

Unity of Moral Action

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Can obedience to moral law be partial?

What constitutes obedience to moral law?

We have seen in former lectures, that disinterested benevolence is all that the spirit of moral law requires; that is, that the love which it requires to God and our neighbor is good willing, willing the highest good or well-being of God, and of being in general, as an end, or for its own sake; that this willing is a consecration of all the powers, so far as they are under the control of the will, to this end. Entire consecration to this end must of course constitute obedience to the moral law. The next question is: Can consecration to this end be real, and yet partial in the sense of not being entire, for the time being? This conducts us to the second proposition, namely:

That obedience cannot be partial in the sense that the subject ever does, or can, partly obey and partly disobey at the same time.

That is, consecration, to be real, must be, for the time being, entire and universal. It will be seen that this discussion respects the simplicity of moral action, that is whether the choices of the will that have any degree of conformity to moral law, are always and necessarily wholly conformed or wholly disconformed to it. There are two distinct branches to this inquiry.

(1.) The one is, Can the will at the same time make opposite choices? Can it choose the highest good of being as an ultimate end, and at the same time choose any other ultimate end, or make any choices whatever inconsistent with this ultimate choice?

(2.) The second branch of this inquiry respects the strength or intensity of the choice. Suppose but one ultimate choice can exist at the same time, may not that choice be less efficient and intense than it ought to be? Let us take up these two inquiries in their order.

(1.) Can the will at the same time choose opposite and conflicting ultimate ends? While one ultimate end is chosen, can the will choose anything inconsistent with this end? In reply to the first branch of this inquiry I observe:

(a.) That the choice of an ultimate end is, and must be, the supreme preference of the mind. Sin is the supreme preference of self-gratification. Holiness is the supreme preference of the good of being. Can then two supreme preferences coexist in the same mind? It is plainly impossible to make opposite choices at the same time, that is, to choose opposite and conflicting ultimate ends.

(b.) All intelligent choice, as has been formerly shown, must respect ends or means. Choice is synonymous with intention. If there is a choice or intention, of necessity

something must be chosen or intended. This something must be chosen for its own sake, or as an end, or, for the sake of something else to which it sustains the relation of a means. To deny this were to deny that the choice is intelligent. But we are speaking of no other than intelligent choice, or the choice of a moral agent.

(c.) This conducts us to the inevitable conclusion that no choice whatever can be made, inconsistent with the present choice of an ultimate end. The mind cannot choose one ultimate end, and choose at the same time another ultimate end. But if this cannot be, it is plain that it cannot choose one ultimate end, and at the same time, while in the exercise of that choice, choose the means to secure some other ultimate end, which other end is not chosen. But if all choice must necessarily respect ends or means, and if the mind can choose but one ultimate end at a time, it follows that, while in the exercise of one choice, or while in the choice of one ultimate end, the mind cannot choose, for the time being, anything inconsistent with that choice. The mind, in the choice of an ultimate end, is shut up to the necessity of willing the means to accomplish that end; and before it can possibly will means to secure any other ultimate end, it must change its choice of an end. If, for example, the soul chooses the highest well-being of God and the universe as an ultimate end, it cannot while it continues to choose that end, use or choose the means to effect any other end. It cannot, while this choice continues, choose self-gratification, or anything else as an ultimate end, nor can it put forth any volition whatever known to be inconsistent with this end. Nay, it can put forth no intelligent volition whatever that is not designed to secure this end. The only possible choice inconsistent with this end is the choice of another ultimate end. When this is done, other means can be used or chosen, and not before. This, then, is plain, to wit, that obedience to moral law cannot be partial, in the sense either that the mind can choose two opposite ultimate ends at the same time, or that it can choose one ultimate end, and at the same time use or choose means to secure any other ultimate end. It "cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). It cannot will the good of being as an ultimate end, and at the same time will self-gratification as an ultimate end. In other words, I cannot be selfish and benevolent at the same time. It cannot choose as an ultimate end the highest good of being, and at the same time choose to gratify self as an ultimate end. Until self-gratification is chosen as an end, the mind cannot will the means of self gratification. This disposes of the first branch of the inquiry.

(2.) The second branch of the inquiry respects the strength or intensity of the choice. May not the choice of an end be real, and yet have less than the required strength or intensity? The inquiry resolves itself into this: Can the mind honestly intend or choose an ultimate end, and yet not choose it with all the strength or intensity which is required, or with which it ought to choose it? Now what degree of strength is demanded? By what criterion is this question to be settled? It cannot be that the degree of intensity required is equal to the real value of the end chosen, for this is infinite. The value of the highest well-being of God and the universe is infinite. But a finite being cannot be under obligation to exert infinite strength. The law requires him only to exert his own strength. But does he, or may he not, choose the right end, but with less than all his strength? All his strength lies in his will; the question, therefore, is, may he not will it honestly, and yet at the same time withhold a part of the strength of his will? No one can presume that the choice can

be acceptable unless it be honest. Can it be honest and yet less intense and energetic than it ought to be?

We have seen in a former lecture that the perception of an end is a condition of moral obligation to choose that end. I now remark that, as light in respect to the end is the condition of the obligation, so the degree of obligation cannot exceed the degree of light. That is, the mind must apprehend the valuable as a condition of the obligation to will it. The degree of the obligation must be just equal to the mind's honest estimate of the value of the end. The degree of the obligation must vary as the light varies. This is the doctrine of the Bible and of reason. If this is so, it follows that the mind is honest when, and only when, it devotes its strength to the end in view, with an intensity just proportioned to its present light, or estimate of the value of that end.

We have seen that the mind cannot will anything inconsistent with a present ultimate choice. If therefore, the end is not chosen with an energy and intensity equal to the present light, it cannot be because a part of the strength is employed in some other choice. If all the strength is not given to this object, it must be because some part of it is voluntarily withheld. That is, I choose the end, but not with all my strength, or I choose the end, but choose not to choose it with all my strength. Is this an honest choice, provided the end appears to me to be worthy of all my strength? Certainly it is not honest.

But again: it is absurd to affirm that I choose an ultimate end, and yet do not consecrate to it all my strength. The choice of any ultimate end implies that is the thing, and the only thing, for which we live and act; that we aim at, and live for nothing else, for the time being. Now what is intended by the assertion, that I may honestly choose an ultimate end, and yet with less strength or intensity than I ought? Is it intended that I can honestly choose an ultimate end, and yet not at every moment keep my will upon the strain, and will at every moment with the utmost possible intensity? If this be the meaning, I grant that it may be so. But I at the same time contend, that the law of God does not require that the will, or any other faculty, should be at every moment upon the strain, and the whole strength exerted at every moment. If it does, it is manifest that even Christ did not obey it. I insist that the moral law requires nothing more than honesty of intention, assumes that honesty of intention will and must secure just that degree of intensity which from time to time, the mind in its best judgment sees to be demanded. The Bible everywhere assumes that sincerity or honesty of intention is moral perfection; that it is obedience to the law. The terms sincerity and perfection in scripture language are synonymous. Uprightness, sincerity, holiness, honesty, perfection, are words of the same meaning in Bible language.

Again, it seems to be intuitively certain that if the mind chooses its ultimate end, it must in the very act of choice consecrate all its time, and strength, and being, to that end; and at every moment, while the choice remains, choose and act with an intensity in precise conformity with its ability and the best light it has. The intensity of the choice, and the strenuousness of its efforts to secure the end chosen, must, if the intention be sincere, correspond with the view which the soul has of the importance of the end chosen. It does not seem possible that the choice or intention should be real and honest unless this is so. To will at every moment with the utmost strength and intensity, is not only impossible,

but, were it possible to do so, could not be in accordance with the soul's convictions of duty. The irresistible judgment of the mind is, that the intensity of its action should not exceed the bound of endurance; that the energies of both soul and body should be so husbanded, as to be able to accomplish the most good upon the whole, and not in a given moment. But to return to the question: does the law of God require simply uprightness of intention? or does it require not only uprightness, but also a certain degree of intensity in the intention? Is it satisfied with simple sincerity or uprightness of intention, or, does it require that the highest possible intensity of choice shall exist at every moment? When it requires that we should love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength, does it mean that all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, shall be consecrated to this end, and be used up, from moment to moment, and from hour to hour, according to the best judgment which the mind can form of the necessity and expediency of strenuousness of effort? or does it mean that all the faculties of soul and body shall be at every moment on the strain to the uttermost? Does it mean that the whole being is to be consecrated to, and used up for God with the best economy of which the soul is capable or does it require that the whole being be not only consecrated to God, but be used up without any regard to economy, and without the soul's exercising any judgment or discretion in the case the law of God the law of reason, or of folly? Is it intelligible and just in its demands? Or is it perfectly unintelligible and unjust? Is it a law suited to the nature, relations, and circumstances, of moral agents? or has it no regard to them? If it has no regard to either, is it, can it be, moral law, and impose moral obligation? It seems to me that the law of God requires that all our power, and strength, and being, be honestly and continually consecrated to God, and held, not in a state of the utmost tension, but that the strength shall be expended and employed in exact accordance with the mind's honest judgment of what is, at every moment, the best economy for God. If this be not the meaning and the spirit of the law, it cannot be law, for it could be neither intelligible nor just. Nothing else can be a law of nature. What! Does, or an the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, and with all thy strength," require that every particle of my strength, and every faculty of my being, shall be in a state of the utmost possible tension (Deut. 6:5)? How long could my strength hold out, or my being last, under such a pressure as this? What reason, or justice, or utility, or equity, or wisdom, could there be in such a commandment as this? Would this be suited to my nature and relations? That the law does not require the constant and most intense action of the will, I argue for the following reasons:

1. No creature in heaven or earth could possibly know whether he ever for a single moment obeyed it. How could he know that no more tension could possibly be endured?
2. Such a requirement would be unreasonable, inasmuch as such a state of mind would be unendurable.
3. Such a state of constant tension and strain of the faculties could be of no possible use.
4. It would be uneconomical. More good could be effected by a husbanding of the strength.

5. Christ certainly obeyed the moral law; and yet nothing is more evident than that His faculties were not always on the strain.

Every one knows that the intensity of the will's action depends, and must depend, upon the clearness with which the value of the object chosen is perceived. It is perfectly absurd to suppose that the will should, or possibly can, act at all times with the same degree of intensity. As the mind's apprehensions of truth vary, the intensity of the will's action must vary, or it does not act rationally, and consequently not virtuously. The intensity of the actions of the will, ought to vary as light varies, and if it does not, the mind is not honest. If honest, it must vary as light and ability vary.

That an intention cannot be right and honest in kind and deficient in the degree of intensity, I argue:

1. From the fact that it is absurd to talk of an intention right in kind, while it is deficient in intensity. What does rightness in kind mean? Does it mean simply that the intention terminates on the proper object? But is this the right kind of intention, when only the proper object is chosen, while there is a voluntary withholding of the required energy of choice? Is this, can this be, an honest intention? If so, what is meant by an honest intention? Is it honest, can it be honest, voluntarily to withhold from God and the universe what we perceive to be their due, and what we are conscious we might render? It is a contradiction to call this honest. In what sense then may, or can, an intention be acceptable in kind, while deficient in degree? Certainly in no sense, unless known and voluntary dishonesty can be acceptable. But again, let me ask, what is intended by an intention being deficient in degree of intensity? If this deficiency be a sinful deficiency, it must be a known deficiency. That is, the subject of it must know at the time that his intention is in point of intensity less than it ought to be, or that he wills with less energy than he ought; or, in other words, that the energy of the choice does not equal, or is not agreeable to, his own estimate of the value of the end chosen. But this implies an absurdity. Suppose I choose an end, that is, I choose a thing solely on account of its own intrinsic value. It is for its value that I choose it. I choose it for its value, but not according to its value. My perception of its value led me to choose it; and yet, while I choose it for that reason, I voluntarily withhold that degree of intensity which I know is demanded by my own estimate of the value of the thing which I choose! This is a manifest absurdity and contradiction. If I choose a thing for its value, this implies that I choose it according to my estimate of its value. Happiness, for example, is a good in itself. Now, suppose I will its existence impartially, that is, solely on account of its intrinsic value; now, does not this imply that every degree of happiness must be willed according to its real or relative value? Can I will it impartially, for its own sake, for and only for its intrinsic value, and yet not prefer a greater to a less amount of happiness? This is impossible. Willing it on account of its intrinsic value implies willing it according to my estimate of its intrinsic value. So, it must be that an intention cannot be sincere, honest, and acceptable in kind, while it is sinfully deficient in degree.

As holiness consists in ultimate intention, so does sin. And as holiness consists in choosing the highest well-being of God and the good of the universe, for its own sake, or

as the supreme ultimate end of pursuit; so sin consists in willing, with a supreme choice or intention, self-gratification and self-interest. Preferring a less to a greater good, because it is our own, is selfishness. All selfishness consists in a supreme ultimate intention. By an ultimate intention, as I have said, is intended that which is chosen for its own sake as an end, and not as a means to some other end. Whenever a moral being prefers or chooses his own gratification, or his own interest, in preference to a higher good, because it is his own, he chooses it as an end, for its own sake, and as an ultimate end, not designing it as a means of promoting any other and higher end, nor because it is a part of universal good. Every sin, then, consists in an act of will. It consists in preferring self-gratification, or self-interest, to the authority of God, the glory of God, and the good of the universe. It is, therefore, and must be, a supreme ultimate choice, or intention. Sin and holiness, then, both consist in supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices, or intentions, and cannot by any possibility, coexist.

Five suppositions may be made, and so far as I can see, only five, in respect to this subject.

1. It may be supposed, that selfishness and benevolence can coexist in the same mind.
2. It may be supposed, that the same act or choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives which induce it.
3. It may be supposed, that an act or choice may be right, or holy in kind, but deficient in intensity or degree. Or
4. That the will, or heart, may be right, while the affections, or emotions, are wrong. Or
5. That there may be a ruling, latent, actually existing, holy preference, or intention, coexisting with opposing volitions.

Now, unless one of these suppositions is true, it must follow that moral character is either wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time. And now to the examination.

1. It may be supposed, that selfishness and benevolence can coexist in the same mind.

It has been shown that selfishness and benevolence are supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices, or intentions. They cannot, therefore, by any possibility, coexist in the same mind.

2. The next supposition is, that the same act or choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives. On this let me say:

(1.) Motives are objective or subjective. An objective motive is that thing external to the mind that induces choice or intention. Subjective motive is the intention itself.

(2.) Character, therefore, does not belong to the objective motive, or to that thing which the mind chooses; but moral character is confined to the subjective motive, which is synonymous with choice or intention. Thus we say a man is to be judged by his motives, meaning that his character is as his intention is. Multitudes of objective motives or considerations, may have concurred, directly or indirectly, in their influence to induce choice or intention; but the intention or subjective motive is always necessarily simple and indivisible. In other words, moral character consists in the choice of an ultimate end, and this end is to be chosen for its own sake, else it is not an ultimate end. If the end chosen be the highest well-being of God and the good of the universe if it be the willing or intending to promote and treat every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, it is a right, a holy motive, or intention. If it be anything else, it is sinful. Now, whatever complexity there may have been in the considerations that led the way to this choice or intention, it is self-evident that the intention must be one, simple, and indivisible.

(3.) Whatever complexity there might have been in those considerations that prepared the way to the settling down upon this intention, the mind in a virtuous choice has, and can have, but one ultimate reason for its choice, and that is the intrinsic value of the thing chosen. The highest well-being of God, the good of the universe, and every good according to its perceived relative value, must be chosen for one, and only one reason, and that is the intrinsic value of the good which is chosen for its own sake. If chosen for any other reason, the choice is not virtuous. It is absurd to say, that a thing is good and valuable in itself, but may be rightly chosen, not for that but for some other reason that God's highest well-being and the happiness of the universe are an infinite good in themselves, but are not to be chosen for that reason, and on their own account, but for some other reason. Holiness, then, must always consist in singleness of eye or intention. It must consist in the supreme disinterested choice, willing, or intending the good of God and of the universe, for its own sake. In this intention there cannot be any complexity. If there were, it would not be holy, but sinful. It is, therefore, sheer nonsense to say, that one and the same choice may have a complex character, on account of complexity of motive. For that motive in which moral character consists, is the supreme ultimate intention, or choice. This choice, or intention, must consist in the choice of a thing as an end, and for its own sake. The supposition, then, that the same choice or intention may have a complex character, on account of complexity in the motives, is wholly inadmissible.

If it be still urged, that the intention or subjective motive may be complex that several things may be included in the intention, and be aimed at by the mind and that it may, therefore, be partly holy and partly sinful I reply:

(4.) If by this it be meant that several things may be aimed at or intended by the mind at the same time, I inquire what things? It is true, that the supreme, disinterested choice of the highest good of being, may include the intention to use all the necessary means. It may also include the intention to promote every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value. These are all properly included in one intention; but this implies no such complexity in the subjective motive, as to include both sin and holiness.

(5.) If by complexity of intention is meant, that it may be partly disinterestedly benevolent, and partly selfish, which it must be to be partly holy and partly sinful, I reply, that this supposition is absurd. It has been shown that selfishness and benevolence consist in supreme, ultimate, and opposite choices or intentions. To suppose, then, that an intention can be both holy and sinful, is to suppose that it may include two supreme, opposite, and ultimate choices or intentions, at the same time; in other words, that I may supremely and disinterestedly intend to regard and promote every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, for its own sake; and at the same time, may supremely regard my own self-interest and self-gratification, and in some things supremely intend to promote my selfish interests, in opposition to the interests of the universe and the commands of God. But this is naturally impossible. An ultimate intention, then, may be complex in the sense, that it may include the design to promote every perceived interest, according to its relative value; but it cannot, by any possibility, be complex in the sense that it includes selfishness and benevolence, or holiness and sin.

3. The third supposition is, that holiness may be right, or pure in kind, but deficient in degree. On this, I remark:

(1.) We have seen that moral character consists in the ultimate intention.

(2.) The supposition, therefore, must be, that the intention may be right, or pure in kind, but deficient in the degree of its strength.

(3.) Our intention is to be tried by the law of God, both in respect to its kind and degree.

(4.) The law of God requires us to will, or intend the promotion of every interest in the universe, according to its perceived relative value, for its own sake; in other words, that all our powers shall be supremely and disinterestedly devoted to the glory of God, and the good of the universe.

(5.) This cannot mean, that any faculty shall at every moment be kept upon the strain, or in a state of utmost tension, for this would be inconsistent with natural ability. It would be to require a natural impossibility, and therefore be unjust.

(6.) It cannot mean that at all times, and on all subjects, the same degree of exertion shall be made; for the best possible discharge of duty does not always require the same degree or intensity of mental or corporeal exertion.

(7.) The law cannot, justly or possibly, require more than that the whole being shall be consecrated to God that we shall fully and honestly will or intend the promotion of every interest, according to its perceived relative value, and according to the extent of our ability.

(8.) Now the strength or intensity of the intention must, and ought, of necessity, to depend upon the degree of our knowledge or light in regard to any object of choice. If our

obligation is not to be graduated by the light we possess, then it would follow, that we may be under obligation to exceed our natural ability, which cannot be.

(9.) The importance which we attach to objects of choice, and consequently the degree of ardor or intenseness of the intention, must depend upon the clearness or obscurity of our views, of the real or relative value of the objects of choice.

(10.) Our obligation cannot be measured by the views which God has of the importance of those objects of choice. It is a well-settled and generally admitted truth, that increased light increases responsibility, or moral obligation. No creature is bound to will any thing with the intenseness or degree of strength with which God wills it, for the plain reason, that no creature sees its importance or real value, as He does. If our obligation were to be graduated by God's knowledge of the real value of objects, we could never obey the moral law, either in this world or the world to come, nor could any being but God ever, by any possibility, meet its demands.

The fact is, that the obligation of every moral being must be graduated by his knowledge. If, therefore, his intention be equal in its intensity to his views or knowledge of the real or relative value of different objects, it is right. It is up to the full measure of his obligation; and if his own honest judgment is not to be made the measure of his obligation, then his obligation can exceed what he is able to know; which contradicts the true nature of moral law, and is, therefore, false.

If conscious honesty of intention, both as it respects the kind and degree of intention, according to the degree of light possessed, be not entire obedience to moral law, then there is no being in heaven or earth, who can know himself to be entirely obedient; for all that any being can possibly know upon this subject, is that he honestly wills or intends, in accordance with the dictates of his reason, or the judgment which he has of the real or relative value of the object chosen. No moral being can possibly blame or charge himself with any default, when he is conscious of honestly intending, willing, or choosing, and acting, according to the best light he has; for in this case he obeys the law, as he understands it, and, of course, cannot conceive himself to be condemned by the law.

Good willing, or intending is, in respect to God, to be at all times supreme; and in respect to other beings, it is to be in proportion to the relative value of their happiness, as perceived by the mind. This is always to be the intention. The volitions, or efforts of the will to promote these objects, may vary, and ought to vary indefinitely in their intensity, in proportion to the particular duty to which, for the time being, we are called.

But further, we have seen that virtue consists in willing every good according to its perceived relative value, and that nothing short of this is virtue. But this is perfect virtue for the time being. In other words, virtue and moral perfection, in respect to a given act, or state of the will, are synonymous terms. Virtue is holiness. Holiness is uprightness. Uprightness is that which is just what, under the circumstances, it should be; and nothing else is virtue, holiness, or uprightness. Virtue, holiness, uprightness, moral perfection when we apply these terms to any given state of the will are synonymous. To talk,

therefore, of a virtue, holiness, uprightness, justice, right in kind, but deficient in degree, is to talk sheer nonsense. It is the same absurdity as to talk of sinful holiness, an unjust justice, a wrong rightness, an impure purity, an imperfect perfection, a disobedient obedience.

Virtue, holiness, uprightness, etc., signify a definite thing, and never anything else than conformity to the law of God. That which is not entirely conformed to the law of God is not holiness. This must be true in philosophy, and the Bible affirms the same thing. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). The spirit of this text as clearly and as fully assumes and affirms the doctrine under consideration, as if it had been uttered with that design alone.

4. The next supposition is, that the will, or heart, may be right, while the affections or emotions are wrong. Upon this I remark:

(1.) That this supposition overlooks the very thing in which moral character consists. It has been shown that moral character consists in the supreme ultimate intention of the mind, and that this supreme, disinterested benevolence, good willing or intention, is the whole of virtue. Now this intention originates volitions. It directs the attention of the mind, and therefore, produces thoughts, emotions, or affections. It also, through volition, produces bodily action. But moral character does not lie in outward actions, the movements of the arm, nor in the volition that moves the muscles; for that volition terminates upon the action itself. I will to move my arm, and my arm must move by a law of necessity. Moral character belongs solely to the intention that produced the volition that moved the muscles to the performance of the outward act. So intention produces the volition that directs the attention of the mind to a given object. Attention, by a natural necessity, produces thought, affection, or emotion. Now thought, affection, emotion, are all connected with volition, by a natural necessity; that is, if the attention is directed to an object, corresponding thoughts and emotions must exist, as a matter of course. Moral character no more lies in emotion, than in outward action. It does not lie in thought, or attention. It does not lie in the specific volition that directed the attention; but in that intention, or design of the mind, that produced the volition, which directed the attention, which, again, produced the thought, which, again, produced the emotion. Now the supposition, that the intention may be right, while the emotions or feelings of the mind may be wrong, is the same as to say, that outward action may be wrong, while the intention is right. The fact is, that moral character is, and must be, as the intention is. If any feeling or outward action is inconsistent with the existing ultimate intention, it must be so in spite of the agent. But if any outward action or state of feeling exists, in opposition to the intention or choice of the mind, it cannot, by any possibility, have moral character. Whatever is beyond the control of a moral agent, he cannot be responsible for. Whatever he cannot control by intention, he cannot control at all. Everything for which he can possibly be responsible, resolves itself into his intention. His whole character, therefore, is, and must be, as his intention is. If, therefore, temptations, from whatever quarter they may come, produce emotions within him inconsistent with his intention, and which he cannot control, he cannot be responsible for them.

(2.) As a matter of fact, although emotions, contrary to his intentions, may, by circumstances beyond his control, be brought to exist in his mind; yet, by willing to divert the attention of the mind from the objects that produce them, they can ordinarily be banished from the mind. If this is done as soon as in the nature of the case it can be, there is no sin. If it is not done as soon as in the nature of the case it can be, then it is absolutely certain that the intention is not what it ought to be. The intention is to devote the whole being to the service of God and the good of the universe, and of course to avoid every thought, affection, and emotion, inconsistent with this. While this intention exists, it is certain that if any object be thrust upon the attention which excites thoughts and emotions inconsistent with our supreme ultimate intention, the attention of the mind will be instantly diverted from those objects, and the hated emotion hushed, if this is possible. For, while the intention exists, corresponding volitions must exist. There cannot, therefore, be a right state of heart or intention, while the emotions, or affections, of the mind are sinful. For emotions are in themselves in no case sinful, and when they exist against the will, through the force of temptation, the soul is not responsible for their existence. And, as I said, the supposition overlooks that in which moral character consists, and makes it to consist in that over which the law does not properly legislate; for love, or benevolence, is the fulfilling of the law.

But here it may be said, that the law not only requires benevolence, or good willing, but requires a certain kind of emotions, just as it requires the performance of certain outward actions, and that therefore there may be a right intention where there is a deficiency, either in kind or degree of right emotion. To this I answer:

Outward actions are required of men, only because they are connected with intention, by a natural necessity. And no outward action is ever required of us, unless it can be produced by intending and aiming to do it. If the effect does not follow our honest endeavors, because of any antagonistic influence, opposed to our exertions, which we cannot overcome, we have, by our intentions, complied with the spirit of the law, and are not to blame that the outward effect does not take place. Just so with emotions. All we have power to do, is, to direct the attention of the mind to those objects calculated to secure a given state of emotion. If, from any exhaustion of the sensibility, or from any other cause beyond our control, the emotions do not arise which the consideration of that subject is calculated to produce, we are no more responsible for the absence or weakness of the emotion than we should be for the want of power or weakness of motion in our muscles, when we willed to move them, provided that weakness was involuntary and beyond our control. The fact is, we cannot be blameworthy for not feeling or doing that which we cannot do or feel by intending it. If the intention then is what it ought to be for the time being, nothing can be morally wrong.

5. The last supposition is, that a latent preference, or right intention, may coexist with opposing or sinful volitions. I formerly supposed that this could be true, but am now convinced that it cannot be true, for the following reasons:

(1.) Observe, the supposition is, that the intention or ruling preference may be right may really exist as an active and virtuous state of mind, while, at the same time, volition may exist inconsistent with it.

(2.) Now what is a right intention? I answer: Nothing short of this willing, choosing, or intending the highest good of God and of the universe, and to promote this at every moment, to the extent of our ability. In other words right intention is supreme, disinterested benevolence. Now what are the elements which enter into this right intention?

(a.) The choice or willing of every interest according to its perceived intrinsic value.

(b.) To devote our entire being, now and forever, to this end. This is right intention. Now the question is, can this intention coexist with a volition inconsistent with it? Volition implies the choice of something, for some reason. If it be the choice of whatever can promote this supremely benevolent end, and for that reason, the volition is consistent with the intention; but if it be the choice of something perceived to be inconsistent with this end, and for a selfish reason, then the volition is inconsistent with the supposed intention. But the question is, do the volition and intention coexist? According to the supposition, the will chooses, or wills, something for a selfish reason, or something perceived to be inconsistent with supreme, disinterested benevolence. Now it is plainly impossible, that this choice can take place while the opposite intention exists. For this selfish volition is, according to the supposition, sinful or selfish; that is, something is chosen for its own sake, which is inconsistent with disinterested benevolence. But here the intention is ultimate. It terminates upon the object chosen for its own sake. To suppose, then, that benevolence still remains in exercise, and that a volition coexists with it that is sinful, involves the absurdity of supposing, that selfishness and benevolence can coexist in the same mind, or that the will can choose, or will, with a supreme preference or choice, two opposites at the same time. This is plainly impossible. Suppose I intend to go to the city of New York as soon as I possibly can. Now, if, on my way, I will to loiter needlessly a moment, I necessarily relinquish one indispensable element of my intention. In willing to loiter, or turn aside to some other object for a day, or an hour, I must of necessity, relinquish the intention of going as soon as I possibly can. I may not design finally to relinquish my journey, but I must of necessity relinquish the intention of going as soon as I can. Now, virtue consists in intending to do all the good I possibly can, or in willing the glory of God and the good of the universe, and intending to promote them to the extent of my ability. Nothing short of this is virtue. If at any time, I will something perceived to be inconsistent with this intention, I must, for the time being, relinquish the intention, as it must indispensably exist in my mind, in order to be virtue. I may not come to the resolution, that I will never serve God anymore; but I must of necessity relinquish, for the time being, the intention of doing my utmost to glorify God, if at any time I put forth a selfish volition. For a selfish volition implies a selfish intention. I cannot put forth a volition intended to secure an end until I have chosen the end. Therefore, a holy intention cannot coexist with a selfish volition. It must be, therefore, that in every sinful choice, the will of a holy being must necessarily drop the exercise of supreme, benevolent intention, and pass into an opposite state of choice; that is, the agent must cease, for the

time being, to exercise benevolence, and make a selfish choice. For, be it understood, that volition is the choice of a means to an end; and of course a selfish volition implies a selfish choice of an end. Having briefly examined the several suppositions that can be made in regard to the mixed character of actions, I will now answer a few objections; after which, I will bring this philosophy, as briefly as possible, into the light of the Bible.

Objection: Does a Christian cease to be a Christian, whenever he commits a sin? I answer:

1. Whenever he sins, he must, for the time being, cease to be holy. This is self-evident. Whenever he sins, he must be condemned; he must incur the penalty of the law of God. If he does not, it must be because the law of God is abrogated. But if the law of God be abrogated, he has no rule of duty; consequently, he can neither be holy nor sinful. If it be said that the precept is still binding upon him, but that, with respect to the Christian, the penalty is forever set aside, or abrogated, I reply, that to abrogate the penalty is to repeal the precept; for a precept without penalty is no law. It is only counsel or advice. The Christian, therefore, is justified no longer than he obeys, and must be condemned when he disobeys; or Antinomianism is true. Until he repents, he cannot be forgiven. In these respects, then, the sinning Christian and the unconverted sinner are upon precisely the same ground.

2. In two important respects the sinning Christian differs widely from the unconverted sinner:

(1.) In his relations to God. A Christian is a child of God. A sinning Christian is a disobedient child of God. An unconverted sinner is a child of the devil. A Christian sustains a covenant relation to God; such a covenant relation as to secure to him that discipline which tends to reclaim and bring him back, if he wanders away from God. "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psalms 89:30-34).

(2.) The sinning Christian differs from the unconverted man, in the state of his sensibility. In whatever way it takes place, every Christian knows that the state of his sensibility in respect to the things of God, has undergone a great change. Now it is true, that moral character does not lie in the sensibility, nor in the will's obeying the sensibility. Nevertheless our consciousness teaches us, that our feelings have great power in promoting wrong choice on the one hand, and in removing obstacles to right choice on the other. In every Christian's mind there is, therefore, a foundation laid for appeals to the sensibilities of the soul, that gives truth a decided advantage over the will. And multitudes of things in the experience of every Christian, give truth a more decided advantage over his will, through the intelligence, than is the case with unconverted sinners.

Objection: Can a man be born again, and then be unborn? I answer:

If there were anything impossible in this, then perseverance would be no virtue. None will maintain, that there is anything naturally impossible in this, except it be those who hold to physical regeneration. If regeneration consists in a change in the ruling preference of the mind, or in the ultimate intention, as we shall see it does, it is plain, that an individual can be born again, and afterwards cease to be virtuous. That a Christian is able to apostatize, is evident, from the many warnings addressed to Christians in the Bible. A Christian may certainly fall into sin and unbelief, and afterwards be renewed, both to repentance and faith.

Objection: Can there be no such thing as weak faith, weak love, and weak repentance? I answer:

If you mean comparatively weak, I say, yes. But if you mean weak, in such a sense as to be sinful, I say, no. Faith, repentance, love, and every Christian grace, properly so called, do and must consist in acts of will, and resolve themselves into some modification of supreme, disinterested benevolence.

I shall, in a future lecture, have occasion to show the philosophical nature of faith. Let it suffice here to say, that faith depends upon the clearness or obscurity of the intellectual apprehension of truth. Faith, to be real or virtuous, must embrace whatever of truth is apprehended by the intelligence for the time being. Various causes may operate to divert the intelligence from the objects of faith, or to cause the mind to perceive but few of them, and those in comparative obscurity. Faith may be weak, and will certainly and necessarily be weak in such cases, in proportion to the obscurity of the views. And yet, if the will or heart confides so far as it apprehends the truth, which it must do to be virtuous at all, faith cannot be weak in such a sense as to be sinful; for if a man confides so far as he apprehends or perceives the truth, so far as faith is concerned he is doing his whole duty.

Again, faith may be weak in the sense, that it often intermits and gives place to unbelief. Faith is confidence, and unbelief is the withholding of confidence. It is the rejection of truth perceived. Faith is the reception of truth perceived. Faith and unbelief, then, are opposite states of choice, and can by no possibility coexist.

Faith may be weak also in respect to its objects. The disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ knew so little of Him, were so filled with ignorance and the prejudices of education, as to have very weak faith in respect to the Messiahship, power, and divinity of their Master. He speaks of them as having but little confidence, and yet it does not appear that they did not implicitly trust Him, so far as they understood Him. And although, through ignorance, their faith was weak, yet there is no evidence, that when they had any faith at all they did not confide in whatever of truth they apprehended. But did not the disciples pray, "Increase our faith?" (Luke 17:5). I answer: Yes. And by this they must have intended to pray for instruction; for what else could they mean? Unless a man means this, when he prays for faith, he does not know what he prays for. Christ produces faith by

enlightening the mind. When we pray for faith, we pray for light. And faith, to be real faith at all, must be equal to the light we have. If apprehended truth be not implicitly received and confided in, there is no faith, but unbelief. If it be, faith is what it ought to be, wholly unmixed with sin.

But did not one say to our Lord, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief" (Mark 9:24), thus implying, that he was in the exercise both of faith and unbelief at the same time? I answer yes, but:

1. This was not inspiration.
2. It is not certain that he had any faith at all.
3. If he had, and prayed understandingly, he meant nothing more than to ask for an increase of faith, or for such a degree of light as to remove his doubts in respect to the divine power of Christ.

Again, it is objected that this philosophy contradicts Christian experience. To this I reply,

That it is absurd to appeal from reason and the Bible to empirical consciousness which must be the appeal in this case. Reason and the Bible plainly attest the truth of the theory here advocated. What experience is then to be appealed to, to set their testimony aside? Why, Christian experience, it is replied. But what is Christian experience? How shall we learn what it is? Why surely by appealing to reason and the Bible. But these declare that if a man offend in one point, he does and must, for the time being, violate the spirit of the whole law. Nothing is or can be more express than is the testimony of both reason and revelation upon this subject. Here, then, we have the unequivocal decision of the only court of competent jurisdiction in the case; and shall we fool ourselves by appealing from this tribunal to the court of empirical consciousness? Of what does that take cognizance? Why, of what actually passes in the mind; that is, of its mental states. These we are conscious of as facts. But we call these states Christian experience. How do we ascertain that they are in accordance with the law and gospel of God? Why only by an appeal to reason and the Bible. Here, then, we are driven back to the court from which we had before appealed, whose judgment is always the same.

Objection: But it is said, this theory seems to be true in philosophy, that is, the intelligence seems to affirm it, but it is not true in fact.

Answer: If the intelligence affirms it, it must be true, or reason deceives us. But if the reason deceives in this, it may also in other things. If it fails us here, it fails us on the most important of all questions. If reason gives false testimony, we can never know truth from error upon any moral subject. We certainly can never know what religion is or is not, if the testimony of reason can be set aside. If the reason cannot be safely appealed to, how are we to know what the Bible means? For it is the faculty by which we get at the truth of the oracles of God.

These are the principal objections to the philosophical view I have taken of the simplicity of moral action, that occur to my mind. I will now briefly advert to the consistency of this philosophy with the scriptures.

1. The Bible every where seems to assume the simplicity of moral action. Christ expressly informed His disciples, that they could not serve God and mammon. Now by this He did not mean, that a man could not serve God at one time and mammon at another; but that he could not serve both at the same time. The philosophy that makes it possible for persons to be partly holy and partly sinful at the same time, does make it possible to serve God and mammon at the same time, and thus flatly contradicts the assertion of our Savior.

2. James has expressly settled this philosophy, by saying, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Here he must mean to assert, that one sin involves a breach of the whole spirit of the law, and is, therefore, inconsistent with any degree of holiness existing with it. Also, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, My brethren, bear olive-berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield saltwater and fresh" (James 3:11, 12). In this passage he clearly affirms the simplicity of moral action; for by the "the same place" he evidently means, the same time, and what he says is equivalent to saying, that a man cannot be holy and sinful at the same time.

3. Christ has expressly taught that nothing is regeneration, or virtue, but entire obedience, or the renunciation of all selfishness. "Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

4. The manner in which the precepts and threatening of the Bible are usually given, shows that nothing is regarded as obedience, or virtue, but doing exactly that which God commands.

I might go to great lengths in the examination of scripture testimony, but it cannot be necessary, or in these lectures expedient, I must close this lecture with a few inferences and remarks.

1. It has been supposed by some, that the simplicity of moral action has been resorted to as a theory, by the advocates of entire sanctification in this life, as the only consistent method of carrying out their principle. To this I reply:

(1.) That this theory is held in common, both by those who hold and those who deny the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life.

(2.) The truth of the doctrine of entire sanctification does not depend at all upon this philosophical theory for its support; but may be established by Bible testimony, whatever the philosophy of holiness may be. 2. Growth in grace consists in two things:

(1.) In the stability or permanency of holy, ultimate intention.

(2.) In intensity or strength. As knowledge increases, Christians will naturally grow in grace, in both these respects.

3. The theory of the mixed character of moral actions, is an eminently dangerous theory, as it leads its advocates to suppose, that in their acts of rebellion there is something holy, or, more strictly, there is some holiness in them, while they are in the known commission of sin.

It is dangerous, because it leads its advocates to place the standard of conversion, or regeneration, exceedingly low to make regeneration, repentance, true love to God, faith, etc., consistent with the known or conscious commission of present sin. This must be a highly dangerous philosophy. The fact is, regeneration, or holiness, under any form, is quite another thing than it is supposed to be, by those who maintain the philosophy of the mixed character of moral action. There can scarcely be a more dangerous error than to say, that while we are conscious of present sin, we are or can be in a state of acceptance with God.

4. The false philosophy of many leads them to adopt a phraseology inconsistent with truth; and to speak as if they were guilty of present sin, when in fact they are not, but are in a state of acceptance with God.

5. It is erroneous to say that Christians sin in their most holy exercises, and it is as injurious and dangerous as it is false. The fact is, holiness is holiness, and it is really nonsense to speak of a holiness that consists with sin.

6. The tendency of this philosophy is to quiet in their delusions those whose consciences accuse them of present sin, as if this could be true, and they, notwithstanding, in a state of acceptance with God.

7. The only sense in which obedience to moral law can be partial is, that obedience may be intermittent. That is, the subject may sometimes obey, and at other times disobey. He may at one time be selfish, or will his own gratification, because it is his own, and without regard to the well-being of God and his neighbor, and at another time will the highest well-being of God and the universe, as an end, and his own good in proportion to its relative value. These are opposite choices, or ultimate intentions. The one is holy; the other is sinful. One is obedience, entire obedience to the law of God; the other is disobedience, entire disobedience, to the law. These, for aught we can see, may succeed each other an indefinite number of times, but coexist they plainly cannot.