even for a moment without sin in this life. And to expect to be, in any proper sense, perfect in this life is with them wholly out of the question. From the manner in which they speak of the subject of perfection, it would seem Christ's command to be perfect as God is perfect is a most extravagant requisition, and something which Christ did not so much as expect would be obeyed in this world. If they are consistent also they must suppose that in requiring us to offer this petition to God, He must have intended that we should use the language of hyperbole, and not that we should seriously expect or even suppose it possible that the will of God should be done on earth by any human being as it is done in heaven. But the truth is that Christ simply intended to require men to be truly religious. We have just seen that nothing short of that state of the will that is for the time being as perfectly conformed to the will of God as is the will of the inhabitants of heaven, can by any possibility be true religion. He meant therefore merely to say, be truly religious. Be what God requires you to be. Do not rebel in any thing against the will of God, but be upright, sincere, or perfect, which is the same thing. It is therefore, as I have before said, true that every moral being that can sincerely offer this prayer is, and must be, in his measure, for the time being, so far as the state of his heart is concerned, as perfect as God.

4. In another sense, every moral being in the universe comes infinitely short of being as perfect as God is. God's knowledge is infinite, and his will is entirely conformed to his infinite knowledge. The knowledge of every other being is finite, and conformity of will to finite knowledge must of necessity fall infinitely short of conformity of will to infinite knowledge.

5. Entire conformity of heart or will to all known truth, is moral perfection, in the only sense in which a moral being is ever perfect.

In a little child who had but one ray of light and the knowledge of but one moral truth in his mind, entire conformity of heart to that truth would be in him moral perfection. Nothing less in him could be virtue, and nothing more could be required. Whether one, ten, ten thousand, or ten thousand million truths and relations are apprehended by the mind, nothing short of conformity to them all can by any possibility be virtue. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." In God nothing can be virtue short of conformity to all the truth known to Him. The same is true of the highest moral agent as well as the lowest. And nothing more or less is properly intended by moral perfection than universal conformity to all known truth.

6. Let not the distinction between perfection as a state and perfection as an act be overlooked. The thing for which we are required to pray in the text, no doubt, is a state of perfection, or of entire conformity to the will of God, and that this may be as universal on earth as it is in heaven.

7. A state of mind that can habitually offer this petition must be in entire conformity to all known truth, or in other words it must be in that state intended by entire consecration to God.

8. If the question be asked whether a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, let it be answered by inquiring whether a state of mind that can sincerely and habitually offer this petition to God, is attainable?

9. The petition for pardon in the Lord's prayer, must respect past sin, and cannot respect the state of mind in which this petition can be offered sincerely. For a man cannot be sinning while he is sincerely saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

10. What perfect mockery it is to teach thoughtless children to say the Lord's prayer and offer this petition. And what a dreadful influence it must have upon them to teach them to offer this prayer without instructing them with reference to its meaning, and informing them of the great wickedness of insincerity.

11. How this petition sounds as it is used in the Church service and repeated by hundreds and thousands of thoughtless sinners, who neither know nor care what they say. Many offer it and mean nothing by it; and some offer the petition and leave it for others to do the will of God, considering, it would seem, that it is their part to offer the petition, and leave it for others to live according to it.

12. The request for pardon is never lawful and acceptable to God, except only when the mind is in a state in which it can sincerely offer this petition. If this petition cannot be sincerely offered, and the soul cannot sincerely say "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," it is in a state of present rebellion against God, and therefore has no right to ask for forgiveness.

13. The great mass of professors of religion have, I fear, fallen entirely short of conceiving rightly of the nature of true religion, and it is high time that the subject were thoroughly investigated, and that the Lord's prayer in its true spirit and import should be deeply pondered by the Church, and the inquiry should be raised, what is implied in the sincere offering of this prayer to God. Unless these fundamental inquiries are started and pressed, until the Church come to an intelligent understanding of them, false hopes will continue to be cherished, and thousands of professing Christians will go down to hell.

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