

Critical Review of B. B. Warfield's "Perfectionism: The Theology of Charles G. Finney"

by Bill Nicely

"It is admitted that theologians are not infallible, in the interpretation of Scripture. It may, therefore, happen in the future, as it has in the past, that interpretations of the Bible, long confidently received, must be modified or abandoned, to bring revelation into harmony with what God teaches in His works." Charles Hodge

Introduction

In the field of theological inquiry it is quite common for men/women to publish their views. When theologians state their particular views in writing it is most often with the express purpose of convincing the reader that the view held by the writer is accurate and true. When a writer would state such views with such attendant purpose it is usually with the understanding that such public display of those views subjects itself to public scrutiny and criticism. Charles Grandison Finney in 1846-1847 published two volumes containing his views on Systematic Theology. In 1851 this work was revised, enlarged and partly rewritten by the author. The 1851 edition of his Systematic Theology was never revised by himself and, therefore, may be said to accurately contain his views and positions on the subjects contained in that volume.

Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield wrote several articles on the subject of perfectionism which were originally published in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* and, subsequent to his death, were compiled and published in 1931 in a two-volume set of books by Oxford University Press titled *Perfectionism*. In Volume II, Chapter I of that set Warfield addresses Oberlin Perfectionism and as Section IV of that chapter, pages 166-215, "The Theology of Charles G. Finney." It is clear from the contents of this section that Warfield disagreed with Finney on numerous issues. The following is a review of that article.

What is not my intent.

I do not intend to disprove Benjamin Warfield in his theological views. I am summarily disqualified due to a lack of familiarity with the great body of his written works. I do not intend to prove Charles G. Finney in his theological views. In my mind this is unnecessary due to the thoroughness of his Systematic Theology. An attempt on my part at proving his views would serve only to dilute his work. His work stands on its own. I do not intend to address Benjamin Warfield's intentions or motives. This lies wholly within the purview and judgement of God.

What is my intent.

I intend to demonstrate that the article by Benjamin Warfield is remarkably lacking in substantive argument. I propose to demonstrate this lack of argument through the use of formal logic principles. I intend to demonstrate that the article is wrought with misrepresentations. I intend that this review should be non-inflammatory and unprejudiced, the reader determining for himself/herself if I was successful. The intent is to persuade the reader that Benjamin Warfield's conclusions about Finney's Systematic Theology are not substantiated by his arguments and, further, that they are not an accurate representation of Finney's views. My ultimate purpose is to convince the reader that Finney's Theology was not disproved by Benjamin Warfield. This would hopefully lead to an interest in Finney's work so that the reader would read Finney's Systematic Theology with a mind unbiased by faulty prejudices. Brother/sister, friend, reader, come let us reason together, the truth will do us good.

Method

Formal logical argument is a tedious and quite laborious task. This requires a working knowledge of the principles involved. These principles include, but are not limited to, first truths, necessary laws of the mind (reasoning), valid premises/conclusions and logical fallacies. These are described/defined in most textbooks on reasoning and logic. A brief review of these concepts follows.

Different Classes of Truth

Truth is, in its most commonly used sense, synonymous with reality, fact, actuality. The study and attainment of truth require the ability and exercise of thought. We attain truth through three primary means: consciousness, reasoning and the senses.

Consciousness and Self-Evident Truths

Consciousness reveals those truths to our minds that are self-evident truths. These truths are universal and necessary in that they are perceived as obligatory upon all moral agents and require no proof or evidence of their existence. The mind perceives or assumes them as true without reasoning or argument. Some truths that belong to this class are as follows:

Cause and effect - The premise that shows that all effects have a cause. There are no uncaused effects.

Space - The idea of matter, that it takes up space.

Time - The idea of duration that we symbolize as time.

Existence - That we exist; I think, therefore, I am.

Personal identity - The idea of personal existence and free will; one is the originator of his own actions.

Existence of others - The idea of the presence of other moral agents.

Individuality - The idea that existence is separate from other existences (other moral agents).

Intellect - The possession of the ability to think, reason.

Sensibility - The possession of the ability to feel, sense.

Will - The possession of the ability to choose, act.

Conscience - The idea of blame and praise for actions of moral choice.

Reasoning (The Intellect)

Reasoning is the process of thought that draws inferences and conclusions from known premises. Often the premises that are present through consciousness are assumed in the reasoning process. E.g., The process of reasoning assumes the capacity for thought or the presence of intellect and existence. Another term that is synonymous with reasoning is argument. A formal argument, known as a syllogism, contains three parts: the major premise, the minor premise and the conclusion. An example:

All men are mortal, (major premise)
Socrates is a man, (minor premise)
Therefore, Socrates is mortal. (conclusion)

Self-evident truths are often used in the reasoning process as major premises. E.g., I exist. Each effect has a cause. I did not cause my own existence. Therefore, the cause of my existence rests outside self. A proposition is a suggested conclusion that is then tested or proved by the process of formal argument. Reasoning provides a second class or tier of truths (as contrasted with self-evident truths) to the mind. These are certain to the mind only when the supporting premises are based on self-evident truths and are the result of a valid argument.

Senses

The mind receives data through the senses and makes that information available to the mind for thought. We see other men and therefore acknowledge the existence of other moral agents (We may only have received the truth of that existence through our eyes, barring any other sensory information).

Reasoning

Some arguments contain several premises. This is a legitimate form of argument. An argument is said to be valid when it contains true premises and logical conclusions. An argument is said to be invalid when it contains untrue or irrelevant premises and/or the conclusions drawn do not follow (non sequitur).

Fallacies

A logical fallacy is any mistake in reasoning. An invalid argument results when logical fallacies are introduced into the process of reasoning. Listed below are some commonly occurring logical fallacies including definitions and some examples.

Over-Generalization (Secundum quid)

Over-generalization in an argument takes place when one makes a generalization from a limited number of cases. The premises of the argument may be true but the conclusion is exaggerated because of the limited database.

The two people I met in Anytown, USA were dishonest,
Therefore, all residents in Anytown, USA are dishonest.

Personal Attacks (Ad hominem)

A personal attack draws attention away from the argument or premises and seeks to discredit that argument by attacking the maker of the argument. This can be done in many ways from a direct insult to an inferred incompetence.

How can you believe what he says considering that he is a Calvinist?

Cause and Effect (Post hoc ergo propter hoc)

This fallacy takes place when someone claims that a particular truth naturally follows from circumstances when in fact no direct connection has been made.

The rooster crowed each morning.
Each morning that he crowed the sun rose afterwards.
He then concluded that his crowing was the
cause of the sun rising.

Appeal to Authority (Ad verecundiam)

This is a common fallacy employed in theological debate. When a famous person agrees/agreed with a conclusion there is a tendency to ascribe trueness to that conclusion based on the reputation of the famous person. Sometimes the person will claim the authority of the Bible when no connection has been made or the argument is inconsistent with Scripture. The conclusion is either true or untrue based on necessary laws of the mind. Agreement/disagreement of any individual does not influence the truth of a statement.

This view on the atonement was also held by Augustine or Calvin or Warfield or . . . (any person revered as authoritative).

Appeal to the Crowd (Ad populum)

This fallacy is related to the Appeal to Authority in that no valid argument is given, only hearsay. The difference is that the argument is based on mass appeal rather than individual agreement. Regardless of the number who have held the view in the past, the argument is either valid or invalid on its own.

This view on the atonement has been held by all orthodox believers in the history of the church. Or, everyone knows that the world is flat.

Circular Arguments (Circulus in probando)

This fallacy takes place when the truth to be proven is assumed true as a premise.

My view on the atonement is the true one.
Your view is different from my view and is therefore false.
Since your view is obviously false, mine must be true.

Two-Valued Or Black/White Approach

This fallacy states that there are only two possible sides to an argument or that a side under consideration is either right or wrong, hence, black/white.

You are either Calvinist or Arminian. There are no other choices/possibilities.

I elaborate on the idea of fallacies out of necessity to lay a groundwork for exposing these logical fallacies as they appear in Warfield's article. Warfield employs a device in argument known as *reductio ad absurdum*. Webster defines this, "to disprove a proposition by showing the absurdity to which it leads when carried to its logical conclusion." The idea is to expose the underlying premises or the resultant conclusions as absurd. This is a valid form of logical argument only when sound reasoning is employed. Warfield, however, employed many logical fallacies in the use of this device, as will be shown.

I have organized the subjects addressed by Warfield in his article to aid in the systematic study of them. Warfield used quotes from Finney's work to lay before the mind of the reader what Finney was teaching. Warfield would then typically draw conclusions and/or inferences from these quotations and proceed on the basis of *reductio ad absurdum* as previously mentioned.

This approach appears like this:

Introductory statements (includes Warfield's interpretation of Finney)

Quotes from Finney

Arguments

Inferences and Conclusions (Reductio Ad Absurdum)

This article follows this scheme:

Subject heading

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

This section contains Warfield's interpretation (what Warfield believes Finney to mean or what Warfield suggests Finney meant). Watch for the subtle differences he injects into Finney's views to represent (often misrepresent) Finney's intended meaning.

Quotes from Finney

These are direct quotes from Finney's Systematic Theology. Often snippets of statements are used for dramatic effect but, when taken in context they suggest a different meaning. Compare these sections with Finney's conclusions (which follow at the end of each subject).

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

This is where Warfield employs *reductio ad absurdum* and attempts to disprove Finney's views. This is what is most often being responded to in *Analysis of arguments*.

Analysis of arguments

This section contains the bulk of the logical argument and demonstration of Warfield's fallacies.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

Finney speaks for himself. The strongest argument available.

MORAL ABILITY and THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

". . . obligation is limited by ability; that we are able to do all that we are under obligation to do; that nothing which we cannot do lies within the range of our duty. He himself represents this as the fundamental principle of his teaching-"1 "He means . . . that man has by his natural constitution as a free agent the inalienable power to obey God perfectly."2 ". . . along with their ability to do it, is an equally strong assertion of their universal unwillingness to do it, on the ground of which is erected an assertion of the necessity of the influence of the Spirit for salvation."3 "The mode of securing these efforts, however, is purely suasive."4 "Beyond the presentation of motive to action he will not permit the Spirit to go in the way of securing man's salvation."5

Quotes from Finney employed

". . . that obligation implies ability in the sense that it is possible for man to be all that he is under obligation to be; that by willing, he can directly or indirectly do all that God requires him to do."6 "This ability is called a natural ability, because it belongs to man as a moral agent, in such a sense that without it he could not be a proper subject of command, of reward or punishment. That is, without this liberty or ability he could not be a moral agent, and a proper subject of moral government."7 "Moral agency implies free agency. Free agency implies liberty of will. Liberty of will implies ability of will."8 ". . . ability to obey God . . . the possession of the power adequate to the performance of that which is required."9 ". . . from the beginning they universally and voluntarily consecrate their powers to the gratification of self, and that therefore they will not, unless they are divinely persuaded, by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, in any case turn and consecrate their powers to the service of God."10 "The question in debate is not whether men do, in any case, use the powers of nature in the manner that God requires, without the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, but whether they are able so to use them."11 "I admit and maintain that regeneration is always induced and effected by the personal agency of the Holy Spirit . . . It is agreed that all who are converted, sanctified and saved, are converted, sanctified and saved by God's own agency; that is, God saves them by securing, by His own agency, their personal and individual holiness."12 ". . . God will convert and sanctify the elect . . . by free grace drawing and securing the concurrence of the free will."13 ". . . that men are able to resist the utmost influence that the truth can exert upon them; and therefore have ability to defeat the wisest, most benevolent, and most powerful exertions which the Holy Spirit can make to effect their sanctification."14

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"They will not; he will not admit that they cannot."15 "A universal will-not, like this, has a very strong appearance of a cannot. A condition in which a particular effect follows with absolute certainty, at least suggests the existence of a causal relation . . ."16 "Surely the action of the Spirit on the elect has the appearance of having a character more causal in nature than is expressed by the term persuasion."17 "It speaks volumes meanwhile for the strength of Finney's conviction that man is quite able to save himself and in point of fact actually does, in every instance of his salvation, save himself, that he maintained it in the face of such broad facts of experience to the contrary."18 ". . . this extravagant assertion of plenary ability."19

Analysis of arguments

Warfield employs the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* or *cause and effect* (Remember the example of the crowing rooster?). He infers that since man invariably sins that this is *de facto* evidence of a causal relationship. All that he can logically state is that the action invariably follows, nothing more. Also, when a premise is equally consistent with both propositions in an argument then it proves neither. At this stage neither Warfield (man is constitutionally depraved and thus unable) nor Finney (man is voluntarily depraved and thus able) has proven his proposition. Both propositions are

consistent with the isolated concept of man's total moral depravity. In regards to man's ability to save himself Warfield confuses man's ability to choose, which is a condition (not without which) of salvation, with the ground (for the sake of which) of salvation, which is God's benevolence as displayed in His mercy. This confusion between conditions and grounds leads Warfield to many illogical conclusions regarding Finney's theology. Warfield does not logically prove his point or logically disprove Finney's point but, merely expresses dogmatic opinion without addressing the real argument.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"The question of ability is one of great practical importance. To deny the ability of man to obey the commandments of God, is to represent God as a hard master, as requiring a natural impossibility of His creatures on pain of eternal damnation. This necessarily begets in the mind that believes it hard thoughts of God. The intelligence cannot be satisfied with the justice of such a requisition. In fact, so far as this error gets possession of the mind and gains assent, just so far it naturally and necessarily excuses itself for disobedience, or for not complying with the commandments of God."²⁰ And lest any should think that Finney bethrones man's ability, "Let it be distinctly understood before we close this subject, that we do not deny, but strenuously maintain, that the whole plan of salvation and all the influences, both providential and spiritual, which God exerts in the conversion, sanctification and salvation of sinners, is grace from first to last . . ." ²¹

FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"It may be taken as revealing Finney's own consciousness of the essentially ethical character of his treatise. It is a system of teleological [Webster defines, "relating to design or purpose in nature"] ethics which he presents to us; or, to be more precise, we may perhaps say in modern phraseology, that it is a system of hedonistic [happiness] as distinguished from eudaemonistic [welfare] ethics . . . is the ethical end, the ultimate object to be achieved by action and conduct, the standard and final criterion of what ought to be . . ." ²² ". . . that happiness is the chief good and benevolence the comprehensive virtue, and actions are good or bad according as they do or do not manifest the one and promote the other."²³ "The 'good' has become the 'happiness' - or the 'welfare'- of the whole body of sentient beings; and the 'right' that which tends to this."²⁴ "Thus all obligation is reduced strictly to the single obligation to choose the good of being as our supreme ultimate end. The ground of obligation is . . . its intrinsic value to being."²⁵ ". . . Charles Hodge is doubtless justified . . . to reduce Finney's teleological ethics to absurdity. He says that it belongs to the same mintage with Jesuit 'intentionalism'-'the means are justified by the end' . . . When stated in an abstract form the observation made by Hodge is so immediately obvious, as not to require argument for its justification." And, ". . . the means acquire all the moral quality which they possess from their relation as means to their end. It was the taunt that this involved [intentionalism] . . . which stung Finney to his unavailing answer."²⁶

Quotes from Finney

"But if the rightarian be the true theory, then disinterested benevolence is sin. According to this scheme, the right, and not the good of being, is the end to, and for which, God and all moral agents ought to live. According to this theory, disinterested benevolence can never be duty, can never be right, but always and necessarily wrong." And, "If moral agents ought to will the right for the sake of the right, or will good, not for the sake of the good, but for the sake of the relation of rightness existing between the choice and the good, then to will the good for its own sake is sin. It is not willing the right end. It is willing the good and not the right as an ultimate end. These are opposing theories. Both cannot be true. Which is the right to will, the good for its own sake, or the right? Let universal reason answer."²⁷

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"'Right' has the form of a past participle, and it is not overpressing its suggestion to say that it expresses not so much the straight as the straightened: behind it lies the idea of rule, regulation, government: it is cognate not only with regular but regal-in short it expresses 'conformed to rule,' with a subaudition of authority." And, ". . . not the man whose conduct is suitable to his nature but the man whose conduct is in accordance with law. The ethics of right is accordingly justly spoken of as "authoritative morality," the ethics which imposes itself as obligatory *per se*, and not merely on the ground of expediency calculated from its tendency to an end presumed to be a good, supposedly the supreme good. The right is not a means to something else conceived as the supreme good, but is itself the supreme good imposed on us as our duty by an adequate authority."²⁸ "Undoubtedly these are opposing theories. . . But, you cry out, you cannot will the good because it is right and for its own sake at the same time. Why not, if it is right to will the good for its own sake? The universal ground of moral obligation is that we must do right. The particular ground of this special obligation lies in the value of the object chosen-but, mind you, its *moral* value - indicates the rightness of its choice." And, "That is the very reason why he ought to choose benevolence as his rule of life. It is right."²⁹

"Everybody, of course, understands that a right intention is necessary to the rightness of an action. The point raised is whether that is all that is necessary. Is it true that if your intention is right, your action is right? This is the Jesuit doctrine: the rightness of the intention makes the action right. It is Finney's doctrine." And, "In reply to Hodge, Finney says a great deal which is wholly ineffective because not to the point."³⁰ "In his system things-whether means or other things-are not good in themselves: they receive their goodness for their relation-as means or otherwise-to the supreme ultimate end, which is defined as the good of being. He cannot subintroduce here an attribute of intrinsic goodness to them": ³¹ "It remains true that any means, any whatever, which are brought into a system of means looking towards the indicated end, is in Finney's view made good by its relation as means to this end."³² "If this is the first act, it is also the last-for it is the whole thing. The only thing that has moral character is the ultimate choice, and, the

ultimate choice having become benevolence, the sinner has wholly ceased to be a sinner, and become altogether righteous."33

Analysis of arguments

Warfield admits that the ground of moral obligation lies in the value of the object chosen. He then makes the distinction that it is the *moral* value that creates the obligation but does not tell us to what he compares this. He then states that the foundation of obligation is the rightness of a choice. Warfield cannot have it both ways. He admits that these are opposite choices yet, he holds both to be true, and, considers Finney to be in error for stating that the value of the end chosen is the foundation of moral obligation. Warfield does not prove that right is the foundation of moral obligation. He bases his conclusion on his manufactured definition (Warfield goes so far as to attribute a part of speech, past participle, to the word) of the word "right" and then uses that definition as a premise in further argument. This is the logical fallacy known as *petitio principii* (begging the question) in which a premise to be proved is implicitly taken for granted. Warfield believed that he proved his point through mere profundity and verbosity. I desist here to elaborate because Finney's summing up of the foundation of moral obligation found in the next section is convincing.

In regards to Finney holding that, ". . . any means, any whatever, which are brought into a system of means looking towards the indicated end, is in Finney's view made good by its relation as means to this end," or 'intentionalism' it seems that Warfield did not read Finney's unavailing answer carefully. In the next section is an abbreviated portion of Finney's answer to Hodge which, I believe, the reader will judge to sufficiently contradict the claim that Finney was an 'intentionalist.' Suffice it to say that Warfield confuses proximate(immediate) and ultimate choices and did not distinguish in his mind the process the human mind goes through in making choices. Finney wrote, "I must distinguish more clearly between ultimate and proximate intentions, which discrimination will show, that in the most strict and proper sense, obligation belongs to the former, and only in a less strict and proper sense, to the latter.

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

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

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

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

Example: A student labors to get wages, to purchase books, to obtain an education, to preach the gospel, to save souls, and to please God. Another labors to get wages, to purchase books, to get an education, to preach the gospel, to secure a salary, and his own ease and popularity. In the first supposition he loves God and souls, and seeks, as his ultimate end, the happiness of souls, and the glory and gratification of God. In the last

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

It is obvious from Finney's writing that he fully intended to distinguish his views from intentionalism and that he took great pains to explain that a moral agent who chooses benevolence as an ultimate end must choose benevolent means, or means calculated to bring the end intended, and, consistent with the characteristics of benevolence (See Attributes of Love in Lectures on Systematic Theology). It is peculiar that Warfield overlooked the distinctions that Finney made in these areas and stumbled into a logomachy (a dispute over words, marked by verbiage). I find Warfield's inferences to be confusing and interminable yet, at one point he claims that Hodge's observation that Finney is an intentionalist "is so immediately obvious, as not to require argument for its justification."

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"The fact is, the law requires the supreme love of God, and the equal love of our neighbor. It says nothing, and implies nothing, about doing right for the sake of the right. Rightarianism is a rejection of the divine law, and a substituting in its stead an entirely different rule of obligation: a rule that deifies right, that rejects the claim of God, and exalts right to the throne."³⁴ "This attribute of benevolence [veracity or honesty] secures it against every attempt to promote the ultimate good of being by means of falsehood. True benevolence will no more, can no more, resort to falsehood as a means of promoting good, than it can contradict or deny itself. The intelligence affirms, that the highest ultimate good can be secured only by a strict adherence to truth."³⁵ "Again: we have seen that the means cannot be chosen until the end is chosen. The choice of the end is distinct from the volitions or endeavors of the mind to secure the end. But although the choice of an end is not identical with the subordinate choices and volitions to secure the end, yet it necessitates them. The choice once made, secures or necessitates the executive volitions to secure the end."³⁶

Finney's unavailing answer [regarding Hodge's charge of 'intentionalism']: "I now proceed to inquire, in what sense the doctrine, that the end sanctifies the means is true, after which, I shall show in what sense it is false.

1. It is true in the sense that the end, design or ultimate intention, gives character to the use of means to accomplish the end. The mere outward act has no moral character, except as its character is derived from the end, or design of the mind. This everybody knows to be true, and this no one can honestly and intelligently deny.

2. The doctrine that the end sanctifies the means, is true in the sense, that from the laws of the mind, a moral agent in the honest pursuit of an ultimate end, can use no other than means which he honestly regards as the appropriate and necessary means. That is, his intention must secure the use of means, and the means which, in the honest apprehension of his mind, are the appropriate and necessary means to that end. For example: if his end be benevolent, he can use no other than benevolent means. If he is honest in the choice of an end, that is, if he chooses an end in accordance with the dictates of reason and revelation, he cannot but choose the means by the same rule. He cannot choose an end in obedience to God and reason, and then disobey and disregard both, or either, in the use of means to secure his end. This is impossible." And,

"3. But the end does not sanctify the means, in the sense, that any means whatever may be justly resorted to, to secure a good end. Now this is the very sense, in which the Jesuits hold that the end sanctifies the means, and herein consists their error, and from this resulted all the odious and ridiculous consequences with which they are chargeable. They held, that a good end justifies or sanctifies the use of any means whatever; that is, that a benevolent end might justify unbenevolent means, or more strictly, that the benevolence of the design imparts the same character to the use of any means whatever." And, "These, and only these [benevolent means], are the means that he ought to use; and being honest, they are the only means he can consent to use, and his intention gives character to their use. No man is, or can be honest, who has access to a Bible, in the selection of either ends or means, without consulting the judgement and the will of God respecting both. But I am aware that, to leave this question here, will be unsatisfactory to this reviewer [Hodge], and to those that agree with him [Warfield]. They will inquire, but what are benevolent means? Are not any means benevolent, which are necessary to secure the highest good of the universe? To this I answer, yes. They inquire again, may not this end, in some cases at least, require injustice and lying, fraud and various forms of sin? I answer, no. The difficulty with this writer is, that he regards benevolence as a simple, unintelligent choice of happiness, having no necessary regard to the means whatever. So the Jesuits regarded it. Hence, their perversion. This writer is unable to point out the error of the Jesuits, if he admits, which he cannot but do, in respect to acts of will, that moral character belongs to the ultimate intention, and that the means must partake of the character of the end. This writer and the Jesuits regard benevolence as a simple choice of happiness, and of course as possessing no attributes whatever."³⁷

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

Upon this philosophy I remark-

That if this be true, the whole subject of moral obligation is perfectly simple and intelligible; so plain, indeed, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein."

Upon this theory, moral obligation respects the choice of an ultimate end.

This end is a clear, simple unit.

It is necessarily known to every moral agent.

The choice of this end is the whole of virtue.

It is impossible to sin while this end is sincerely intended with all the heart and with all the soul.

Upon this theory, every moral agent knows in every possible instance what is right, and can never mistake his real duty.

We may state it thus-

His duty is to will this end with all the known conditions and means thereof. Intending this end with a single eye, and doing what appears to him, with all the light he can obtain, to be in the highest degree calculated to secure this end, he really does his duty. If in this case he is mistaken in regard to what is the best means of securing this end, still, with a benevolent intention, he does not sin. He has done right, for he has intended as he ought, and acted outwardly as he thought was the path of duty, under the best light he could obtain. This, then, was his duty. He did not mistake his duty; because it was duty to intend as he intended, and under the circumstances, to act as he acted. How else should he have acted?

This ultimate intention is right, and nothing else is right, more or less.

Right and wrong respect ultimate intention only, and are always the same. Right can be predicated only of good will, and wrong only of selfishness. These are fixed and permanent. If a moral agent can know what end he aims at or lives for, he can know, and cannot but know, at all times, whether he is right or wrong. All that upon this theory a moral agent needs to be certain of is, whether he lives for the right end, and this, if at all honest, or if dishonest, he really cannot but know. If he would ask, what is right or what is duty at any time, he need not wait for a reply. It is right for him to intend the highest good of being as an end. If he honestly does this, he cannot mistake his duty, for in doing this he really performs the whole of duty. With this honest intention, it is impossible that he should not use the means to promote this end, according to the best light he has; and this is right. A single eye to the highest good of God and the universe, is the whole of morality, strictly considered; and, upon this theory, moral law, moral government, moral obligation, virtue, vice, and the whole subject of morals and religion are the perfection of simplicity. If this theory be true, no honest mind ever mistook the path of duty. To intend the highest good of being is right and is duty. No mind is honest that is not steadily

pursuing this end. But in the honest pursuit of this end there can be no sin, no mistaking the path of duty. That is and must be the path of duty that really appears to a benevolent mind to be so. That is, it must be his duty to act in conformity with his honest convictions. This is duty, this is right. So, upon this theory, no one who is truly honest in pursuing the highest good of being, ever did or can mistake his duty in any such sense as to commit sin. I have spoken with great plainness, and perhaps with some severity, of the several systems of error, as I cannot but regard them, upon the most fundamental and important of subjects; not certainly from any want of love to those who hold them, but from a concern, long cherished and growing upon me, for the honor of truth and for the good of being. Should any of you ever take the trouble to look into this subject, in its length and breadth, and read the various systems, and take the trouble to trace out their practical results, as actually developed in the opinions and practices of men, you certainly would not be at a loss to account for the theological and philosophical fogs that so bewilder the world. How can it be otherwise, while such confusion of opinion prevails upon the fundamental question of morals and religion?

How is it, that there is so much profession and so little real practical benevolence in the world? Multitudes of professed Christians seem to have no conception that benevolence constitutes true religion; that nothing else does; and that selfishness is sin, and totally incompatible with religion. They live on in their self-indulgences, and dream of heaven. This could not be, if the true idea of religion, as consisting in sympathy with the benevolence of God, was fully developed in their minds."³⁸

MORAL DEPRAVITY

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"Naturally he scouts the very idea of "original sin," whether in its broader or narrower application. There is no imputation; no transmitted corruption of heart."³⁹ "It will have already been observed that it is denied of the first stages of infancy. It accordingly does not belong to mankind as such, as at present existing in the world; it is not a racial affair. It is picked up for himself by each individual in the process of living."⁴⁰ "These little brutes of babies, like other brutes, of course follow their impulses. These, being constitutional, have no moral quality. But one fair day the babies awake to moral values, and then their whole habitual activity at once becomes sin."⁴¹ "What Adam has to do with it is this - because Adam sinned, and because all after Adam have sinned - they all would have inevitably have sinned whether Adam had sinned or not - the physical nature inherited by babies is to a certain extent disordered, and this makes their impulse to self-gratification perhaps somewhat more clamant than otherwise it would have been."⁴² "He energetically denies that the race on which this depravity is brought is a guilty race, or that it can be conceived as a punishment. He presents it as the account of how the human race - in all the length and breadth of it - becomes in the first instance sinful, in any sense of that word. And his object is to represent it as becoming so voluntarily-with a voluntariness, which, although embracing every individual of the race, is repeated in each individual's case in the completest isolation of distinct personal action."⁴³ "To him on the contrary, everything which is not the substance of the soul is one of its acts; and as he

cannot attribute sinfulness to the soul itself, he therefore confines all sin to actual sinning."⁴⁴ "Affections, as such, have no character; they are but the innocent susceptibilities of our nature, and their most violent workings are innocent, except so far as they are produced or modified by a previous deliberate act of the will."⁴⁵

Quotes from Finney

"Subsequent to the commencement of moral agency, and previous to regeneration, the moral depravity of mankind is universal."⁴⁶ ". . . without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue. . . "⁴⁷ "Previous to moral agency, infants are no more subjects of moral government than brutes are;"⁴⁸ ". . . their sufferings and death are to be accounted for as are those of brutes, namely, by ascribing them to physical interference with the laws of life and health."⁴⁹ "The fact that Christ died in the stead and behalf of sinners, proves that God regarded them not as unfortunate, but as criminal and altogether without excuse."⁵⁰ ". . . from circumstances that would result in certain and eternal death, and are by grace made heirs of eternal life. But after all, it is useless to speculate about the character and destiny of those who are confessedly not moral agents. The benevolence of God will take care of them."⁵¹ "We can also predict, without the gift of prophecy, that with a constitution physically depraved, and surrounded with objects to awaken appetite, and with all the circumstances in which human beings first form their moral character, they will seek universally to gratify themselves, unless prevented by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit."⁵² ". . . the sensibility acts as a powerful impulse to the will, from the moment of birth, and secures the consent and activity of the will to procure its gratification, before the reason is at all developed. The will is thus committed to the gratification of feeling and appetite, when first the idea of moral obligation is developed. This committed state of the will is not moral depravity, and has no moral character, until the idea of moral obligation is developed. The moment this idea is developed, this committal of the will to self-indulgence must be abandoned, or it becomes selfishness, or moral depravity. But, as the will is already in a state of committal, and has to some extent already formed the habit of seeking to gratify feeling, and as the idea of moral obligation is at first but feebly developed, unless the Holy Spirit interferes to shed light on the soul, the will, as might be expected, retains its hold on self-gratification." And, "A diseased physical system renders the appetites, passions, tempers, and propensities more clamorous and despotic in their demands, and of course constantly urging to selfishness, confirms and strengthens it. It should be distinctly remembered that physical depravity has no moral character in itself. But yet it is a source of fierce temptation to selfishness. The human sensibility is, manifestly, deeply physically depraved; and as sin, or moral depravity, consists in committing the will to the gratification of the sensibility, its physical depravity will mightily strengthen moral depravity. Moral depravity is then universally owing to temptation."⁵³ "To represent the constitution as sinful, is to represent God, who is the author of the constitution, as the author of sin. To say that God is not the direct former of the constitution, but that sin is conveyed by natural generation from Adam, who made himself sinful, is only to remove the objection one step farther back, but not to obviate it; for God established the physical laws that of necessity bring about this result."⁵⁴ "Sin may be the result of temptation; temptation may be universal, and of such a nature as uniformly, not necessarily, to result in sin, unless a contrary result

be secured by a Divine moral suasion."55 "Sin may be, and must be, an abuse of free agency; and this may be accounted for, as we shall see, by ascribing it to the universality of temptation, and does not at all imply a sinful constitution . . . Free, responsible will is an adequate cause in the presence of temptation, without the supposition of a sinful constitution, as has been demonstrated in the case of Adam and of angels . . . it is said that no motive to sin could be a motive or a temptation, if there were not a sinful taste, relish, or appetite, inherent in the constitution, to which the temptation or motive is addressed . . . To this I reply:

Suppose this objection be applied to the sin of Adam and of angels. Can we not account for Eve's eating the forbidden fruit without supposing that she had a craving for sin?"56 "We deny that the human constitution is morally depraved, because it is impossible that sin should be a quality of the substance of soul or body. It is, and must be, a quality of choice or intention, and not of substance."57 "But if it be anything, it must be either substance or action."58

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"We suppose this [interference with the laws of life and health] is the proximate cause of the sufferings and death of adults also; but Finney appears to think that, in saying it of infants, he is denying that sin has anything to do with their dying . . ."59 "No doubt, in saying this [Christ died in the stead and behalf of sinners] he had adults in mind-but, is it not a proposition of universal validity, and then, how can infants be partakers of this grace of Christ?"60 "And can we acquiesce without protest, when we are told that infants are 'confessedly not moral agents'? Perhaps if we press the word 'agents'-but let us substitute 'beings'? Are infants not moral beings? Does a man cease to be a moral being every time he goes to sleep? Are we moral beings only when we are acting, but become unmoral and only brutes whenever we are quiescent?"61 "We have here of course only the familiar construction of the old *Rationalismus Vulgaris*; and no more here than there is the implication of God in bringing the human race into a condition of universal depravity escaped. It was God, no doubt, who made the human race after such a fashion that its selfish impulses should get the start of its reason in the development of the child, who should therefore be hopelessly committed to sin before it knew any better."62 "All that is accomplished by this explanation of how it comes about that man is morally depraved, is that God and not man is made inexcusable for it. God betrays mankind into depravity wholly arbitrarily, with no excuse, not to say justification, for His act. All that can be said is that this is the way God has chosen to make man. No reason is assigned, none is assignable, for His making him in such a manner that he must at the first dawn of moral agency become totally and hopelessly depraved. If anyone supposes that an exoneration for God is supplied in the circumstance that He does not directly create depravity in the human heart, but produces it only indirectly, through the operation of the laws of human development which He has ordained, we are happy to say that Finney is above such a subterfuge." And, "He leaves God equally responsible for human depravity, and deprives Him of all justification for attaching it to man."63 "A tendency is exhibited at times to neglect this more elaborate explanation of universal depravity, and to represent it as sufficiently accounted for by the formula of freedom plus temptation. All

men are free agents, and all men are tempted; therefore all men sin. The formula is obviously inoperative . . . unless free agency is supposed to carry with it, *per se*, helplessness in the face of temptation, and always to succumb to temptation if it is addressed to it in an enticing form."⁶⁴ "Free agency plus temptation may account for the possibility of sin, and may lay a basis for an account of the actual occurrence of sinning in this or that case. It will not account for universal sinning. For that, nothing less than a universal bias to sin will supply an adequate account."⁶⁵ "The child, he teaches-that little brute-must be supposed to have acquired habits of action which his moral sense, so soon as moral agency dawns in him, pronounces to be sinful, if we are to account for his universal succumbing to solicitations to what he now perceives to be sin. He has acquired a bias to what is objectively sinful . . ."⁶⁶ "He knows and will know nothing therefore of a sinful 'nature,' or 'constitution' as he likes to call it, embodying his argument in a word. It is his psychology which is at fault. The soul, to him, consists of its substance and its acts; there is nothing more, and there is room for nothing more-for such things, for example, as permanent, though separable, dispositions. He will allow no other than these two categories. His psychology compels him thus to reject any and every doctrine which appears to him to imply anything permanent in the soul, permanently affecting its actions, except the bare soul itself. He therefore constantly speaks as if the Augustinians thought of the sinfulness of the soul as a modification of the soul itself in its very substance . . ."⁶⁷ "It follows, on this principle, that love to God and hatred of Him, are equally different things; and that they become praiseworthy or criminal, solely in consequence of their connection with some previous purpose of mind."⁶⁸

Analysis of arguments

Warfield concludes that Finney believed infants die innocently. Next he suggests that if this were true then infants could not receive grace from Christ. Then Warfield tries to make a distinction between moral agents and moral beings. He asks, "Are infants not moral beings?", without defining this term. Warfield has now shifted the argument away from Finney's subject (whether infants are moral agents, able to sin) and into a discussion of whether men are moral beings while asleep. The connection between the two subjects is not clear, however, one might ask if Warfield is trying to establish that men sin in their sleep. Warfield completely overlooks the distinctions that Finney made concerning what constitutes moral agency, namely, intellect, sensibility and free will. Does an infant possess these in such a measure as to indicate moral obligation? Or does the infant merely act in response to outside stimuli? This is the real issue, not whether men are brutes when quiet. Nevertheless, infants would not be barred from receiving grace, a free gift, solely on the basis that they had not sinned. Is God limited to extending grace to only the sinful and not to the innocent? Warfield is silent on this subject.

Warfield accuses Finney of making God the author of sin by designing and creating man in such a fashion as leads man "hopelessly" to sin. This is a fallacy, trying to infer a cause and effect relationship when none exists. Warfield represents Finney's scheme as God arbitrarily betraying mankind into depravity. This is not a fair representation of Finney's views. Finney claimed that mankind was totally, *voluntarily* depraved. Man is depraved

because man *chose* to sin, not because he was born with a natural disposition or bias that *forces* him to sin.

Warfield then states that total moral depravity cannot be accounted for by free will plus temptation, "nothing less than a universal bias to sin will supply an adequate account." This is the two-valued or black/white fallacy where there is only the right way (Warfield's) or the wrong way (any different view). Does Warfield supply logical argument to refute Finney's view or support his own? No, he merely asserts this to be true as if that was all that was required. This is a *petitio principii* or begging the question. Warfield represents Finney as believing that once a child reaches the age of understanding that he or she has habits or biases that his or her conscience condemns as sinful. Finney would state that these habits or biases are sinful only when acted upon contrary to a morally obligated opposite choice.

Warfield states that Finney will have nothing to do with a "sinful 'nature' or 'constitution'". He goes on to state that Finney's psychology is at fault, again without an argument. Warfield states that Finney has no room for "permanent, though separable, dispositions". How something can be permanent and separable one cannot tell but, neither does Warfield. Again, a bare assertion with no supporting argument. A cursory perusal of Finney's Theology would leave one with the impression that Finney clearly regarded moral obligation as consisting in free, intelligent choice.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

- "1. Adam, being the natural head of the race, would naturally, by the wisest constitution of things, greatly affect for good or evil his whole posterity.
2. His sin in many ways exposed his posterity to aggravated temptation. Not only the physical constitution of all men, but all the influences under which they first form their moral character, are widely different from what they would have been, if sin had never been introduced.
3. When selfishness is understood to be the whole of moral depravity, its *quo modo*, or in what way it comes to exist, is manifest. Clear conceptions of the thing will instantly reveal the occasion and manner.
4. The only difficulty in accounting for it, has been the false assumption, that there must be, and is, something lying back of the free actions of the will, which sustains to those actions the relation of a cause, that is itself sinful.
5. If holy Adam, and holy angels could fall under temptations addressed to their undepraved sensibility, how absurd it is to conclude, that sin in those who are born with a physically depraved constitution, cannot be accounted for, without ascribing it to original sin, or to a nature that is in itself sinful.

6. Without divine illumination, the moral character will of course be formed under the influence of the flesh. That is, the lower propensities will of course influence the will, unless the reason be developed by the Holy Spirit.

7. The dogma of constitutional moral depravity, is a part and parcel of the doctrine of a necessitated will. It is a branch of a grossly false and heathenish philosophy. How infinitely absurd, dangerous, and unjust, then, to embody it in a standard of Christian doctrine, to give it the place of an indispensable article of faith, and denounce all who will not swallow its absurdities, as heretics!

8. We are unable to say precisely at what age infants become moral agents, and of course how early they become sinners. Doubtless there is much difference among children in this respect. Reason is developed in one earlier than in another, according to the constitution and circumstances.

A thorough consideration of the subject, will doubtless lead to the conviction, that children become moral agents much earlier than is generally supposed. The conditions of moral agency are, as has been repeatedly said in former lectures, the possession of the powers of moral agency, together with the development of the ideas of the good or valuable, of moral obligation or oughtness-of right and wrong-of praise and blameworthiness. I have endeavored to show, in former lectures, that mental satisfaction, blessedness or happiness, is the ultimate good. Satisfaction arising from the gratification of the appetites, is one of the earliest experiences of human beings. This no doubt suggests or develops, at a very early period, the idea of the good or the valuable. The idea is doubtless developed, long before the word that expresses it is understood. The child knows that happiness is good, and seeks it in the form of self-gratification, long before the terms that designate this state of mind are at all understood. It knows that its own enjoyment is worth seeking, and doubtless very early has the idea, that the enjoyment of others is worth seeking, and affirms to itself, not in words, but in idea, that it ought to please its parents and those around it. It knows, in fact, though language is as yet unknown, that it loves to be gratified, and to be happy, that it loves and seeks enjoyment for itself, and doubtless has the idea that it ought not to displease and distress those around it, but that it ought to endeavor to please and gratify them. This is probably among the first ideas, if not the very first idea, of the pure reason that is developed, that is, the idea of the good, the valuable, the desirable; and the next must be that of oughtness, or of moral obligation, or of right and wrong, etc. I say again, these ideas are, and must be developed, before the signs or words that express them are at all understood, and the words would never be understood except the idea were first developed. We always find, at the earliest period at which children can understand words, that they have the idea of obligation, of right and wrong. As soon as these words are understood by them, they recognize them as expressing ideas already in their own minds, and which ideas they have had further back than they can remember. Some, and indeed most persons, seem to have the idea, that children affirm themselves to be under moral obligation, before they have the idea of the good; that they affirm their obligation to obey their parents before they know, or have the idea of the good or of the valuable. But this is, and must be a mistake. They may and do affirm obligation to obey their parents, before they can express

in language, and before they would understand, a statement of the ground of their obligation. The idea, however, they have, and must have, or they could not affirm obligation." And,

"12. Why is sin so natural to mankind? Not because their nature is itself sinful, but because the appetites and passions tend so strongly to self-indulgence. These are temptations to sin, but sin itself consists not in these appetites and propensities, but in the voluntary committal of the will to their indulgence. This committal of the will is selfishness, and when the will is once given up to sin, it is very natural to sin. The will once committed to self-indulgence as its end, selfish actions are in a sense spontaneous.

13. The doctrine of original sin, as held by its advocates, must essentially modify the whole system of practical theology. This will be seen as we proceed in our investigations.

14. The constitution of a moral being as a whole, when all the powers are developed, does not tend to sin, but strongly in an opposite direction; as is manifest from the fact that when reason is thoroughly developed by the Holy Spirit, it is more than a match for the sensibility, and turns the heart to God.

15. The difficulty is, that the sensibility gets the start of reason, and engages the attention in devising means of self-gratification, and thus retards, and in a great measure prevents, the development of the ideas of the reason which were designed to control the will.

16. It is this morbid development that the Holy Spirit is given to rectify, by so forcing truth upon the attention, as to secure the development of the reason. By doing this, He brings the will under the influence of truth. Our senses reveal to us the objects correlated to our animal nature and propensities. The Holy Spirit reveals God and the spiritual world, and all that class of objects that are correlated to our higher nature, so as to give reason the control of the will. This is regeneration and sanctification, as we shall see in its proper place."⁶⁹

ATTRIBUTES OF SELFISHNESS

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"What the moral man above everything has to do, is, recognizing the purely 'constitutional' nature of his affectional movements, to abstract himself from them altogether, and to determine all his activities by voluntary choices made in view of the perception of the supreme intrinsic value of the good of being. To be governed in any action whatever by our constitutional affections, whatever they may be-whether what in the common estimation would be called wicked or what in that estimation would be called good, alike-is in view of the supreme obligation that rests upon us to direct our activities to the one end of the good of being, no longer merely unmoral but in the highest degree immoral. It is preferring self-gratification to that benevolence which is the sum of virtue."⁷⁰ "Pure will plus external inducement-which may be in the way of temptation to

evil, or may be in the way of incitement to good-that is all that comes into consideration in our moral judgements."71

Quotes from Finney

"It matters not what kind of desire it is; if it is the desire that governs the will this is selfishness. It must be the will in a state of committal to the gratification of the desire."72 "He may be prevented by a constitutional or phrenological conscientiousness, or sense of justice. But this is only a feeling of the sensibility, and, if restrained only by this, he is just as absolutely selfish as if he had stolen a horse in obedience to acquisitiveness."73 ". . . if the selfish man were to preach the gospel, it would be only because, upon the whole, it was most pleasing or gratifying to himself, and not at all for the sake of the good of being, as an end. If he should become a pirate, it would be for exactly the same reason, to wit, that this course is, upon the whole, most pleasing or gratifying to himself, and not at all for the reason that that course is evil in itself. Whichever course he takes, he takes it for precisely the same ultimate reason; and with the same degree of light it must involve the same degree of guilt."74

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

He admits that if a man pays his debts from a sense of justice, or feeling of conscientiousness, he is therein and therefore just as wicked as if he stole a horse. Or if man preaches the gospel from a desire to glorify God and benefit his fellow men, he is just as wicked for so doing as a pirate."75 "He was perfectly free to admit that we must begin by denying the sinfulness of 'concupiscence,'[strong desire] if we are to end by affirming 'entire sanctification.'"76

Analysis of arguments

In regard to the first inference above (Warfield quoting from Hodge) I will provide Charles Hodge's actual statement and Finney's response to that statement:

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

[Finney]"This is a specimen of this writer's reading and criticism. Here he represents me as holding the ridiculous absurdity, that a sinner's ultimate intention may be to glorify

God from a sense of duty, or from an appreciation of the loveliness of moral excellence; that is, his ultimate choice or intention may be to glorify God, and yet this is not chosen as an end for its own sake, but from a sense of duty, or from an apprehension of the loveliness of moral excellence. He may choose the glory of God for its own sake, and yet not for its own sake, but from a sense of duty, etc. This is a ridiculous contradiction; and if this writer had understood the book he was reviewing, he would not have failed to see, that I again and again expose the very absurdity which he here charges upon me. The thing I hold is, not that the sinner's ultimate end may be the glory of God, and it be as wicked as a pirate; but I say, that his ultimate end may be selfish, and yet he may aim to do his duty as a means of securing his own interest, or he may be selfish in aiming to promote the glory of God, etc. Self may be his end, and duty or aiming to glorify God a means. What a gross blunder for the reviewer to represent me as holding, that the ultimate intention may be to glorify God, and yet the glory of God not be his end, but duty or something else be his end, or to represent me as holding, that a man can be wicked at all when his ultimate end is to glorify God. But as I said, this is but a specimen of the misrepresentations of this reviewer."77

Regarding the second argument, Warfield is right. Finney did hold that feelings and desires were not sinful in and of themselves. Does Warfield disprove this or prove the opposite? No, again. Finney summarizes below.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"What disobedience to moral law must consist in: Disobedience to God's law must consist in the choice of self-gratification as an end. In other words, it must consist essentially in committing the will, and through the will committing the whole being, to the indulgence of self-love, as the supreme and ultimate end of life. This is selfishness. In other words, it is seeking to gratify the desire of personal good, in a manner prohibited by the law of God. It consists in choosing self-gratification as an end, or for its own sake, instead of choosing, in accordance with the law of the reason and of God, the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an ultimate end. In other words still, sin or disobedience to the moral law, consists in the consecration of the heart and life to the gratification of the constitutional and artificial desires, rather than in obedience to the law of the intelligence. Or, once more, sin consists in being governed by *impulses of the sensibility* [italics mine], instead of being governed by the law of God, as it lies revealed in the reason."78

"Selfishness consists in the obedience of the will to the impulses of the sensibility. It is a spirit of self-gratification. The will seeks to gratify the desires and propensities, for the pleasure of the gratification. Self-gratification is sought as an end, and as the supreme end. It is preferred to the claims of God and the good of being. Phrenological, or constitutional benevolence, is only obedience to the impulse of the sensibility—a yielding to a feeling of compassion. It is only an effort to gratify a desire. It is, therefore, as really selfishness, as is an effort to gratify any constitutional desire whatever."79

"Some writers have fallen into the strange mistake of making virtue to consist in seeking the gratification of certain desires, because, as they say, these desires are virtuous. They make some of the desires selfish, and some benevolent. To yield the will to the control of the selfish propensities is sin; to yield to the control of the benevolent desires, such as the desire of my neighbor's happiness and of the public happiness, is virtue, because these are good desires, while the selfish desires are evil. Now this is, and has been, a very common view of virtue and vice. But it is fundamentally erroneous. None of the constitutional desires are good or evil in themselves; they are alike involuntary, and all alike terminate on their correlated objects. To yield the will to the control of any one of them, no matter which, is sin; it is following a blind feeling, desire, or impulse of the sensibility, instead of yielding to the demands of the intelligence, as the law affirming power. To will the good of my neighbor, or of my country, and of God, because of the intrinsic value of those interests, that is to will them as an end, and in obedience to the law of the reason, is virtue; but to will them to gratify a constitutional but blind desire, is selfishness and sin. The desires terminate on their respective objects; but the will, in this case, seeks the objects, not for their own sake, but because they are desired, that is, to gratify the desires. This is choosing them, not as an end, but as a means of self-gratification. This is making self-gratification the end after all. This must be a universal truth, when a thing is chosen merely in obedience to desire. The benevolence of these writers is sheer selfishness, and their virtue is vice.

The choice of any thing whatever, because it is desired, irrespective of the demands of the reason, is selfishness and sin. It matters not what it is. The very statement, that I choose a thing because I desire it, is only another form of saying, that I choose it for my own sake, or for the sake of appeasing the desire, and not on account of its own intrinsic value. All such choice is always and necessarily partial. It is giving one interest the preference over another, not because of its perceived intrinsic and superior value, but because it is an object of desire. If I yield to mere desire in any case, it must be to gratify the desire. This is, and in the case supposed must be, the end for which the choice is made. To deny this is to deny that the will seeks the object because it is desired. Partiality consists in giving one thing the preference of another for no good reason. That is, not because the intelligence demands this preference, but because the sensibility demands it. Partiality is therefore always and necessarily an attribute of selfishness."80

REPROBATION

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"The ultimate result is that, representing God as ordering the universe for the one end of the production of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, he finds himself teaching that men are left to perish solely for the enhancement of the happiness of others."81
"What God has determining regard to in His dealing with both alike, says Finney, is the wise ordering of His government. He would prefer the salvation of the reprobate, if-but only if-they could be saved consistently with the wise government He has ordained."82

Quotes from Finney

"He knows, indeed, that His creating them, together with His providential dispensations, will be the occasion, not the cause, of their sin and consequent destruction."83 ". . . He regards their destruction as a less evil to the universe, than would be such a change in the administration and arrangements of His government as would secure their salvation."84 "If He foresaw that, upon the whole, He could secure such an amount of virtue and happiness by means of moral government, as to more than counterbalance the sin and misery of those who would be lost, then certainly it was a dictate of benevolence to create them."85

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"They are sacrificed thus to the good of the universe, and perish not because justice demands that they perish, but because it is better for others-surely not for themselves-that they perish."86 "We may possibly be able to bow before reasoning which is directed to show that our reprobation is the unavoidable condition of the attainment of an end high and holy enough to justify any individual evils which are incurred in its achievement . . ." And, "But it is not so easy to acquiesce when we are told that we must be miserable that others may be happy. If the happiness of being is the end to which everything is to give way, it is difficult to see why we should be excluded from our fair share of it. Surely at all events we must see the note of moral necessity, and not that of a mere governmental expediency, in the transaction before we can readily embrace it as just."87

Analysis of arguments

Warfield concludes that if God's intended end in creation was the greatest happiness of the greatest number, then men perish solely for this happiness and not due to justice for voluntary acts. No reasoning for this conclusion is given. It is an assumption that the answer can only be either/or and not both/and (two-valued fallacy). In other words, why can't happiness be the intended end AND men perish due to sinful choices. Laws without sanction are only advisory. Sanctions help to secure the intended end by demonstrating the seriousness of the lawmaker and the goodness of the end sought. Sanctions (misery in hell, etc.) are therefore a necessary means for producing the end.

Men are reprobated for actions of free-will, not making use of the appointed means for their sanctification. Reprobated because they are unwilling, not unwilling because reprobated.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"Therefore, for their foreseen wickedness and perseverance in rebellion, under circumstances the most favorable to their virtue and salvation, in which He can wisely place them, He is resolved upon their destruction; and has already in purpose cast them off for ever."88

"Be it remembered, then, that the reason why any are reprobated, is because they are unwilling to be saved; that is, they are unwilling to be saved on the terms upon which

alone God can consistently save them. Ask sinners whether they are willing to be saved, and they all say, yes; and with perfect sincerity they may say this, if they can be saved upon their own terms. But when you propose to them the terms of salvation upon which the gospel proposes to save them; when they are required to repent and believe the gospel, to forsake their sins, and give themselves up to the service of God, they will with one consent begin to make excuse. Now, to accept these terms, is heartily and practically to consent to them. For them to say, that they are willing to accept salvation, while they actually do not accept it, is either to deceive themselves, or to utter an infamous falsehood. To be willing is to accept it; and the fact, that they do not heartily consent to, and embrace the terms of salvation, is demonstration absolute, that they are unwilling. Yes, sinners, the only terms on which you can possibly be saved, you reject. Is it not then an insult to God for you to pretend that you are willing? The only true reason why all of you are not Christians, is that you are unwilling. You are not made unwilling by any act of God, or because you are reprobate; but if you are reprobate, it is because you are unwilling."89

REGENERATION

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"From this point of view also, he is eager to show "not only that sanctification implies merely 'present obedience,' 'right volitions now,' and produces 'no change of our nature so that we become good in ourselves,' but that there is nothing 'in us,' antecedent to moral action, operating as the occasion of sinful exercises, which needs to be eradicated or changed in order to our being in a state of 'entire sanctification'"; and "to refute the doctrine, that apart from present transgressions, 'there might be that in a person which would lay the foundation for his sinning at a future time.'"90 "If there is nothing in us from which we need to be saved except our 'commitment to self-gratification as the end of our being,' it is easier to believe that the passage from the one to the other-being only a passage from one purpose to another-may be made absolutely all at once;"91

Quotes from Finney

"Those persons who maintain the sinfulness of the constitutional appetites, must of course deny that man can ever be entirely sanctified in this life."92 "Neither God, nor any other being, can regenerate him, if he will not turn. If he will not change his choice, it is impossible that it should be changed."93 ". . . implies an entire present change of moral character, that is, a change from entire sinfulness to entire holiness."94

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

". . . absolutely all that happens to him is a change of purpose." And, "We regenerate ourselves: only the man himself can 'change his choice,'"95 "It is quite clear that what Finney gives us is less a theology than a system of morals. God might be eliminated from it entirely without essentially changing its character. All virtue, all holiness, is made to consist in an ethical determination of will."96

Analysis of arguments

God calls, man voluntarily responds; so taught Finney. Warfield claims that this means that man regenerates himself. The issue is whether or not man is active in regeneration. Warfield suggests that a claim of voluntariness on the part of man negates all other activity in the face of Finney's clear distinctions to the contrary (See Finney's conclusion). Warfield makes a false issue by claiming a cause and effect relationship between Finney's view (voluntariness) and Warfield's conclusion (man regenerates self). This is a bare assertion with no supporting argument.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"The theologians whose views we are canvassing, maintain that the appetites, passions, desires, and propensities, which are constitutional and entirely involuntary, are in themselves sinful. To this I reply, that Adam and Eve possessed them before they fell. Christ possessed them, or He was not a man, nor, in any proper sense, a human being. No, these appetites, passions, and propensities, are not sinful, though they are the occasions of sin. They are a temptation to the will to seek their unlawful indulgence. When these lusts or appetites are spoken of as the "passions of sin," or as "sinful lusts or passions," it is not because they are sinful in themselves, but because they are the occasions of sin. It has been asked, Why are not the appetites and propensities to be regarded as sinful, since they are the prevalent temptations to sin? I reply:

They are involuntary, and moral character can no more be predicated of them, on account of their being temptations, than it could of the fruit that was a temptation to Eve. They have no design to tempt. They are constitutional, unintelligent, involuntary; and it is impossible that moral character should be predicable of them. A moral agent is responsible for his emotions, desires, etc., so far as they are under the direct or indirect control of his will, and no further. He is always responsible for the manner in which he gratifies them. If he indulges them in accordance with the law of God, he does right. If he makes their gratification his end, he sins."⁹⁷

"In regeneration the subject is both passive and active:

1. That he is active is plain from what has been said, and from the very nature of the change.

2. That he is, at the same time, passive, is plain from the fact that he acts only when and as he is acted upon. That is he is passive in the perception of the truth presented by the Holy Spirit. I know that this perception is no part of regeneration. But it is simultaneous with regeneration. It induces regeneration. It is the condition and the occasion of regeneration. Therefore the subject of regeneration must be a passive recipient or percipient of the truth presented by the Holy Spirit, at the moment, and during the act of regeneration. The Spirit acts upon him through or by the truth: thus far he is passive. He closes with the truth: thus far he is active. What a mistake those theologians have fallen into who represent the subject as altogether passive in regeneration! This rids the sinner

at once of the conviction of any duty or responsibility about it. It is wonderful that such an absurdity should have been so long maintained in the church. But while it is maintained, it is no wonder that sinners are not converted to God. While the sinner believes this, it is impossible, if he has it in mind, that he should be regenerated. He stands and waits for God to do what God requires him to do, and which no one can do for him. Neither God, nor any other being, can regenerate him, if he will not turn. If he will not change his choice, it is impossible that it should be changed. Sinners who have been taught thus and have believed what they have been taught, would never have been regenerated had not the Holy Spirit drawn off their attention from this error, and ere they were aware, induced them to close in with the offer of life."98

"What is implied in regeneration:

1. The nature of the change shows that it must be instantaneous. It is a change of choice, or of intention. This must be instantaneous. The preparatory work of conviction and enlightening the mind may have been gradual and progressive. But when regeneration occurs, it must be instantaneous.

2. It implies an entire present change of moral character, that is, a change from entire sinfulness to entire holiness. We have seen that it consists in a change from selfishness to benevolence. We have also seen that selfishness and benevolence cannot coexist in the same mind; that selfishness is a state of supreme and entire consecration to self; that benevolence is a state of entire and supreme consecration to God and the good of the universe. Regeneration, then, surely implies an entire change of moral character.

Again: the Bible represents regeneration as a dying to sin and becoming alive to God. Death in sin is total depravity. This is generally admitted. Death to sin and becoming alive to God, must imply entire present holiness.

3. The scriptures represent regeneration as the condition of salvation in such a sense, that if the subject should die immediately after regeneration, and without any further change, he would go immediately to heaven.

Again: the scriptures require only perseverance in the first love, as the condition of salvation, in case the regenerate soul should live long in the world subsequently to regeneration.

4. When the scriptures require us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, this does not imply that there is yet sin remaining in the regenerate heart which we are required to put away by degrees. But the spirit of the requirement must be, that we should acquire as much knowledge as we can of our moral relations, and continue to conform to all truth as fast as we know it. This, and nothing else, is implied in abiding in our first love, or abiding in Christ, living and walking in the Spirit."99

SANCTIFICATION

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"The supreme ultimate end to which in the right exercise of our will we must direct ourselves, if we would be virtuous or holy-these things are one-is the good of being. God is of course included in this being, but only as part of the whole-Being-to which our benevolent purpose is directed."100 " . . . identification of 'benevolence' and 'obedience' does not appear obvious to the uninstructed mind and requires some explication. Finney discovers the intermediating idea in . . . adoption of His end as our end . . . "101 "In that case the essence of true religion is obedience; and it can be benevolence only as obedience can be construed as rendered, not because it is due, but out of good will;" And, "Religion being obedience, it is distinctly a matter of will, and also of conduct, the product of will. Voluntary subjection is its form, although the form of this subjection is described as the adoption of the Divine end as our own and the prosecution of it (always under the Divine prescription) with all our might."102 "Everything that the Spirit does for us is thus reduced to enlightenment; everything we receive from Him to knowledge. We are exhorted, it is true, to renounce our own strength and rely on, draw on, live by the strength of Christ."103 "The precise thing he asserts is that sanctification is by faith as opposed to works." And, "We believe in Christ for our sanctification; He then acts persuasively in our souls for sanctification; under this persuasion we act holily; that is our sanctification. It is all a sanctification of acts. We are not ourselves cleansed; but then there is no need of cleansing us, since we are never ourselves unclean. We were only a bundle of constitutional appetites, passions, and propensities, innocent in themselves, which we have been misusing through a bad will. What needs correcting is only this bad will into a good one. And the appropriate, the only instrument for the correction of our willing is a persuasion. Moved by this persuasion we 'make ourselves a good heart'-we 'change our mind,' as the phrase goes-and that is the whole of it."104

Quotes from Finney

"It consists in consecration to the right end; to the end to which God is consecrated."105 ". . . all holiness . . . [consists in] the right exercise of our own will or agency"106 "True religion consists in benevolence, or in heart obedience to God."107 "It should never be forgotten, that all true religion consists in voluntary states of mind, and that the true and only way to attain to true religion, is to look at and understand the exact thing to be done, and then to put forth at once the voluntary exercise required."108 "It ascribes the whole of salvation and sanctification from first to last, not only till the soul is sanctified, but at every moment while it remains in that state, to the indwelling spirit, and influence, and grace of Christ. A state of entire sanctification can never be attained by an indifferent waiting of God's time. Nor by any works of law, or works of any kind, performed in your own strength, irrespective of the grace of God. By this I do not mean, that, were you disposed to exert your natural powers aright, you could not at once obey the law in the exercise of your natural strength, and continue to do so. But I do mean, that as you are wholly indisposed to use your natural powers aright, without the grace of God, no efforts that you will actually make in your own strength, or independent of His grace, will ever result in your entire sanctification."109 "By the assertion, that the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Christ, is received by faith, to reign in the heart, it is intended, that He is actually

trusted in, or submitted to by faith, and His influence suffered to control us. He does not guide and control us, by irresistible power or force, but faith confides the guidance of our souls to Him. Faith receives and confides in Him, and consents to be governed and directed by Him. As His influence is moral, and not physical, it is plain that he can influence us no further . . . than we trust or confide in Him."110 "The Holy Spirit controls, guides, and sanctifies the soul, not by a physical influence, nor by impulses nor by impressions made on the sensibility, but by enlightening and convincing the intellect, and thus quickening the conscience."111 Rely on Christ not "in the antinomian, do-nothing, sit-still sense . . . but upon Christ, as a helpless man would lean upon the arm or shoulder of a strong man, to be borne about in some benevolent enterprise."112 "That is, faith receives Christ in all His offices, and in all the fullness of His relations to the soul; and Christ, when received, works in the soul to will and to do of all His good pleasure, not by a physical, but by a moral or persuasive working."113

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"We are all, He and we, members of one ethical body, governed by one ethical law, and pursuing a common ethical course. But since the same law governs God and us, it is clear that we are dealing with pure ethics, not religion." And, " . . . God cannot be held to be the sole or even the chief object included under the term, 'Being,' the good of which is our supreme ultimate end."114 "Finney constantly employs the double phrase, 'God and the universe' as the synonym of Being in this reference; and we may think it possible that he wished the two elements in the composite idea to be distributed differently in our case and in God's-that in our case it should be God along with the universe, in God's, the universe along of course with Himself-as even we include ourselves in the Being whose good we seek. But can we even imagine God taking a subordinate place in His own eyes, attributing 'greater intrinsic value' . . . to the universe than to His own all glorious Being? Must not His own glory be to Him also, as it must be to us, His supreme ultimate end?"115 "The adoption of the end of God as our end, and obedience to the will of God, are not quite the same conception: they are assimilated to one another by the requirement that we shall prosecute this end when adopted in implicit obedience to the Divine prescription. Clearly this is a religion of law, and the heart of it is obedience: and these are ethical conceptions."116 "A perfectionism is asserted here of every true Christian, from the inception of his Christianity; a perfectionism resting absolutely on the sinner's own ultimate choice."117 "We do not need Christ's strength: we have enough of our own. We need from Christ only an adequate inducement to use our own strength aright."118 "You see, nothing but better knowledge is required; better knowledge leads to a better life. The ministrations of the Holy Ghost are, to be sure, not excluded; but the whole work of the Spirit is reduced to the mode of illumination. All that the Spirit does is to give the sinner a better view of the claims of God."119

Analysis of arguments

If the same law (disinterested benevolence) governs God and man how does it follow that this is ethics and not religion? Warfield, of course, does not tell. He merely asserts. Finney did not claim that God was/is required to take a subordinate position to the

universe. This is a misrepresentation. Concerning God's end, etc.: God's will is God's intended end, how can they be separate? Again, Warfield makes a bare assertion with no argument.

Does repentance and conversion imply sanctification? Finney said yes. Does this sanctification rest *solely* on the sinner's own ultimate choice? Finney said NO! Finney made the distinction that man's choice was a condition of perfection but, that man was dependent on the Holy Spirit and Christ. Warfield would have one believe that if you speak of man acting at all, you have therefore taken God out of the picture. This does not follow.

Finney says, ""The Holy Spirit controls, guides, and sanctifies the soul . . . by enlightening and convincing the intellect, and thus quickening the conscience." Warfield represents this as nothing but "better knowledge." Convincing the intellect speaks of persuasion, not information; argument, not knowledge. Quickening the conscience is knowledge? Warfield overlooks these distinctions that Finney was careful to make.

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"It [grace] has made no provision to secure holiness without the right exercise of our own will or agency."¹²⁰

"1. There is an importance to be attached to the sanctification of the *body*, of which very few persons appear to be aware. Indeed, unless the bodily appetites and powers be consecrated to the service of God—unless we learn to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wake, and labor, and rest, for the glory of God, permanent sanctification as a practical thing is out of the question. It is plain, that very few persons are aware of the great influence which their bodies have over their minds, and of the indispensable necessity of bringing their bodies under, and keeping them in subjection.

Few people seem to keep the fact steadily in view, that unless their bodies be rightly managed, they will be so fierce and overpowering a source of temptation to the mind, as inevitably to lead it into sin. If they indulge themselves in a stimulating diet, and in the use of those condiments that irritate and rasp the nervous system, their bodies will be, of course and of necessity, the source of powerful and incessant temptation to evil tempers and vile affections. If persons were aware of the great influence which the body has over the mind, they would realize, that they cannot be too careful to preserve the nervous system from the influence of every improper article of food or drink, and preserve that system as they would the apple of their eye, from every influence that could impair its functions. No one who has opportunity to acquire information in regard to the laws of life and health, and the best means of sanctifying the whole spirit, soul, and body, can be guiltless if he neglects these means of knowledge. Every man is bound to make the structure and laws of both body and mind the subject of as thorough investigation as his circumstances will permit, to inform himself in regard to what are the true principles of perfect temperance, and in what way the most can be made of all his powers of body and mind for the glory of God.

2. From what has been said in these lectures, the reason why the church has not been entirely sanctified is very obvious. As a body the church has not believed that such a state was attainable until near the close of life. And this is a sufficient reason, and indeed the most weighty of all reasons, for her not having attained it.

3. From what has been said, it is easy to see, that the true question in regard to entire sanctification in this life is: Is it attainable as a matter of fact? Some have thought the proper question to be: Are Christians entirely sanctified in this life? Now certainly this is not the question that needs to be discussed. Suppose it to be fully granted that they are not; this fact is sufficiently accounted for, by the consideration that they do not know or believe it to be attainable until the close of life. If they believed it to be attainable, it might no longer be true that they do not attain it. But if provision really is made for this attainment, it amounts to nothing, unless it be recognized and believed. The thing needed then is, to bring the church to see and believe, that this is her high privilege and her duty. It is not enough, as has been shown, to say that it is attainable, simply on the ground of natural ability. This is as true of the devil, and the lost in hell, as of men in this world. But unless grace has put this attainment so within our reach, as that it may be aimed at with the reasonable prospect of success, there is, as a matter of fact, no more provision for our entire sanctification in this life, than for the devil's. As has been said, it seems to be trifling with mankind, merely to maintain the attainability of this state, on the ground of natural ability only, and at the same time to tell them, that they certainly never will exercise this ability unless disposed to do so by the grace of God; and furthermore, that it is a dangerous error for us to expect to receive grace from God to secure this result; that we might by natural possibility make this attainment, but it is irrational and dangerous error to expect or hope to make it, or hope to receive sufficient grace to secure it.

The real question is, has grace brought this attainment so within our reach, that we may reasonably expect, by aiming at it, to experience it in this life? It is admitted, that on the ground of natural ability, both wicked men and devils have the power to be entirely holy. But it is also admitted that their indisposition to use this power aright is so complete, that as a matter of fact, they never will, unless influenced to do so by the grace of God. I insist therefore that the real question is, whether the provisions of the gospel are such, that did the church fully understand and lay hold upon the proffered grace, she might attain this state? Are we as fully authorized to offer this grace to Christians, as we are the grace of repentance and pardon to sinners? May we as consistently urge Christians to lay hold on sanctifying grace sufficient to keep them from all sin, as to urge sinners to lay hold of Christ for justification? May we insist upon the one as really and as honestly as the other?

4. We see how irrelevant and absurd the objection is, that as a matter of fact the church has not attained this state, and therefore it is not attainable. Why, if they have not understood it to be attainable, it no more disproves its attainableness, than the fact that the heathen have not embraced the gospel, proves that they will not when they know it. Within my memory it was thought to be dangerous to call sinners to repent and believe the gospel; and on the contrary, they were told by Calvinists, that they could not repent, that they must wait God's time; and it was regarded as a dangerous error for a sinner to think that he could repent. But who does not know, that the thorough inculcation of an

opposite doctrine has brought scores of thousands to repentance? Now the same course needs to be pursued with Christians. Instead of being told, that it is dangerous to expect to be entirely sanctified in this life, they ought to be taught to believe at once, and take hold on the promises of perfect love and faith.

5. You see the necessity of fully preaching and insisting upon this doctrine, and of calling it by its true scriptural name. It is astonishing to see to what an extent there is a tendency among men to avoid the use of scriptural language, and to cleave to the language of such men as Edwards, and other great and good divines. They object to the terms perfection and entire sanctification, and prefer to use the terms entire consecration, and such other terms as have been common in the church.

Now, I would by no means contend about the use of words; but still it does appear to me to be of great importance, that we use scripture language, and insist upon men being "perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), and being "sanctified wholly, body, soul and spirit" (1 Thess. 5:23). This appears to me to be the more important for this reason, that if we use the language to which the church has been accustomed upon this subject, she will, as she has done, misunderstand us, and will not get before her mind that which we really mean. That this is so, is manifest from the fact, that the great mass of the church will express alarm at the use of the terms perfection and entire sanctification, who will neither express nor feel any such alarm, if we speak of entire consecration. This demonstrates, that they do not by any means understand these terms as meaning the same thing. And although I understand them as meaning precisely the same thing, yet I find myself obliged to use the terms perfection and entire sanctification to possess their minds of their real meaning. This is Bible language. It is unobjectionable language. And inasmuch as the church understands entire consecration to mean something less than entire sanctification or Christian perfection, it does seem to me of great importance, that ministers should use a phraseology which will call the attention of the church to the real doctrine of the Bible upon this subject. With great humility, I would submit the question to my beloved brethren in the ministry, whether they are not aware, that Christians have entirely too low an idea of what is implied in entire consecration, and whether it is not useful and best to adopt a phraseology in addressing them, that shall call their attention to the real meaning of the words which they use?

6. Young converts have not been allowed so much as to indulge the thought that they could live even for a day wholly without sin. They have as a general thing no more been taught to expect to live even for a day without sin, than they have been taught to expect immediate translation, soul and body, to heaven. Of course, they have not known that there was any other way than to go on in sin; and however shocking and distressing the necessity has appeared to them, in the ardor of their first love, still they have looked upon it as an unalterable fact, that to be in a great measure in bondage to sin is a thing of course while they live in this world. Now, with such an orthodoxy as this, with the conviction in the church and ministry so ripe, settled and universal, that the utmost that the grace of God can do for men in this world is to bring them to repentance, and to leave them to live and die in a state of sinning and repenting, is it at all wonderful, that the state of religion should be as it really has been?

In looking over the results to Christians, of preaching the doctrine in question, I feel compelled to say, that so far as all observation can go, I have the same evidence that it is truth, and as such is owned and blessed of God to the elevation of the holiness of Christians, as I have, that those are truths which I have so often preached to sinners, and which have been blessed of God to their conversion. This doctrine seems as naturally calculated to elevate the piety of Christians, and as actually to result in the elevation of their piety, under the blessing of God, as those truths that I have preached to sinners were to their conversion.

7. Christ has been in a great measure lost sight of in some of His most important relations to mankind. He has been known and preached as a pardoning and justifying Savior; but as an actually indwelling and reigning Savior in the heart, he has been but little known. I was struck with a remark a few years since, of a brother whom I have from that time greatly loved, who had been for a time in a desponding state of mind, borne down with a great sense of his own vileness, but seeing no way of escape. At an evening meeting the Lord so revealed Himself to him, as entirely to overcome the strength of his body, and his brethren were obliged to carry him home. The next time I saw him, he exclaimed to me with a pathos I shall never forget, "Brother Finney, the church have buried the Savior." Now it is no doubt true, that the church have become awfully alienated from Christ-have in a great measure lost a knowledge of what He is, and ought to be, to her; and a great many of her members, I have good reason to know, in different parts of the country, are saying with deep and overpowering emotion, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him" (John 20:13)." And,

"16. Much pains have been taken to demonstrate, that our views of this subject are wrong. But in all the arguing to this end hitherto, there has been one grand defect. None of the opponents of this doctrine have yet showed us "a more excellent way, and told us what is right" (1 Cor. 12:31). It is certainly impossible to ascertain what is wrong, on any moral subject, unless we have before us the standard of right. The mind must certainly be acquainted with the rule of right, before it can reasonably pronounce anything wrong: "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). It is therefore certainly absurd, for the opponents of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, to pronounce this doctrine wrong without being able to show us what is right. To what purpose, then, I pray, do they argue, who insist upon this view of the subject as wrong, while they do not so much as attempt to tell us what is right? It cannot be pretended, that the scriptures teach nothing upon this subject. And the question is, what do they teach? We therefore call upon the denouncers of this doctrine, and we think the demand reasonable, to inform us definitely, how holy Christians may be, and are expected to be in this life. And it should be distinctly understood, that until they bring forward the rule laid down in the scripture upon this subject, it is but arrogance to pronounce anything wrong; just as if they should pronounce anything to be sin without comparing it with the standard of right. Until they inform us what the scriptures do teach, we must beg leave to be excused from supposing ourselves obliged to believe, that what is taught in these lectures is wrong, or contrary to the language and spirit of inspiration. This is certainly a question that ought not to be thrown loosely aside, without being settled. The thing at which we aim is, to establish a definite rule, or to explain what we suppose to be the real and explicit

teachings of the Bible upon this point. And we do think it absurd, that the opponents of this view should attempt to convince us of error, without so much as attempting to show what the truth upon this subject is. As if we could easily enough decide what is contrary to right, without possessing any knowledge of right. We therefore beseech our brethren, In discussing this subject, to show us what is right. And if this is not the truth, to show us a more excellent way, and convince us that we are wrong, by showing us what is right. For we have no hope of ever seeing that we are wrong, until we can see that something else than what is advocated in this discussion, is right."121

ELECTION

Warfield's representations of Finney's view

"So far as this representation goes, God's entire action is determined by His creatures: He finds Himself (in His foresight) with an apostate race on His hands; an apostate race of whom He can 'wisely'-a 'wisely' which in Finney's scheme means ultimately 'benevolently'-save only a part; and His choice of the part He will save is determined immediately by them and not by Himself."122 " . . . a description of God's mode of action under His decree of salvation. This action is summed up in the institution of a system of means to effect the end in view . . . These means are the law, the atonement and mediatorial work of Christ, the publication of the Gospel and God's providential and moral government-and also 'the gift and agency of the Holy Spirit.'"123 " . . . grace has made sufficient provision to make the salvation of all men possible . . . and that of a portion of mankind certain: and this is followed by the declaration that all who have the Gospel are without excuse, if they are not saved-another barren statement . . . "124 "What He does, it is affirmed, is effective to the end in the case of those whose salvation He conceives it 'wise' to 'secure.'"125 "According to him election proceeds on the foresight of salvability; but he does not suppose that the same grace is given to all men alike-although all receive 'sufficient grace'-but that God employs in each case whatever grace it seems to Him wise to employ in order to accomplish His end. Those that are salvable-that is, those that are salvable under the wise government which He has established-He secures the salvation of. Those who, under this wise government, are not salvable, He leaves in their sins. Those whose salvation He undertakes to secure, because they are salvable under the wise government He has established, He brings to salvation by suasive influences of grace, adapted in each case to their special needs, and therefore certain to be effective. These are the elect."126 " . . . the reason, or one of the reasons, why just those who are elected are elected, is that they, and not others, would be saved under the system of government which God had in mind to establish. He was bound to elect those and not others-or else alter the system of government He had it in mind to establish, under which none others could be saved; and He cannot alter this system of government because it is the wisest and best system."127

Quotes from Finney

"God foresaw that all mankind would fall into a state of total alienation from Him and His government. He also foresaw that by the wisest arrangement, He could secure the

return and salvation of a part of mankind. He resolved to do so, and 'chose them to eternal salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.'"128 "Grace has made the salvation of every human being secure, who can be persuaded, by all the influences that God can wisely bring to bear upon him, to accept the offers of salvation."129 "The best system of means for securing the great end of benevolence, included the election of just those who were elected, and no others . . . The highest good demanded it."130 "I suppose that God bestows on men unequal measures of gracious influence, but that in this there is nothing arbitrary; that on the contrary, He sees the wisest and best reasons for this; that being in justice under obligation to none, He exercises His own benevolent discretion, in bestowing on all as much gracious influence as He sees to be upon the whole wise and good, and enough to throw the entire responsibility of their damnation upon them if they are lost. But upon some He foresaw that He could wisely bestow a sufficient measure of gracious influence to secure their voluntary yielding, and upon others He could not bestow enough in fact to secure this result."131 "The elect were chosen to eternal life upon condition that God foresaw that in the perfect exercise of their freedom, they could be induced to repent and embrace the gospel."132

Arguments, inferences and conclusions adduced by Warfield

"In this whole statement the greatest care is expended in making it clear that all that God does toward saving men is directed to inducing the objects of salvation to save themselves."133 " . . . they are elected on the ground of their salvability-under the wise government which God has established. There is no sovereignty exhibited in their election itself, except in the sense that God might have left them also in their sin; if He were to save any, these were the only ones He could save-under the wise government established by Him."134 "The determining characteristic of the elect on this view, we presume, is that, in nature, character, situation, circumstances-in their totality, considered in all relations-the salvation of just these and none others serves as a means to God's ultimate supreme end-the good of being. Not merely the salvation of some rather than others, but the salvation of just these same rather than any others, subserves this end."135 "God elects those whom He *can* save, and leaves unelected those whom He *cannot* save, consistently with the system of government which He has determined to establish as the wisest and best. And this seems strongly to suggest that there is an intrinsic difference between the objects of election and others, determining their different treatment." And, "The ground of His election of just them is that there is something in them or in their relations to His system of government of the world, which makes it wise to save them; and this is not true of the others."136 "It appears that Finney wishes to make it appear that election is in some sense the cause of salvation. But he is hampered by his preconceptions. He wishes to deny that election is 'arbitrary.' He wishes to represent salvation as depending on the 'voluntary' action of men."137

Analysis of arguments

Warfield represents Finney as holding that man saves himself. Man's choice is the condition of salvation, God's mercy the grounds. Does God save man against his will?

" . . . they are elected on the ground of their salvability" NO! This does not follow from Finney's statements, nor does Warfield demonstrate a connection.

"God elects those whom He *can* save" NO! God elects those whom He can wisely save. This is Finney's view. Warfield once again makes a false issue by ignoring Finney's careful distinctions. Salvability is *a condition* of election, not the cause.

Warfield speaks to an unstated intention of Finney with "Finney wishes to make it appear that election is in some sense the cause of salvation." Does Warfield explain how he draws this inference? Does he show how it follows from Finney's statements?

Finney's conclusions on the same subject

"It is, that all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end-their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end. The election of some individuals and nations to certain privileges, and to do certain things, is not the kind of election of which I treat at this time; but I am to consider the doctrine of election as it respects election unto salvation, as just explained." 138

"God was under obligation to no one-He might in perfect justice have sent all mankind to hell. The doctrine of election will damn no one: by treating the non-elect according to their deserts, He does them no injustice; and surely His exercising grace in the salvation of the elect, is no act of injustice to the non-elect; and especially will this appear to be true, if we take into consideration the fact, that the only reason why the non-elect will not be saved is, because they pertinaciously refuse salvation. He offers mercy to all. The atonement is sufficient for all. All may come, and are under an obligation to be saved. He strongly desires their salvation, and does all that He wisely can to save them. Why then should the doctrine of election be thought unjust?"

To this paragraph it has been objected as follows: "Can it be said, that the only reason why the non-elect are not saved is their rejection of salvation, etc? Is there not a reason back of this? God does not give that gracious influence in their case, which He does in the case of the elect. If the only reason why the non-elect are not saved is their pertinacious refusal, then it would follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is their acceptance of salvation. If these two points are so, then why all this discussion about election to salvation, and the means to that end, and God's reason for electing? The whole matter would resolve itself into free will, and God would stand quite independent of the issue in every case. Then would there be no such thing as election." The objection contains a non sequitur.

I say, the only reason why the non-elect are not saved, is because they pertinaciously refuse salvation. But if this is true, he says, "it will follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is their acceptance of salvation." But this does not follow. The non-elect

fail of salvation only because they resist all the grace that God can wisely bestow upon them. This grace they resist, and fail of salvation. It is no more reasonable to say, that God's not giving them more divine influence to convert them "is a reason back of this," than it would be to say that His not having by a gracious influence, restrained them from sin altogether, is "a reason back of" their pertinacious resistance of grace. If the non-elect are lost, or fail of salvation only because they resist all the grace that God can wisely bestow, it would not follow that the only reason why the elect are saved, is because they accept, or yield to the same measure of gracious influence as that bestowed upon the non-elect, for it may be, and in many cases the fact is, that God does bestow more gracious influence on the elect, than on the non-elect, because He can wisely do so. Here then is a plain non sequitur. Observe, I am writing in the paragraph in question upon the justice of the divine proceeding. I say, that so far as this is concerned, he fails of salvation, not because God withholds the grace that He could wisely bestow, but only because he rejects the grace proffered, and all that can be wisely proffered.

If I understand this objector, there is another *non sequitur* in his objection. I understand him to say, that upon the supposition that the elect and the non-elect have the same measure of gracious influence, and that the reason why the elect are saved, and the non-elect not saved is, that the elect yield to, and the non-elect resist this influence; the whole question resolves into free will, and there is no election about it. If this is his meaning, as I think it must be, it is a plain non sequitur. Suppose God foresaw that this would be so, and in view of this foreseen fact elected those who He foresaw would yield both to the privileges and gracious influence to which He foresaw they would yield, and to salvation as a consequence of this influence and yielding. And suppose He foresaw that the non-elect, although ordained or elected to enjoy the same measure of gracious influence, would resist and reject salvation, and for this cause rejected or reprobated them in His eternal purpose. Would not this be election? To be sure, in this case the different results would turn upon the fact that the elect yielded, and the non-elect did not yield, to the same measure of gracious influence. But there would be an election of the one to eternal life, and a rejection of the other. I cannot see how this objector can say, that in this case there could be no election, unless in his idea of election there is the exercise of an arbitrary sovereignty. I suppose that God bestows on men unequal measures of gracious influence, but that in this there is nothing arbitrary; that, on the contrary, He sees the wisest and best reasons for this; that being in justice under obligation to none, He exercises His own benevolent discretion, in bestowing on all as much gracious influence as He sees to be upon the whole wise and good, and enough to throw the entire responsibility of their damnation upon them if they are lost. But upon some He foresaw that He could wisely bestow a sufficient measure of gracious influence to secure their voluntary yielding, and upon others He could not bestow enough in fact to secure this result. In accordance with this foreknowledge, He chose the elect to both the gracious influence and its results, eternal life. In all this there was nothing arbitrary or unjust. He does all for all that He wisely can. He does enough for all to leave them without excuse. If the non-elect would yield to that measure of gracious influence which He can and does bestow upon them, which is the best He can do without acting unwisely, and of course wickedly, they would be saved. To this they might yield. To this they ought to yield. God has no right to do more than He does for them, all things considered; and there is no

reason of which they can justly complain why they are not saved. They can with no more reason complain of His not giving them more gracious influence than that He created them, or that He made them free agents, or that He did not restrain them from sin altogether, or do anything else which it had been unwise, and therefore wrong to have done. Nor is the fact that God does not bestow on them sufficient grace to secure their yielding and salvation, a "reason back of their obstinacy to which their not being saved is to be ascribed," any more than any one of the above-named things is such a reason.

This objection proceeds upon the assumption, that election must be unconditional to be election at all—that election must be so defined, as to be the cause of the difference in the eternal state of the elect and non-elect. But I see not why election may not be conditioned upon the foreseen fact, that the wisest possible administration of moral government would secure the free concurrence of some, and not of others. What could be wisely done being foreseen, the purpose that so it should be done would be election. No man has a right to define the terms election and reprobation in such a sense, as to exclude all conditions, and then insist that conditional election is no election at all."139

"Inferences and remarks:

1. Foreknowledge and election are not inconsistent with free agency. The elect were chosen to eternal life, upon condition that God foresaw that in the perfect exercise of their freedom, they could be induced to repent and embrace the gospel.
2. You see why many persons are opposed to the doctrine of election, and try to explain it away; 1st, they misunderstand it, and 2nd, they deduce unwarrantable inferences from it. They suppose it to mean, that the elect will be saved at all events, whatever their conduct may be; and again, they infer from the doctrine that there is no possibility of the salvation of the non-elect. The doctrine, as they understand it, would be an encouragement to the elect to persevere in sin, knowing that their salvation was sure, and their inference would drive the non-elect to desperation, on the ground that for them to make efforts to be saved would be of no avail. But both the doctrine, as they understand it, and the inference, are false. For election does not secure the salvation of the elect irrespective of their character and conduct; nor, as we have seen, does it throw any obstacle in the way of the salvation of the non-elect.
3. This view of the subject affords no ground for presumption on the one hand, nor for despair upon the other. No one can justly say, If I am to be saved I shall be saved, do what I will. Nor can any one say, If I am to be damned I shall be damned, do what I will. But the question is left, so far as they are concerned, as a matter of entire contingency. Sinners, your salvation or damnation is as absolutely suspended upon your own choice, as if God neither knew nor designed anything about it.
4. This doctrine lays no foundation for a controversy with God. But on the other hand, it does lay a broad foundation for gratitude, both on the part of the elect and non-elect. The elect certainly have great reason for thankfulness, that they are thus distinguished. Oh, what a thought, to have your name written in the book of life, to be chosen of God an heir

of eternal salvation, to be adopted into His family, to be destined to enjoy His presence, and to bathe your soul in the boundless ocean of His love for ever and ever! Now are the non-elect without obligations of thankfulness. You ought to be grateful, if any of your brethren of the human family are saved. If all were lost, God would be just. And if any of this dying world receive the gift of eternal life, you ought to be grateful, and render everlasting thanks to God.

5. The non-elect often enjoy as great or greater privileges than the elect. Many men have lived and died under the sound of the gospel, have enjoyed all the means of salvation during a long life, and have at last died in their sins, while others have been converted upon their first hearing the gospel of God. Nor is this difference owing to the fact, that the elect always have more of the strivings of the Spirit than the non-elect. Many who die in their sins, appear to have had conviction for a great part of their lives; have often been deeply impressed with a strong sense of their sins and the value of their souls, but have strongly entrenched themselves under refuges of lies, have loved the world and hated God, and fought their way through all the obstacles that were thrown around them to hedge up their way to death, and have literally forced their passage to the gates of hell. Sin was their voluntary choice.

6. Why should the doctrine of election be made a stumbling-block in the way of sinners? In nothing else do they make the same use of the purposes and designs of God, as they do on the subject of religion; and yet, in everything else, God's purposes and designs are as much settled, and have as absolute an influence. God has as certainly designed the day and circumstances of your death, as whether your soul shall be saved. It is not only expressly declared in the Bible, but is plainly the doctrine of reason. What would you say if you should be called in to see a neighbor who was sick; and, on inquiry, you should find he would neither eat nor drink, and that he was verily starving himself to death. On expostulating with him upon his conduct, suppose he should calmly reply, that he believed in the sovereignty of God, in foreknowledge, election and decrees; that his days were numbered, that the time and circumstances of his death were settled, that he could not die before his time, and that all efforts he could make would not enable him to live a moment beyond his time; and if you attempted to remonstrate against his inference, and such an abuse and perversion of the doctrine of decrees, he should accuse you of being a heretic, of not believing in divine sovereignty. Now, should you see a man on worldly subjects reasoning and acting thus, you would pronounce him insane. Should farmers, mechanics, and merchants, reason in this way in regard to their worldly business, they would be considered fit subjects for bedlam.

7. How forcibly the perversion and abuse of this doctrine illustrate the madness of the human heart, and its utter opposition to the terms of salvation! The fact that God foreknows, and has designs in regard to every other event, is not made an excuse for remaining idle, or worse than idle, on these subjects. But where men's duty to God is concerned, and here alone, they seize these scriptures, and wrest them to their own destruction. How impressively does this fact bring out the demonstration, that sinners want an excuse for disobeying God; that they desire an apology for living in sin; that they seek an occasion for making war upon their Maker.

8. I have said, that the question is as much open for your decision, that you are left as perfectly to the exercise of your freedom, as if God neither knew or designed anything in regard to your salvation. Suppose there was a great famine in New York city, and that John Jacob Astor alone had provisions in great abundance; that he was a benevolent and liberal-minded man, and willing to supply the whole city with provisions, free of expense; and suppose there existed a universal and most unreasonable prejudice against him, insomuch that when he advertised in the daily papers that his storehouses were open, that whosoever would, might come and receive provisions, without money and without price, they all, with one accord, began to make excuse, and obstinately refused to accept the offers. Now, suppose that he should employ all the cartmen to carry provisions around the city, and stop at every door. But still they strengthened each other's hands, and would rather die than be indebted to him for food. Many had said so much against him, that they were utterly ashamed to feel and acknowledge their dependence upon him. Others were so much under their influence as to be unwilling to offend them; and so strong was the tide of public sentiment, that no one had the moral courage to break loose from the multitude and accept of life. Now, suppose that Mr. Astor knew beforehand the state of the public mind, and that all the citizens hated him, and had rather die than be indebted to him for food. Suppose he also knew, from the beginning, that there were certain arguments that he could bring to bear upon certain individuals, that would change their minds, and that he should proceed to press them with these considerations, until they had given up their opposition, had most thankfully accepted his provisions, and were saved from death. Suppose he used all the arguments and means that he wisely could to persuade the rest, but that, notwithstanding all his benevolent efforts, they adhered to the resolution, and preferred death to submission to his proposals. Suppose, further, he had perfect knowledge from the beginning, of the issue of this whole matter, would not the question of life and death be as entirely open for the decision of every individual as if he knew nothing about it?

9. Some may ask, Why does God use means with the non-elect, which He is certain they will not accept? I answer, because He designs that they shall be without excuse. He will demonstrate His willingness and their obstinacy before the universe. He will stop their mouths effectually in judgment by a full offer of salvation; and although He knows that their rejection of the offer will only enhance their guilt, and aggravate their deep damnation, still He will make the offer, as there is no other way in which to illustrate His infinite willingness to save them, and their perverse rejection of His grace.

10. Lastly, God requires you to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. In choosing His elect, you must understand that He has thrown the responsibility of their being saved upon them; that the whole is suspended upon their consent to the terms; you are all perfectly able to give your consent and this moment to lay hold on eternal life. Irrespective of your own choice, no election could save you, and no reprobation can damn you. The "Spirit and the Bride say Come: let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). The responsibility is yours. God does all that He wisely can, and challenges you to show what more He could do that He has not done. If you go to hell, you must go stained with your own blood. God is clear, angels are clear. To your own Master you

stand or fall; mercy waits; the Spirit strives; Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Do not then pervert this doctrine, and make it an occasion of stumbling, till you are in the depths of hell."140

CONCLUSION

Benjamin Warfield, in this article, has labeled Charles Finney as a proponent of intentionalism, teleological ethics, vulgar rationalism, Pelagianism, Hedonism, Universalism, Perfectionism, Grahamism, laborism, propagandism, Anti-Augustinian Congruism and Molinism. Classification and generalization are necessary components of organized study and thought. Often negative connotations are attached to the terms which symbolize these generalizations. When this happens, the use of these terms encourages prejudicial thinking by an evocation of emotion. Christian charity precludes the use of terms that bring unnecessary offense and/or are intended to appeal to prejudice. Intellectual assent occurs when sufficient evidence is brought before the mind. Prejudice short-circuits this process by replacing evidence with emotion, most commonly fear. Clear thought and judgement require a mind unfettered by prejudice. Therefore, any appeal to prejudice would discard reasoning and replace it with emotional response. Theological and philosophical discussions have no place for such methods.

Did Warfield refute Finney's theology? Did he summarize Finney's theology in such a manner as to fairly represent his views? Did Warfield make valid points or raise new issues? Did he bring substantive argument to bear upon the issues at hand? Unhappily, the evidence suggests that these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative. After wading through the morass of verbosity provided by Warfield the reader cannot possibly possess himself/herself of Finney's meaning on these issues (nor can it be fairly found in any extant review). As Finney once wrote of another review,

"This review is so very miscellaneous in its character, that to reply to it *in extenso*, were but little less than to rewrite the volume reviewed. Everyone familiar with the work criticized by the reviewer, will perceive upon an attentive perusal that the reviewer had not made himself well acquainted with the work in question; and that, almost without an exception, a complete answer to his objections might be quoted verbatim from the work itself. I have read and reread his review, and every time with increasing wonder that the reviewer could pass over, so apparently without reading or consideration, the full and complete answer to nearly all his objections which is found in the book he was reviewing."141

Warfield dogmatized where he should have reasoned. He appealed to prejudice (bare assertions) and ignorance (misrepresentation) when he should have met argument with argument. Warfield is not alone in his misrepresentations as he followed the methods of his seminary professor and mentor, Charles Hodge. It can be said with much certainty that he did not understand that which he opposed. Obviously content with a cursory perusal of the work, he constantly misrepresented Finney's views, often making false

issues. Both Finney and G.F. Wright make valid and noteworthy points (in response to Hodge's similar reviews):

"The laws of logic are inherent in every mind; but in various states of development in different minds. If a truth which needs demonstration, and which is capable of demonstration, is barely announced and not demonstrated, the mind feels a dissatisfaction and does not rest short of the demonstration of which it feels the necessity. It is therefore of little use to dogmatize, when we ought to reason, demonstrate, and explain. In all cases of truths not self-evident, or of truths needing proof, religious teachers should understand and comply with the logical conditions of knowledge and rational belief; they tempt God when they merely dogmatize where they ought to reason, explain, and prove, throwing the responsibility of producing conviction and faith upon the sovereignty of God. God convinces and produces faith, not by an overthrow of, but in accordance with, the fixed laws of the mind. It is therefore ridiculous to dogmatize and assert, when explanation, illustration, and proof are possible, and demanded by the laws of the intellect. To do this, and then leave it for God to make the people understand and believe, may be at present convenient for us, but if it be not death to our auditors, no thanks are due to us."142

"Does he meet argument with argument? Does he attempt by argument to show that either the premises, or the conclusions of the book before him are unsound? O, no indeed. This were a painful and hopeless task. He therefore assumes the correctness of the peculiarities of what is called old schoolism; to wit, constitutional sinfulness, physical divine influence, physical regeneration, natural inability; that the sovereign will of God is the foundation of moral obligation; that moral obligation does not imply ability; that moral obligation extends beyond the sphere of moral agency to the substance of the soul and body, and that therefore these can be and are sin in every faculty and part; that the involuntary states of the intellect and the sensibility are virtuous in a higher degree than benevolence or goodwill to being is;—I say he assumes the correctness of these and sundry other similar dogmas; and finding that the conclusions in the work before him conflict with these, he most conveniently appeals to the prejudices of all who sympathize with him in those views, and without one sentence of argument, condemns the work because of its conclusions."143

"Erudition is worse than useless if it essentially fails in accuracy. A fig-tree without leaves raises no false hopes. It is bad enough if the abundant foliage invites you to a fruitless search. It is superlatively bad if the fruit that is found be positively poisonous . . .

At this point, we can hardly resist the temptation to speculate concerning the cause of such misrepresentations as we have here feebly attempted to review . . . their author is by nature an advocate, and that he is singularly lacking in the judicial qualities of mind, which are necessary for understanding the position of an opponent. Indeed, according to our experience, he can hardly state the argument of an antagonist without misstating it . . . Why did he not confine himself to the discussion of principles in the abstract? Would not the cause of truth have been better promoted had he written less, and taken more pains to understand what he opposed, or had he delegated the work of making summaries to a more judicial mind?"144

Warfield would have saved his reader's fifty plus pages of reading if he had just written a single syllogism:

Whatever is inconsistent with the system that I hold to is in error;
The system under question is inconsistent with the system that I hold to;
Therefore, the theological system under question is in error.

It would be better to read the first fifty pages of Finney's Systematic Theology than to read Warfield's article. At least the reader would have a first-hand understanding of its unfiltered contents.

The cause of truth still awaits the appearance of a judicial mind and theological champion to show the Christian church a "still better way" than that laid out in Finney's Systematic Theology. Reputable theologians such as Hodge, Duffield, Warfield and most recently MacArthur would have the Church contented with a dogmatic approach in discussing these all-important issues as stated by Finney. The Christian church needs a new generation and class of theologians who demonstrate and stimulate independent, Biblically-sound thought, unchained from the false philosophical assumptions and presuppositions that have stagnated advancement for centuries. Of course, these men and women do exist but, as ALL great men and women who have effected change by challenging the *assumed* orthodoxy of their day, they bear the scarlet letter "H" or "C" (heretic or cultist). Finney wrote, "If I know my heart, I am willing and anxious to have the errors of the work under consideration detected and exposed, if errors there be in it."¹⁴⁵ After one hundred and forty-five years from the publishing of this great work (Finney's Systematic Theology), no one has reviewed the work with a reasoned and fair approach and found issue. Perhaps we should all be reading Finney to find out why.

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ENDNOTES

1 Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *The Theology of Charles G. Finney*, p. 173

2 *Ibid*, p. 174

3 *Ibid*, p. 175

4 *Ibid*, p. 175

5 *Ibid*, p. 175

6 Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, p. 925

7 *Ibid*, p. 484

8 *Ibid*, p. 924

- 9 Ibid, p. 500
- 10 Ibid, pp. 501-502
- 11 Ibid, p. 501
- 12 Ibid, pp. 422, 767
- 13 Ibid, pp. 756-757
- 14 The Oberlin Evangelist, Lecture 21, p. 193
- 15 Warfield, p. 175
- 16 Ibid, p. 176
- 17 Ibid, p. 177
- 18 Ibid, p. 178
- 19 Ibid, p. 178
- 20 Finney, pp. 509-510
- 21 Ibid, p. 510
- 22 Warfield, p. 196
- 23 Ibid, p. 197
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- 25 Ibid, p. 197
- 26 Ibid, pp. 199-200
- 27 Finney, pp. 57-58
- 28 Ibid, p. 198
- 29 Ibid, p. 199
- 30 Ibid, p. 200
- 31 Ibid, p. 201
- 32 Ibid, p. 202
- 33 Ibid, p. 203
- 34 Ibid, p. 59
- 35 Ibid, p. 211
- 36 Ibid, p. 260
- 37 Ibid, p. 929-931
- 38 Ibid, pp. 132-134
- 39 Warfield, p. 178-179
- 40 Ibid, p. 180
- 41 Ibid, p. 182
- 42 Ibid, p. 182
- 43 Ibid, p. 185-186
- 44 Ibid, p. 188

- 45 Ibid, p. 190, quoted from Theological Essays Reprinted from the Princeton Review, 1846, p. 436
- 46 Finney, p. 374
- 47 Ibid, p. 375
- 48 Ibid, p. 388-389
- 49 Ibid, p. 389
- 50 Ibid, p. 393

- 51 Ibid, p. 390
- 52 Ibid, p. 381
- 53 Ibid, p. 397
- 54 Ibid, p. 391
- 55 Ibid, p. 380
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- 57 Ibid, p. 391
- 58 Ibid, p. 392
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- 61 Ibid, p. 181
- 62 Ibid, p. 183
- 63 Ibid, p. 184-185
- 64 Ibid, p. 186
- 65 Ibid, pp. 186-187
- 66 Ibid, p. 187
- 67 Ibid, p. 188
- 68 Ibid, p. 190, quoted from Theological Essays Reprinted from the Princeton Review, 1846, p. 436
- 69 Finney, pp. 401-404
- 70 Ibid, p. 190
- 71 Ibid, p. 191
- 72 Ibid, p. 253
- 73 Ibid, p. 266
- 74 Ibid, p. 295
- 75 Ibid, p. 191, quoted from The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, April, 1847, pp. 268 ff.
- 76 Ibid, p. 192
- 77 Finney, p. 955
- 78 Ibid, p. 243
- 79 Ibid, p. 184
- 80 Ibid, pp. 257-258
- 81 Warfield, p. 171-172
- 82 Ibid, p. 172
- 83 Finney, p. 785
- 84 Ibid, p. 786-787
- 85 Ibid, p. 790

- 86 Warfield, P. 172
- 87 Ibid, p. 173
- 88 Finney, p. 787
- 89 Ibid, p. 788
- 90 The quotation is from Canfield, An Exposition, etc., pp. 17 ff
- 91 Warfield, p. 192
- 92 Finney, p. 404

93 Ibid, p. 413
94 Ibid, p. 413
95 Warfield, pp. 192-193
96 Ibid, p. 193
97 Finney, P. 388
98 Ibid, p. 413
99 Ibid, pp. 413-414
100 Warfield, p. 193
101 Ibid, p. 195
102 Ibid, p. 195
103 Ibid, p. 205
104 Ibid, p. 208
105 Finney, p. 46
106 Ibid, p. 693
107 Ibid, p. 716
108 Ibid, p. 630
109 Ibid, p. 629
110 Ibid, p. 306
111 Ibid, p. 307
112 Ibid, pp. 667-668
113 Ibid, p. 684
114 Warfield, p. 194
115 Ibid, p. 194
116 Ibid, p. 195
117 Ibid, pp. 203-204
118 Ibid, p. 206
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120 Finney, p. 693
121 Ibid, pp. 757-761, 766
122 Warfield, p. 166
123 Ibid, p. 166
124 Ibid, p. 167
125 Ibid, p. 167
126 Ibid, p. 168
127 Ibid, p. 170
128 Finney, P. 693
129 Ibid, p. 693
130 Ibid, p. 775
131 Ibid, p. 778
132 Ibid, p. 780
133 Warfield, p. 167
134 Ibid, p. 169
135 Ibid, p. 169
136 Ibid, pp. 170-171
137 Ibid, p. 171
138 Finney, p. 768

139 Ibid, p. 777-778

140 Ibid, p. 780-783

141 Ibid, p. 916

142 Ibid, p. 4

143 Ibid, p. 917

144 Rev. George F. Wright, Dr. Hodges Misrepresentations of President Finneys System of Theology, Bibliotheca Sacra, April, 1876, Article VII.

145 Finney, p. 917