



Charles G. Finney

The Anti-Biblical Teachings of Charles G. Finney

Thoroughly illustrated in context, from his own very extensive writings.

By A. Allison Lewis – 2007

Any notes within quoted texts will be within brackets and initialed.

Red Font color plus **bold** and/or **bold underline** and/or **ALL CAPS underline** and **size** are used for various degrees of emphasis. *Italics* are used for quotations. Bible references will be made uniform. For example Genesis 1:1 = GEN 1:1 and 1 Kings 1:1 = 1KI 1:1. Because of a conflict two references will differ from the ordinary first 3 digits for the name of the book (i.e.) Judges = JDG 1:1 and Philemon = PHM 1:1. A one chapter book will be treated as other books for reference (i.e.) Jude = JUD 1:1.

I have depended ENTIRELY on printed books from my personal library rather than the numerous articles and books available on the internet – **they too often vary from the printed books.**

The Second Great Awakening was the work of Charles Grandison Finney (August 29, 1792 – August 16, 1875).

[The *Great Awakening* was started by Jonathan Edwards, and contained the seeds of its rather quick end in his own teaching].

Pages 212-228.

Page 212>

LECTURE. XXXV.

ATONEMENT — No. 1.

In this lecture I shall show:

FIRST. What is intended by the Atonement.

SECOND. That an Atonement was necessary.

FIRST. *What is intended by the atonement.*

The English word Atonement is synonymous with the Hebrew word *Cofer*. This is a noun from the verb *caufar*, to cover. The *Cofer* or cover, was the name of the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant, and constituted what was called the mercy seat. The Greek word rendered Atonement is *katallage*. This means reconciliation, to favor; from *kallasso*, to change, or exchange. The term properly means substitution. An examination of these original words, in the connection in which they stand, will show that the Atonement is the substitution of the sufferings of Christ in the place of the sufferings of sinners. It is a covering of their sins, by his sufferings.

SECOND. *Its necessity.*

1. All nations have felt the necessity of expiatory sacrifices. This is evident from the fact that all nations have offered them. Hence *antipsucha*, or ransom for their souls, have been offered by nearly every nation under heaven. (See Buck's *Theo. Dic.* p. 539.)

2. The wisest heathen philosophers, who saw the intrinsic inefficacy of animal sacrifices, held that God could not forgive sin. This proves to a demonstration, that they felt the necessity of an atonement or expiatory sacrifice. And having too just views of God and his government, to suppose that either animal, or merely human sacrifices, could be efficacious under the government of God, they were unable to understand upon what principles sin could be forgiven.

3. The whole Jewish scriptures, especially the whole ceremonial dispensation of the Jews attest, most unequivocally, the necessity of an Atonement.

4. The New Testament is just as unequivocal in its testimony to the same point. The Apostle expressly asserts, that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

5. The necessity of an Atonement is fully implied in the fact, that an Atonement has been made.

6. **The fact that the execution of the law of God on rebel angels had not and could not arrest the progress of rebellion in the universe, proves that something more needed to be done, in sup-Page 213> port of the authority of law, than the execution of its penalty upon rebels could do.** While the execution of law may have a strong tendency to prevent the beginning of rebellion, and to awe and restrain rebellion, among the rebels themselves; yet penal inflictions, do not as a matter of fact, subdue the heart, under any government, whether human or divine.

7. As a matter of fact, the law, without Atonement, was only exasperating rebels, without confirming holy beings. Paul affirmed that the action of the law upon his own mind, while in impenitence, was, to beget in him all manner of concupiscence. One grand reason for giving the law

was, to develop the nature of sin, and to show that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The law was, therefore, given that the offence might abound, that thereby it might be demonstrated, that without an Atonement there could be no salvation for rebels under the government of God.

8. THE NATURE, DEGREE, AND EXECUTION OF THE PENALTY OF THE LAW, MADE THE HOLINESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD SO PROMINENT, AS TO ABSORB TOO MUCH OF PUBLIC ATTENTION TO BE SAFE. Those features of his character were so fully revealed, by the execution of his law upon the rebel angels, that to have pursued the same course with the inhabitants of this world, without the offer of mercy, might have had, and doubtless would have had an injurious influence upon the universe, by creating more of fear than of love to God and his government.

9. Hence, a fuller revelation of the love and compassion of God was necessary, to guard against the influence of slavish fear.

10. PUBLIC JUSTICE required either that an Atonement should be made, or that the law should be executed upon every offender. By public justice is intended, that due administration of law, that shall secure in the highest manner the nature of the case admits, private and public interests, and establish the order and well-being of the universe. In establishing the government of the universe, God had given the pledge, both impliedly and expressly, that he would regard the public interests and by a due administration of the law, secure and promote, as far as possible, public and individual happiness.

11. Public justice could strictly require only the execution of law; for God had neither expressly or impliedly given a pledge to do any thing more for the promotion of virtue and happiness, than to administer due rewards to both the righteous and the wicked. Yet an Atonement, as we shall see, would more fully meet the necessities of the government, and act as a more efficient preventive of sin, and a more powerful persuasive to holiness, than the infliction of the penalty of his law would do.

12. AN ATONEMENT WAS NEEDED, TO CONTRADICT THE SLANDER OF SATAN. HE HAD SEDUCED OUR FIRST PARENTS, BY THE INSINUATION THAT GOD WAS SELFISH, IN PROHIBITING THEIR EATING THE FRUIT OF A CERTAIN TREE. NOW THE EXECUTION OF THE PENALTY OF HIS LAW WOULD NOT SO THO-Page 214> ROUGHLY REFUTE THIS ABOMINABLE SLANDER AS WOULD THE GREAT SELF-DENIAL OF GOD EXHIBITED IN THE ATONEMENT.

13. An Atonement was needed, for the removal of obstacles to the free exercise of benevolence towards our race. Without an Atonement, the race of man after the fall, sustained to the government of God the

relation of rebels and outlaws. And before God, as the great executive magistrate of the universe, could suffer his benevolence to flow toward them, an Atonement must be decided upon and made known, as the reason upon which his favorable treatment of them was founded.

14. An Atonement was needed, to promote the glory and influence of God in the universe. But more of this hereafter.

15. **An Atonement was needed, to present overpowering motives to repentance.**

16. An Atonement was needed, that the offer of pardon might not seem like connivance at sin.

17. An Atonement was needed, to manifest the sincerity of God, in his legal enactments.

18. **An Atonement was needed, to make it safe, to present the offer and promise of pardon.**

19. An Atonement was needed, to inspire confidence in the offers and promises of pardon, and in all the promises of God to man.

20. An Atonement was needed, as the only means of reclaiming rebels.

21. An Atonement was needed, as the great and only means of sanctifying sinners :

ROM 8:3, 4. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

22. **An Atonement was needed, not to render God merciful, but to reconcile pardon with a due administration of justice:**

ROM 3:23-26. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Page 215>

ATONEMENT

LECTURE XXXVI.

ATONEMENT.—No. 2.

In this lecture I shall present several farther reasons why an Atonement under the government of God was preferable in the case of the inhabitants of this world, to punishment, or to the execution of the divine

law. Several reasons have already been assigned in the last lecture, to which I will add the following, some of which are plainly revealed in the Bible; others are plainly inferred from what the Bible does reveal; and others still are plainly inferable from the very nature of the case:

1. **God's great and DISINTERESTED LOVE to sinners themselves was a prime reason for the Atonement.**

JOH 3:16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

2. His great love to the universe at large must have been another reason, inasmuch as it was impossible that the Atonement should not exert an amazing influence over moral beings, in whatever world they might exist.

3. Another reason for substituting the sufferings of Christ in the place of the eternal damnation of sinners, is that an infinite amount of suffering might be prevented. The relation of Christ to the universe rendered his sufferings so infinitely valuable and influential as an expression of God's abhorrence of sin on the one hand, and great love to his subjects on the other, **that an infinitely less amount of suffering in him than must have been inflicted upon sinners, would be equally, and no doubt vastly more influential in supporting the government of God, than the execution of the law upon them would have been.**

4. By this substitution an immense good might be gained. The eternal happiness of all that can be reclaimed from sin, together with all the augmented happiness of those who have never sinned that must result from this glorious revelation of God.

5. Another reason for preferring the Atonement to the punishment of sinners, must have been, that sin had afforded an opportunity for the highest exercise of virtue in God: the exercise of forbearance, mercy, self-denial, for enemies, and suffering for enemies that were within his own power, and for those from whom he could expect no equivalent in return.

6. It is impossible to conceive of a higher order of virtues than are exhibited in the Atonement of Christ.

Page 216>

7. It was vastly desirable that God should take advantage of such an opportunity to exhibit his true character, and shew to the universe what was in his heart.

8. **Another reason for preferring Atonement was God's desire to lay open his heart to the inspection and imitation of moral beings.**

9. Another reason is, because God is love, and prefers mercy when it can be safely exercised. The Bible represents him as delighting in mercy, and affirms that *judgment is his strange work.*

10. Because he so much prefers mercy to judgment as to be willing to suffer as their substitute, to afford himself the opportunity to exercise

pardon on principles that are consistent with a due administration of justice.

11. In the Atonement God consulted his own happiness and his own glory. To deny himself for the salvation of sinners was a part of his own infinite happiness, always intended by him, and therefore always enjoined.

12. In making the Atonement, God complied with the laws of his own mind, and did just that, all things considered, in the highest degree promotive of the universal good.

13. The self-denial exercised in the Atonement would secure to him the highest kind and degree of happiness.

14. **The Atonement would present to creatures the highest possible MOTIVES to virtue.**

15. **It would beget among creatures the highest kind and degree of happiness, by leading them to contemplate and imitate his love.** [Points 14 and 15 introduce Finney's MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY – aal]

16. **The circumstances of his government rendered an Atonement necessary; as the execution of law was not, as a matter of fact, a sufficient preventive of sin. The annihilation of the wicked would not answer the purposes of government. A full revelation of mercy, blended with such an exhibition of justice, was called for by the circumstances of the universe.**

17. To confirm holy beings.

18. To confound his enemies.

19. A just and necessary regard to his own reputation made him prefer Atonement to the punishment of sinners.

20. **A desire to sustain his own reputation, as the only moral power that could support his own moral government, MUST HAVE BEEN a leading reason for the Atonement.**

21. **The Atonement was preferred as the best and perhaps only way to inspire an affectionate confidence in him.**

22. Atonement must have been the most agreeable to God, and the most beneficial to the universe.

23. Atonement would afford him an opportunity to always gratify his love in his kindness to sinners in using means for their salvation, in forgiving and saving them when they repent, without the danger of its being inferred in the universe that he had not a sufficient abhorrence of their sins.

Page 217>

24. The Atonement demonstrates the superior efficacy of love, as a moral influence, over penal inflictions.

25. Another reason for the Atonement was to counteract the influence of the Devil, whose whole influence is exerted in this world for the promotion of selfishness.

26. The Atonement would enable God to make the best use of the Devil which the nature of the case admitted.

27. To make the final punishment of the wicked more impressive in the light of the infinite love manifest in the Atonement.

28. The Atonement is the highest testimony that God can bear against selfishness. It is the testimony of his own example.

29. The Atonement is a higher expression of his regard for the public interests than the execution of law. It is therefore a fuller satisfaction to public justice.

30. **The Atonement so reveals all the attributes of God as to complete the whole circle of MOTIVES NEEDED TO INFLUENCE THE MINDS OF MORAL BEINGS** [This and like terminology is where the term “**moral influence theory**” comes from - aal].

31. By dying in human nature, Christ exhibited his heart to both worlds.

LECTURE XXXVII.

ATONEMENT.—No. 3.

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE ATONEMENT.

In this lecture I will show:

FIRST. Not Christ's obedience to law as a covenant of works.

SECOND. That his sufferings, and especially his death, constitutes the Atonement.

THIRD. That his taking human nature and obeying unto death, under such circumstances, constituted a good reason for our being treated as righteous.

FOURTH The nature and kind of his sufferings.

FIFTH. The amount of his sufferings.

SIXTH. That the Atonement is not a commercial transaction.

SEVENTH. **That the Atonement is to be regarded as a satisfaction of PUBLIC JUSTICE.**

FIRST. *Christ's obedience to the moral law, as a covenant of works, did not constitute the .Atonement.*

1. **Christ owed obedience to the moral law both as God and man. He was under as much obligation to be perfectly benevolent as any moral creature is. It was therefore impossible for him to to (sic) perform any works of supererogation; that is, so far as obedi- Page**

218> **ence to law was concerned, HE COULD, NEITHER AS GOD, NOR AS MAN, DO ANY THING MORE THAN HIS DUTY.**

2. Had he *obeyed* for us, he would not have suffered for us. If his obedience was to be substituted for our obedience, he need not certainly have both fulfilled the law for us, as our substitute under a covenant of works, and at the same time have suffered, a substitute for the penalty of the law.

3. If he obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine qua non* of our salvation.

4. **THE IDEA THAT ANY PART OF THE ATONEMENT CONSISTED IN CHRIST'S OBEYING THE LAW FOR US, AND IN OUR STEAD AND BEHALF, REPRESENTS GOD AS REQUIRING:**

- (1.) The *obedience* of our substitute.
- (2.) The same *suffering* as if no obedience had been rendered.
- (3.) Our *repentance*.
- (4.) Our *personal obedience*.
- (5.) And then represents him as, after all, ascribing our salvation to grace. Strange grace this, that requires a debt to be paid sev-al (sic) times over before the obligation is discharged!

SECOND. *The sufferings of Christ, and especially his death, constituted the atonement.*

1. His sufferings were no part of them deserved by him. They must, therefore, have been vicarious or unjust. If they were vicarious, that is, voluntarily suffered by him as our substitute, no injustice was done. But if they were not vicarious, he could not have suffered at all under the government of God, without injustice having been done him.

2. That his sufferings were vicarious, is manifest from the fact that they were *all* occasioned by the sins of men.

3. The Bible represents *all* his sufferings as for us.

ISA 53: *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our*

*iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not **Page 219**> his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

HEB 2:10. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

4. The Bible especially, and almost every where represents his death, or the shedding of his blood, as a vicarious offering for our sins. The texts which prove this are too numerous to be quoted in a skeleton.

5. Perhaps his other sufferings are to be regarded as incidental to the work he had undertaken, and fitted to prepare him to sympathize with us, rather than as strictly vicarious.

HEB 2:17, 18. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

HEB 4:15. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

THIRD. *His taking human nature, and obeying unto death, under such circumstances, constituted a good reason for our being treated as righteous.*

1. It is a common practice in human governments, and one that is founded in the nature and laws of mind, to reward distinguished public service by conferring favors on the children of those who had rendered this service, and treating them as if they had rendered it themselves. This

is both benevolent and wise. Its governmental importance, its wisdom and excellent influence have been most abundantly attested in the experience of nations.

2. As a governmental transaction, this same principle prevails, and for the same reason, under the government of God. All that **Page 220**> are Christ's children and belong to him, are received for his sake, treated with favor, and the rewards of the righteous are bestowed upon them for his sake. And the public service which he has rendered the universe by laying down his life for the support of the divine government, has rendered it eminently wise that all who are united to him by faith should be treated as righteous for his sake.

FOURTH. *The nature or kind of his sufferings.*

1. His sufferings were not those of a sinner, neither in kind nor degree. The sufferings of a sinner must consist, in a great measure, in remorse. But Christ could not feel remorse, having never sinned.

2. He could not have endured the literal penalty of the law of God, for this we have seen in a former skeleton was eternal death.

3. **He did not endure the displeasure of God. On the contrary, God expressly affirmed that he was his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased.** [^{MAR 15:34} And the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, why have You abandoned Me?" – ^{WHO} και τη ενατη ωρα εβοησεν ο ιησους φωνη μεγαλη ελωι ελωι λαμα σαβαχθανι ο εστιν μεθερμηνευομενον ο θεος μου εις τι εγκατελιπες με – Point 3 is **a clear example of Finney's misuse of the Bible** - aal].

4. **But a substitute for the curse due to sinners fell on him. In other words, he endured such sufferings, as our substitute, both in kind and degree, AS FULLY TO MEET THE DEMAND OF PUBLIC JUSTICE.**

ISA 53:4-12. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul and offering for sin, he shall see his seed,*

he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Rom. 4:25. *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

Page 221>

2CO 5:21. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

HEB 9:28. *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

1PE 2:24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

5. His sufferings were those of a holy mind voluntarily submitted to, in support of law, under a dispensation of mercy.

FIFTH. *The amount of his sufferings.*

1. He did not suffer all that was due to sinners on the ground of retributive justice. This was naturally impossible, as each sinner deserved eternal death.

2. Inflicting upon him this amount of suffering would have been unjust, as his sufferings were infinitely more valuable than the sufferings of sinners.

3. Therefore such an amount of suffering was wholly unnecessary in him.

4. Had he suffered the same amount that was due to sinners, nothing would have been gained to the universe by this substitution, and therefore the Atonement would have been unwise.

5. Neither wisdom nor enlightened benevolence could consent that an innocent being should suffer, as a substitute for a guilty one, the same amount that was justly due to the guilty.

6. We are no where informed, nor is it possible for us to know, or perhaps to conceive, the exact amount of Christ's sufferings as a substitute for sinners. It is enough for us to know that his sufferings, both in kind and degree, were so ample a satisfaction to public justice as to render the universal offer of forgiveness to all the penitent consistent with the due administration of justice.

SIXTH: *The Atonement was not a commercial transaction.*

Some have regarded the Atonement simply in the light of the payment of a debt; and have represented Christ as purchasing the elect of the Father

and paying down the same amount of suffering in his own person that justice would have exacted of them. To this I answer :

1. It is naturally impossible, as it would require that satisfaction should be made to retributive justice.

2. But as we have seen in a former lecture, retributive justice must have inflicted on them eternal death. To suppose, therefore, that Christ suffered in amount all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that he suffered an eternal punishment multiplied by the whole number of the elect.

Page 222>

SEVENTH. *The Atonement of Christ was intended as a satisfaction of public justice.*

1. ISA 53:10-12. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

ROM 24-26. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

2. Public justice requires:

(1.) That penalties shall be annexed to laws that are equal to the importance of the precept.

(2.) That when these penalties are incurred they shall be inflicted for the public good, as an expression of the law-giver's regard to the law, of his determination to support public order, and by a due administration of justice to secure the highest well being of the public. As has been seen in a former lecture, a leading design of the sanctions of law is prevention; and the execution of penal sanctions is demanded by public justice. The great design of sanctions, both remuneratory and vindicatory, is to prevent disobedience and secure obedience or universal happiness. This is done by such a revelation of the heart of the law-giver, through the precept, sanctions, and execution of his law, as to beget awe on the one hand, and the most entire confidence and love on the other.

3. Whatever can as effectually reveal God, make known his hatred to sin, his love of order, his determination to support government, and to

promote the holiness and happiness of his creatures, as the execution of his law would do, is a full satisfaction of public justice.

4. Atonement is, therefore, a part, and a most influential part of moral government. It is an auxiliary to a strictly legal government. It does not take the place of the execution of law in such a sense as to exclude penal inflictions from the universe. The execution of law still holds a place and makes up an indispensable part of the great circle of motives essential to the perfection of moral government. Fallen angels and the finally impenitent of this world will **Page 223**> receive the full execution of the penalty of the divine law. But Atonement is an expedient above law, not contrary to it, which adds new and vastly influential motives to induce obedience. I have said it is an auxiliary to law, adding to the precept and sanction of law an overpowering exhibition of love and compassion.

5. The Atonement is an illustrious exhibition of commutative justice, in which the government of God, by an act of infinite grace, commutes or substitutes the sufferings of Christ for the eternal damnation of sinners. These various positions might be sustained by numerous quotations from scripture, but in this skeleton form they cannot conveniently be given; and besides, it is no part of my design to dispense with the necessity of your searching the Bible for the proof of these positions yourselves.

LECTURE XXXVIII.
ATONEMENT.—No. 4.
ITS VALUE.

In discussing the value of the Atonement, I shall—

FIRST. Show in what its value consists.

SECOND. How great its value is.

THIRD. For whose benefit it was intended.

FIRST. *Show in what its value consists.*

1. It is valuable only as it tends to promote the glory of God, and the virtue and happiness of the universe.

2. In order to understand, in what the value of the Atonement consists, we must understand:

(1.) That happiness is an ultimate good.

(2.) That virtue is indispensable to happiness.

(3.) That the knowledge of God is indispensable to virtue.

(4.) That Christ, who made the Atonement, is God.

(5.) That the work of Atonement was the most interesting and impressive exhibition of God that ever was made in this world and probably in the universe.

(6.) That, therefore, the Atonement is the highest means of promoting virtue that exists in this world, and perhaps in the universe. And

that it is valuable only, and just so far as it reveals God, and tends to promote virtue and happiness.

(7.) That the work of Atonement was a gratification of the infinite benevolence of God.

Page 224>

(8.) It was a work eternally designed by him, and therefore eternally enjoyed.

(9.) It has eternally made no small part of the happiness of God.

(10.) The development or carrying out of this design, in the work of Atonement, highly promotes and will for ever promote his glory in the universe.

(11.) **Its value consists in its adaptedness to promote the virtue and happiness of holy angels, and all moral agents who have never sinned. AS IT IS A NEW AND MOST STUPENDOUS REVELATION OF GOD, IT MUST OF COURSE GREATLY INCREASE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND BE GREATLY PROMOTIVE OF THEIR VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS.**

(12.) **ITS VALUE CONSISTS IN ITS ADAPTEDNESS TO PREVENT FARTHER REBELLION AGAINST GOD IN EVERY PART OF THE UNIVERSE. THE ATONEMENT EXHIBITS GOD IN SUCH A LIGHT, AS MUST GREATLY STRENGTHEN THE CONFIDENCE OF HOLY BEINGS IN HIS CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT. IT IS THEREFORE CALCULATED IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE, TO CONFIRM HOLY BEINGS IN THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO GOD, AND THUS PREVENT THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF REBELLION.**

SECOND. *Show how great its value is.*

1. Let it be remembered, **THE VALUE OF THE ATONEMENT CONSISTS IN ITS MORAL POWER OR TENDENCY TO PROMOTE VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS.**

2. Moral power is the **POWER OF MOTIVE.**

3. **The highest moral power is the influence of example.** Advice has moral power. Precept has moral power. Sanction has moral power. But **EXAMPLE IS THE HIGHEST MORAL INFLUENCE THAT CAN BE EXERTED BY ANY BEING.**

4. Moral beings are so created as to be naturally influenced by the example of each other. The example of a child, as a moral influence, has power upon other children. The example of an adult, as a moral influence, has power. The example of great men and of angels has great moral power. But the example of God is the highest moral influence in the universe.

5. **The word of God has power. His commands, threatenings, promises; but his example is a higher moral influence than his precepts or his threatenings.**

6. Virtue consists in benevolence. God requires benevolence, threatens all his subjects with punishment, if they are not benevolent, and promises them eternal life if they are. All this has power. But his example, his own benevolence, **HIS OWN DISINTERESTED LOVE, AS EXPRESSED IN THE ATONEMENT, IS A VASTLY HIGHER MORAL INFLUENCE THAN HIS WORD, OR ANY OTHER OF HIS WAYS.**

7. Christ is God. In the Atonement God has given us the influence of his own example, has exhibited his own love, his own compassion, his own self-denial, his own patience, his own long-suffering, under abuse from enemies. In the Atonement he has exhibited all the highest and most perfect virtues, has united himself with human nature, has exhibited these virtues to the inspection of **Page 225**> our senses, and labored, wept, suffered, bled, and died for man. This is not only the highest revelation of God, that could be given to man; but is giving the whole weight of his own example in favor of all the virtues which he requires of man.

8. This is the highest possible moral influence. It is properly moral omnipotence; that is—the influence of the Atonement, when apprehended by the mind, will accomplish whatever is an object of moral power. **IT CANNOT COMPEL A MORAL AGENT, AND SET ASIDE HIS FREEDOM, FOR THIS IS NOT AN OBJECT OF MORAL POWER; BUT IT WILL DO ALL THAT MOTIVE CAN, IN THE NATURE OF THE CASE ACCOMPLISH. It is the highest and most weighty motive that the mind of a moral being can conceive. IT IS THE MOST MOVING, IMPRESSIVE, AND INFLUENTIAL CONSIDERATION IN THE UNIVERSE.**

9. The value of the Atonement may be estimated then:

(1.) By the consideration, that it has from eternity made up no inconsiderable part of the happiness of God. We are not aware, and cannot know, that God has ever exercised a higher class of virtues, than

were exercised and exhibited in the Atonement. His happiness arises out of, and is founded in, his virtue.

(2.) God has always been in that state of mind, so far as his will and design were concerned, in which he made the Atonement.

(3.) He has, therefore, always exercised those virtues, and always enjoyed the happiness resulting from them. And those virtues are certainly among the highest kind that can possibly be exercised by God, and as his happiness is in proportion to the perfection and strength of his virtue, we have good reason for believing, that the work of Atonement, or the virtues exercised or exhibited in it, have ever constituted a great share of the happiness of God.

(4.) Its value may be estimated, by its moral influence in the promotion of holiness among all holy beings:

a. Their love to God must depend upon their knowledge of him.

b. As he is infinite, and all creatures are finite, finite beings know him only as he is pleased to reveal himself.

c. The Atonement has disclosed or revealed to the universe of holy beings, a class and an order of virtues, as resident in the divine mind, which, but for the Atonement, would probably have for ever remained unknown.

d. As the Atonement is the most impressive revelation of God, of which we have any knowledge, or can form any conception, we have reason to believe that it has greatly increased the holiness and happiness of all holy creatures, that it has done more than any other and perhaps every other revelation of God, to exalt his character, strengthen his government, enlighten the universe, and increase its happiness.

e. The value of the Atonement may be estimated by the amount of good it has done and will do in this world. The Atonement is an exhibition of God suffering as a substitute for his rebellious subjects. His relation to the law and to the universe, is that which gives his sufferings such infinite value. I have said, in a former **Page 226**> lecture, that the utility of executing penal sanctions consists in the exhibition it makes of the true character and designs of the law-giver. It creates public confidence, makes a public impression, and thus strengthens the influence of government, and is in this way promotive of order and happiness. The Atonement is the highest testimony that God could give of his holy abhorrence of sin; of his regard to his law; of his determination to support it; and, also, of his great love for his subjects; his great compassion for sinners; and his willingness to suffer himself in their stead; rather, on the one hand, than to punish them, and on the other, than to set aside the penalty without **satisfaction being made to public justice**.

f. The Atonement may be viewed in either of two points of light.

(a.) Christ may be considered as the law-giver, and attesting his sincerity, love of holiness, approbation of the law, and compassion for his subjects, by laying down his life as their substitute.

(b.) Or, Christ may be considered as the Son of the Supreme Ruler; and then we have the spectacle of a sovereign, giving his only begotten and well beloved Son, his greatest treasure, to die a shameful and agonizing death, in testimony of his great compassion for his rebellious subjects, and of his high regard for public justice.

g. The value of the Atonement may be estimated, by considering the fact that it provides for the pardon of sin, in a way that forbids the hope of impunity in any other case. This, the good of the universe imperiously demanded. If sin is to be forgiven at all, under the government of God, it should be known to be forgiven upon principles that will by no means encourage rebellion, or hold out the least hope of impunity, should rebellion break out in any other part of the universe.

h. The Atonement has settled the question, that sin can never be forgiven, under the government of God, simply on account of the repentance of any being. It has demonstrated, that sin can never be forgiven without full satisfaction being made to public justice, and that public justice can never be satisfied with any thing less than an Atonement made by God himself. Now, as it can never be expected, that the Atonement will be repeated, it is for ever settled, that rebellion in any other world than this, can have no hope of impunity. This answers the question so often asked by infidels, "If God was disposed to be merciful, why could he not forgive without an Atonement?" The answer is plain; he could not forgive sin, but upon such principles as would for ever preclude the hope of impunity, should rebellion ever break out in any other part of the universe.

i. From these considerations, it is manifest that the value of the Atonement is infinite. **WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE [! - aal], that Christ, by his Atonement, is not only the Savior of this world, but the Savior of the universe in an important sense. Rebellion once broke out in Heaven, and upon the rebel angels God executed his law, and sent them down to hell. It next broke out in this world; and as Page 227> the execution of law was found by experience not to be a sufficient preventive against rebellion, there was no certainty that rebellion would not have spread until it had ruined the universe, but for that revelation of God which Christ has made in the Atonement. This exhibition of God has proved itself, not merely able to prevent**

rebellion among holy beings, but to reclaim and reform rebels. Millions of rebels have been reclaimed and reformed. This world is to be turned back to its allegiance to God, and the blessed Atonement of Christ has so unbosomed [“to tell or reveal one’s feelings, secrets, etc.” – Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language; Simon and Schuster. 1982 - aal] **God before the universe, as, no doubt, not only to save other worlds from going into rebellion, but to save myriads of our already rebellious race from the depths of an eternal hell.**

THIRD. *For whose benefit the .Atonement was intended.*

1. God does all things for himself; that is—he consults his own glory and happiness, as the supreme and most influential reason for all his conduct. This is wise and right in him, because his own glory and happiness are infinitely the greatest good in the universe. He does what he does, because he loves to do it. He made the Atonement to gratify himself; that is—because he loved to do it. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* God himself, then, was greatly benefitted (sic) by the Atonement. In other words, his happiness, in a great measure, consisted in it.

2. He made the Atonement for the benefit of the universe. All holy beings are and must be benefitted (sic) by it, from its very nature. As it gives them a higher knowledge of God, than they ever had before, or ever could have gained in any other way. The Atonement is the greatest work that he could have wrought for them, the most blessed, and excellent, and benevolent thing he could have done for them. For this reason, angels are described as desiring to look into the Atonement. The inhabitants of Heaven are represented as being deeply interested in the work of Atonement, and those displays of the character of God that are made in it. The Atonement is then, no doubt, one of the greatest blessings that ever God conferred upon the universe of holy beings.

3. The Atonement was made for the benefit particularly of the inhabitants of this world. From its very nature, it is calculated to benefit all the inhabitants of this world; as it is a most stupendous revelation of God to man. Its nature is adapted to benefit all mankind. **ALL MANKIND CAN BE PARDONED, IF THEY WILL BE RIGHTLY AFFECTED AND BROUGHT TO REPENTANCE BY IT, AS WELL AS ANY PART OF MANKIND CAN** [What ever happened to MAT 7:13, 14? - aal].

4. The Bible declares that Christ tasted death for every man.

5. All do certainly receive many blessings on account of it. There is reason to believe, that but for the Atonement, none of our race, except the first human pair, would ever have had an existence **Page 228>**.

6. But for the Atonement, no man could have been treated with any more lenity [sic] and forbearance than Satan can.

7. The lives, and all the blessings which all mankind enjoy, are conferred on them on account of the Atonement of Christ; that is—**God could not consistently confer these blessings, were it not that Christ has made such a satisfaction to public justice, that God can consistently wait on sinners, and bless, and do all that the nature of the case admits to save them.**

8. **That it was made for all mankind, is evident, from the fact that it is offered to all, indiscriminately.**

9. Sinners are universally condemned, for not receiving it.

10. **If the Atonement is not intended for all mankind, God is insincere in making them the offer of salvation through the Atonement.**

11. **If the Atonement is not for all mankind, then God is partial.**

12. If not, sinners in hell will see and know, that their salvation was never possible; that no Atonement was made for them; and that God was insincere, in offering them salvation.

13. If the Atonement is not for all men, no one can know for whom, in particular, it was intended, without direct revelation.

14. **IF THE ATONEMENT IS FOR NONE BUT THE ELECT, no man can know whether he has a right to embrace it, until by a direct revelation, God has made known to him that he is one of the elect.**

15. If the Atonement was made but for the elect, no man can by any possibility embrace it without such a revelation. Why cannot Satan believe in, embrace, and be saved, by the Atonement? Simply because it was not made for him. If it was not made for the non-elect, they can no more embrace and be saved by it, than Satan can. If, therefore, the Atonement was made but for a part of mankind, it is entirely nugatory [trifling, worthless – Webster; *op. cit.* - aal], unless a further revelation make known for whom in particular it was made.

16. If it was not made for all men, ministers do not know to whom they should offer it.

17. If ministers do not believe that it was made for all men, they cannot heartily and honestly press its acceptance upon any individual, or congregation in the world; for they cannot assure any individual, or congregation, that there is any Atonement for him or them, any more than there is for Satan. <page 228.

The previous pages are from the following book.

**FINNEY'S LECTURES
ON THEOLOGY**

By Charles G. Finney

*Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Publishers
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to express our gratitude to the Oberlin College Library for loaning us their rare copy of the original edition from which this book was produced.

We are also indebted to Mr. Gordon Olson of Franklin Park, Illinois, one of the foremost students of Finney's writings, who encouraged us in this project and gave us valuable background material.

—The Publishers

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Book review by Robert Sumner in *THE BIBLICAL EVANGELIST*, 3-1-91

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THE MEMOIRS OF CHARLES G. FINNEY, Annotated Critical Edition by Garth M. Rosell & Richard A. G. Dupuis, Editors; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; 36 chapters, 736 Pages; \$24.95

We dare say that no man should call himself a student of Finney without this magnificent volume. Many in the past have *thought* they had it when they read Finney's *Autobiography*. Alas, the man who succeeded Finney and did the editing for that work, James Harris Fairchild, president of Oberlin College, did so in a manner **that took all the punch and fire out. Many of Finney's characteristic statements were toned down and other key passages were completely deleted**

[Emphasis added - If Fairchild "took all the punch and fire out" and "characteristic statements were toned down" we are still left with a blasphemous rejection of Bible doctrine. **HOW DO EVANGELICALS GET HOOKED ON SUCH UNGODLY, DANGEROUS PHILOSOPHY?** - aal]

The late John R. Rice repeatedly voiced his indebtedness to Finney and his autobiography; what would he have done if he had possessed his unedited version? How he would have been blessed! If for no other reason than who Finney was (one of the greatest evangelists in the history of our nation), *we strongly recommend this volume!*

[Signed: Robert Sumner]

. * * * * *

Sumner's article needs to be severely restricted by the following article by Dr. John Rice in his *Sword of the Lord*. It is a typical example of Dr. Rice's compromise.

SWORD OF THE LORD, July 16, 1982

About Charles G. Finney - 1792-1875

Few men on the American scene have preached with such power and conviction of the Holy Spirit as has Charles Grandison Finney.

Finney was born in Warren, Connecticut, in 1792. During his early life he studied to become a lawyer. While in law school he began to attend a Presbyterian church and came under conviction of sin as a result of the prayers of the young people's group. One day in 1821, in the agony of conviction, he went to the woods where he began to pray. God met his need and he was soundly converted. Within 24 hours he had personally led 20 to the Lord.

Finney immediately dropped his law study and practice and began to preach. He applied the lawyer's methods to his preaching technique and rarely closed a service without getting a verdict—a definite action from the audience. Often in his meetings strong men and women would fall on their faces, convicted of their sin, and ask God's forgiveness and salvation.

Finney conducted campaigns both in America and Great Britain, **and he did not always have to preach in order to have the Holy Spirit bring about conviction. One day while just walking through a factory, a revival broke out among the workers** [Emphasis added - aal].

From 1852 until 1866 Finney served as president of Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. Time and again revival fires swept through the students and faculty as revivalist Finney preached. It was while at Oberlin that he wrote his *Theology*, his *Lectures on Revival*, and *Lectures to Professing Christians*. There he founded and edited a magazine known as THE EVANGELIST.

Finney went to be with the Lord in 1875, at the age of 83.

Charles Finney was particularly blessed of God and filled with the Spirit and dedicated to the Lord for personal soul winning. **His theology, however, as expressed in much of his preaching, is unscriptural in some important areas—so only a very few of his messages have we been able to find, with some justified editing, acceptable for use in *THE SWORD OF THE LORD*** [Emphasis added - aa]. In spite of this fact and because of his warm heart and deep love for souls, God greatly used him in turning thousands to Himself.

The following material is taken from the following book:

CHARLES G. FINNEY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
OLD TAPPAN • NEW JERSEY
[REPRINT DATE NOT GIVEN]

Printed in the United States of America

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THE TRUSTEES OF OBERLIN COLLEGE 1876
COPYRIGHT RENEWED 1908

This book was originally entitled
MEMOIRS OF CHARLES G. FINNEY

PREFACE

THE author of the following narrative sufficiently explains its origin and purpose, in the introductory pages. He left the manuscript at the disposal

of his family, having never decided, in his own mind, that it was desirable to publish it. Many of his friends, becoming aware of its existence, have urged its publication; and his children, yielding to the general demand, have presented the manuscript to Oberlin College for this purpose.

In giving it to the public, it is manifestly necessary to present it essentially as we find it. No liberties can be taken with it, to modify views or statements which may sometimes seem extreme or partial, or even to subdue a style, which, though rugged at times, is always dramatic and forcible. **Few men have better earned the right to utter their own thoughts, in their own words** . These thoughts and words are what the many friends of Mr. Finney will desire. The only changes that seemed allowable, were occasional omissions, to avoid unnecessary repetition, or too minute detail, or, at times, references that might seem too distinctly personal. The narrative is, in its very nature, personal, involving the experiences both of the author and of those with whom he had to do; and to these personal experiences it, in great part, owes its interest and its value. As the narrative presents the memories and heart-yearnings of a veteran pastor, with a passion for winning souls, it is hoped and believed that, in its personal references, it will not be regarded as having transcended the limits of Christian propriety. For the most part, the lapse of time sets aside all question.

Here and there perhaps, the statements in the narrative may seem inadequate, as involving only a partial view of facts. It will be remembered that such partial views belong to all personal observation and opinion, and each one will naturally supply the correction that seems to be demanded.

J. H. F. [James Harris Fairchild - aal]

OBERLIN COLLEGE, January, 1876.

[Red and bold or all caps and underlining have been used for emphasis. Any notes are enclosed in square brackets and initialed – aal. Sufficient context is given to make sure the reader does not misunderstand what Finney wrote].

MEMOIRS
of
CHARLES G. FINNEY

CHAPTER 1

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION

It has pleased God in some measure to connect my name and labors with an extensive movement of the church of Christ, regarded by some as a new era in its progress, especially in relation to revivals of religion. As **THIS MOVEMENT INVOLVED, TO A CONSIDERABLE**

EXTENT, THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE WHICH HAD NOT BEEN COMMON

, and was brought about by changes in the means of carrying forward the work of evangelization, IT WAS VERY NATURAL THAT SOME MISAPPREHENSION SHOULD PREVAIL IN REGARD TO THESE MODIFIED STATEMENTS OF DOCTRINE, and the use of these measures; and consequently that, to some extent, EVEN GOOD MEN SHOULD CALL IN QUESTION the wisdom of these measures and THE SOUNDNESS OF THESE THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS; and that ungodly men should be irritated, and for a time should strenuously oppose these great movements.

I have spoken of myself as connected with these movements; but only as one of the many ministers and other servants of Christ, who have shared prominently in promoting them. I am aware that by a certain portion of the church I have been considered an innovator, both in regard to doctrine and measures; and that many have looked upon me as rather prominent, especially in assailing some of the old forms of theological thought and expression, and in stating the doctrines of the Gospel in many respects in new language.

I have been particularly importuned, for a number of years, by the friends of those revivals with which my name and labors have been connected, to write a history of them. As so much misapprehension has prevailed respecting them, it is thought that the truth of history demands a statement from myself of the doctrines that were preached, so far as I was concerned; of the measures used, and of the results of preaching those doctrines and the use of those measures.

My mind seems instinctively to recoil from saying so much of myself as I shall be obligated to do, if I speak honestly of those revivals and of my relation to them. For this reason I have declined, up to this time, to undertake such a work. Of late the trustees of Oberlin College have laid the matter before me, and urged me to undertake it. They, together with numerous other friends in this country and in England, have urged that it was due to the cause of Christ, that a better understanding should exist in the church than has hitherto existed, in regard especially to the revivals that occurred in central New York and elsewhere, from 1821 and onward for several years, because those revivals have been most misrepresented and opposed.

I approach the subject, I must say, with reluctance, for many reasons. I have kept no diary, and consequently must depend on my memory. It is true, that my memory is naturally very tenacious, and the events that I have witnessed in revivals of religion have made a very deep impression on my mind; and I remember, with great distinctness, many more than I shall have time to communicate. Every

one who has witnessed powerful revivals of religion is aware that many cases of conviction and conversion are daily occurring, of the greatest interest to the people in the midst of whom they occur. Where all the facts and circumstances are known, a thrilling effect is often produced; and such cases are frequently so numerous that if all the highly interesting facts of even one extended revival, in a single locality, should be narrated, it would fill a large volume.

I do not propose to pursue this course in what I am about to write. I shall only sketch such an outline as will, upon the whole, give a tolerably clear idea of the type which these revivals took on; and shall only relate a few of the particular instances of conversion which occurred in different places.

I shall also endeavor to give such an account of the doctrines which were preached, and of the measures which were used, and shall mention such facts, in general, as will enable the church hereafter; partially at least, to estimate the power and purity of those great works of God.

But I hesitate to write a narrative of those revivals, because I have often been surprised to find how much my own remembrance of facts differs from the recollection of other persons who were in the midst of those scenes. Of course I must state the facts as I remember them. A great many of those events have been often referred to by myself in preaching, as illustrative of the truths that I was presenting to the people. I have been so often reminded of them, and have so often referred to them in all the years of my ministry, that I cannot but have strong confidence that I remember them substantially as they occurred. If I shall in any case misstate the facts, or if in any case my recollections shall differ widely from those of others, I trust that the church will believe that my statements are in entire accordance with my present remembrance of those facts. **I am now (1867-68) seventy-five years old.** Of course, I remember things that transpired many years ago more definitely than those of recent occurrence. **In regard to the doctrines preached, so far as I was concerned, and the means used to promote the revivals, I think I cannot be mistaken.**

To give any intelligible account of the past which I was called to act in those scenes, it is necessary that I should give a little history of the manner in which I came to adopt the doctrinal views which I have long held and preached, AND WHICH HAVE BEEN REGARDED BY MANY PERSONS AS OBJECTIONABLE.

I must commence by giving a very brief account of my birth, and early circumstances and education, my conversion to Christ, my study of theology, and my entering upon the work of the ministry. I am not about to write an autobiography, let it be remembered; and shall enter no farther into a relation of the events of my own private life than shall seem necessary to give an intelligible account of the manner in which I was led, in relation to these great movements of the church.

I was born in Warren, Litchfield county, Connecticut, August 29, 1792. When I was about two years old, my father removed to Oneida county, New York, which was, at that time, to a great extent, a wilderness. No religious privileges were enjoyed by the people. Very few religious books were to be had. The new settlers, being mostly from New England, almost immediately established common schools; but they had among them very little intelligent preaching of the Gospel. I enjoyed the privilege of a common school, summer and winter, until I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I believe; and advanced so far as to be supposed capable of teaching a common school myself, as common schools were then conducted.

My parents were neither of them professors of religion, and, I believe, among our neighbors there were very few religious people. I seldom heard a sermon, unless it was an occasional one from some traveling minister, or some miserable holding, forth of an ignorant preacher who would sometimes be found in that country. I recollect very well that the ignorance of the preachers that I heard was such, that the people would return from meeting and spend a considerable time in irrepressible laughter at the strange mistakes which had been made and the absurdities which had been advanced.

In the neighborhood of my father's residence we had just erected a meeting-house and settled a minister, when my father was induced to remove again into the wilderness skirting the southern shore of Lake Ontario, a little south of Sackett's Harbor. Here again I lived for several years, enjoying no better religious privileges than I had in Oneida county.

When about twenty years old I returned to Connecticut, and from thence went to New Jersey, near New York city, and engaged in teaching. I taught and studied as best I could; and twice returned to New England and attended a high school for a season. While attending the high school I meditated going to Yale College. My preceptor was a graduate of Yale, but he advised me not to go. He said it would be a loss of time, as I could easily accomplish the whole curriculum of study pursued at that institution, in two years; whereas it would cost me four years to graduate. He presented such considerations as prevailed with me, and as it resulted, I failed to pursue my school education any farther at that time.

However, afterward I acquired some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But I was never a classical scholar, and **AND NEVER**

POSSESSED SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANCIENT LANGUAGES AS TO THINK MYSELF CAPABLE OF INDEPENDENTLY CRITICISING OUR ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

The teacher to whom I have referred, wished me to join him in conducting an academy in one of the Southern States. I was inclined to accept his proposal, with the design of pursuing and completing my studies under his instruction. **But when I informed my parents, whom I had not seen for four years, of my contemplated movement south, they both came immediately after me, and prevailed on me to go home with them to Jefferson county, New York. After making them a visit, I concluded to enter, as a student, the law office of, Squire W.____, at Adams, in that county. This was in 1818.**

Up to this time I had never enjoyed what might be called religious privileges. I had never lived in a praying community, except during the periods when I was attending the high school in New England; and the religion in that place was of a type not at all calculated to arrest my attention. The preaching was by an aged clergyman, an excellent man, and greatly beloved and venerated by his people; but he read his sermons in a manner that left no impression whatever on my mind. He had a monotonous, humdrum way of reading what he had probably written many years before.

To give some idea of his preaching, let me say that his manuscript sermons were just large enough to put into a small Bible. I sat in the gallery, and observed that he placed his manuscript in the middle of his Bible, and inserted his fingers at the places where were to be found the passages of Scripture to be quoted in the reading of his sermon. This made it necessary to hold his Bible in both hands, and rendered all gesticulation with his hands impossible. As he proceeded he would read the passages of Scripture where his fingers were inserted, and thus liberate one finger after another until the fingers of both hands were read out of their places. When his fingers were all read out, he was near the close of the sermon. His reading was altogether unimpassioned and monotonous; and although the people attended very closely and reverentially to his reading, yet, I must confess, it was to me not much like preaching.

When we retired from meeting, I often heard the people speak well of his sermons; and sometimes they would wonder whether he had intended any allusion, in what he said, to what was occurring among them. It seemed to be always a matter of curiosity to know what he was aiming at, especially if there was anything more in his sermon than a dry discussion of doctrine. And this was really quite as good preaching as I had ever listened to in any place. But any one can judge whether such preaching was calculated to instruct or interest a young man who neither knew nor cared anything about religion.

When I was teaching school in New Jersey, the preaching in the neighborhood was chiefly in German. I do not think I heard half a dozen sermons in English during my whole stay in New Jersey, which was about three years.

Thus when I went to Adams to study law I was almost as ignorant of religion as a heathen. I had been brought up mostly in the woods. I had very little regard to the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth.

At Adams, for the first time, I sat stately, for a length of time, under the educated ministry. Rev. George W. Gale, from Princeton, New Jersey, became, soon after I went there, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in that place. HIS PREACHING WAS OF THE OLD SCHOOL TYPE; THAT IS, IT WAS THOROUGHLY CALVINISTIC; and whenever he came out with the doctrines! which he seldom did, he would preach what has been called hyper-calvinism. He was, of course, regarded as highly orthodox; but I was not able to gain very much instruction from his preaching. As I sometimes told him, he seemed to me to begin in the middle of his

discourse, and to assume many things which to my mind needed to be proved. He seemed to take it for granted that his hearers were theologians, and therefore that he might assume all the great and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. But I must say that I was rather perplexed than edified by his preaching.

I had never, until this time, lived where I could attend a stated prayer meeting. As one was held by the church near our office every week, I used to attend and listen to the prayers, as often as I could be excused from business at that hour.

In studying elementary law, I found the old authors frequently quoting the Scriptures, and referring especially to the Mosaic Institutes, as authority for many of the great principles of common law. This excited my curiosity so much that I went and purchased a Bible, the first I had ever owned; and whenever I found a reference by the law authors to the Bible, I turned to the passage and consulted it in its connection. This soon led to my taking a new interest in the Bible, and I read and meditated on it much more than I had ever done before in my life. However, much of it I did not understand.

Mr. Gale was in the habit of dropping in at our office frequently, and seemed anxious to know what impression his sermons had made on my mind. I used to converse with him freely; and I now think that I sometimes criticised his sermons unmercifully. I raised such objections against his positions as forced themselves upon my attention.

In conversing with him and asking him questions, I perceived that his own mind was, as I thought, mystified; and that he did not accurately define to himself what he meant by many of the important terms that he used. Indeed I found it impossible to attach any meaning to many of the terms which he used with great formality and frequency. What did he mean by repentance? Was it a mere feeling of sorrow for sin? Was it altogether a passive state of mind, or did it involve a voluntary element? If it was a change of mind, in what respect was it a change of mind? What did he mean by the term regeneration? What did such language mean when applied to a spiritual change? What did he mean by faith? Was it merely an intellectual state? Was it merely a conviction, or persuasion, that the things stated in the Gospel were true? What did he mean by sanctification? Did it involve any physical change in the subject, or any physical influence on the part of God? I could not tell, nor did he seem to me to know himself, in what sense he used these and similar terms.

We had a great many interesting conversations; but they seemed rather to stimulate my own mind to inquiry, than to satisfy me in respect to the truth.

But as I read my Bible and attended the prayer meetings, heard Mr. Gale preach, and conversed with him, with the elders of the church, and with others from time to time, I became very restless. A little consideration convinced me that I was by no means in a state of mind to go to heaven if I should die. It seemed to me that there must be something in religion that was of infinite importance; and it was soon settled with me, that if the soul was immortal I needed a great change in my inward state to be prepared for happiness in heaven. But still my mind was not made up as to the truth or falsehood of the Gospel and of the Christian religion. The question, however, was of too much importance to allow me to rest in any uncertainty on the subject.

I was particularly struck with the fact that the prayers that I had listened to, from week to week, were not, that I could see, answered. Indeed, I understood from their utterances in prayer, and from other remarks in their meetings, that those who offered them did not regard them as answered.

When I read my Bible I learned what Christ had said in regard to prayer, and answers to prayer. He had said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." I read also what Christ affirms, that God is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. I heard them pray continually for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and as often confess that they did not receive what they asked for.

They exhorted each other to wake up and be engaged, and to pray earnestly for a revival of religion, asserting that if they did their duty, prayed for the outpouring of the spirit, and were in earnest, that the spirit of God would be poured out, that they would have a revival of religion, and that the impenitent would be converted. But in their prayer and conference meetings they would continually confess, substantially, that they were making no progress in securing a revival of religion.

This inconsistency, the fact that they prayed so much and were not answered? was a sad stumbling block to me. I knew not what to make of it. It was a question in my mind whether I was to understand that these persons were not truly Christians, and therefore did not prevail with God; or did I misunderstand the promises and teachings of the Bible on this subject, or was I to conclude that the Bible was not true? Here was something inexplicable to me; and it seemed, at one time, that it would almost drive me into scepticism. It seemed to me that the teachings of the Bible did not at all accord with the facts which were before my eyes.

On one occasion, when I was in one of the prayer meetings, I was asked if I did not desire that they should pray for me. I told them, no; because I did not see that God answered their prayers. I said, "I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for a revival of religion ever since I have been in Adams, and yet you have it not. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness." I recollect having used this expression at that time: "You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayers. But here you are praying on, and complaining still." I was quite in earnest in what I said, and not a little irritable, I think, in consequence of my being brought so continually face to face with religion's truth; which was a new state of things to me.

But on farther reading of my Bible, it struck me that the reason why their prayers were not answered, was because they did not comply with the revealed conditions upon which God had promised to answer prayer; that they did not pray in faith, in the sense of expecting God to give them the things that they asked for.

This thought, for some time, lay in my mind as a confused questioning, rather than in any definite form that could be stated in words. However, this relieved me, so far as queries about the truth of the Gospel were concerned; and after struggling in that way for some two or three years, my mind became quite settled that whatever mystification there might be either in my own or in my pastor's mind, or in the mind of the church, the Bible was, nevertheless, the true word of God.

This being settled, I was brought face to face with the question whether I would accept Christ as presented in the Gospel, or pursue a worldly course of life. At this period, my mind, as I have since known, was so much impressed by the Holy Spirit, that I could not long leave this question unsettled; nor could I long hesitate between the two courses of life presented to me.

CHAPTER 2

CONVERSION TO CHRIST

On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God. But as I was very busy in the affairs of the office, I knew that without great firmness of purpose, I should never effectually attend to the subject. I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that would divert my attention, and to give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul. I carried this resolution into execution as sternly and thoroughly as I could. I was, however, obliged to be a good deal in the office. But as the providence of God would have it, I was not much occupied either on Monday or Tuesday; and had opportunity to read my Bible and engage in prayer most of the time.

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had supposed that I had not much regard for the opinions of others, whether they thought this or that in regard to myself; and I had in fact been quite singular in attending prayer meetings, and in the degree of attention that I had paid to religion, while in Adams. In this respect I had been so singular as to lead the church at times to think that I must be an anxious inquirer. But I found, when I came to face the question, that I was very unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper my prayer, after having stopped the key-hole to the door, lest some one should discover that I was engaged in prayer. Before

that time I had my Bible lying on the table with the law books; and it never had occurred to me to be ashamed of being found reading it, any more than I should be ashamed of being found reading any of my other books.

But after I had addressed myself in earnest to the subject of my own salvation, I kept my Bible, as much as I could, out of sight. If I was reading it when anybody came in, I would throw my law books upon it, to create the impression that I had not had it in my hand. Instead of being outspoken and willing to talk with anybody and everybody on the subject as before, I found myself unwilling to converse with anybody. I did not want to see my minister, because I did not want to let him know how I felt, and I had no confidence that he would understand my case, and give me the direction that I needed. For the same reasons I avoided conversation with the elders of the church, or with any of the Christian people. I was ashamed to let them know how I felt, on the one hand; and on the other, I was afraid they would misdirect me. I felt myself shut up to the Bible.

During Monday and Tuesday my convictions increased; but still it seemed as if my heart grew harder. I could not shed a tear; I could not pray. I had no opportunity to pray above my breath; and frequently I felt, that if I could be alone where I could use my voice and let myself out, I should find relief in prayer. I was shy, and avoided, as much as I could, speaking to anybody on any subject. I endeavored, however, to do this in a way that would excite no suspicion, in any mind, that I was seeking the salvation of my soul.

Tuesday night I had become very nervous; and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did I should sink down to hell; but I quieted myself as best I could until morning.

At an early hour I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me with questions like these: indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry was within myself, as if an inward voice said to me, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. **I think I then saw, as clearly, as I ever have in my life, the reality and fulness of the atonement of Christ. I SAW THAT HIS WORK WAS A FINISHED WORK; AND THAT INSTEAD OF HAVING, OR NEEDING, ANY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN TO RECOMMEND ME TO GOD, I HAD TO SUBMIT MYSELF TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST. GOSPEL SALVATION SEEMED TO ME TO BE AN OFFER OF SOMETHING TO BE ACCEPTED; AND THAT IT WAS FULL AND COMPLETE; AND THAT ALL THAT WAS NECESSARY ON MY PART, WAS TO GET MY OWN CONSENT TO GIVE UP MY SINS, AND ACCEPT CHRIST. SALVATION, IT SEEMED TO ME, INSTEAD OF BEING A THING TO BE WROUGHT OUT, BY MY OWN WORKS, WAS A THING TO BE FOUND ENTIRELY IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE ME AS MY GOD AND MY SAVIOR.**

Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the INWARD VOICE seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that position I cannot say. **BUT AFTER THIS DISTINCT REVELATION HAD STOOD FOR SOME LITTLE TIME BEFORE MY MIND, THE QUESTION SEEMED TO BE PUT, "WILL YOU ACCEPT IT NOW, TODAY?" I REPLIED, "YES; I WILL ACCEPT IT TODAY, OR I WILL DIE IN THE ATTEMPT."**

North of the village, and over a hill, lay a piece of woods, in which I was in the almost daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather. It was now October, and the time was past for my frequent walks there. Nevertheless, instead of going to the office, I turned and bent my course toward the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

But still my pride must show itself. As I went over the hill, it occurred to me that some one might see me and suppose that I was going away to pray. Yet probably there was not a person on earth that would have suspected such a thing, had he seen me going. But so great was my pride and so much was I possessed with the fear of man, that I recollect that I skulked along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one from the village could see me. I then penetrated into the woods, I should think, a quarter of a mile, went over on the other side of the hill, and found a place where some large trees had fallen across each other, leaving an open place between. There I saw I could make a kind of closet. I crept into this place and knelt down for prayer. As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, "I will give my heart to God, or I never will come down from there." I recollect repeating this as I went up—"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray. I had supposed that if I could only be where I could speak aloud, without being overheard, I could pray freely. But lo! when I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God; or at least I could say but a few words, and those without heart. In attempting to pray I would hear a rustling in the leaves, as I thought, and would stop and look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times.

Finally I found myself verging fast to despair. I said to myself, "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God, and will not pray." I then reproached myself for having promised to give my heart to God before I left the woods. When I came to try, I found I could not give my heart to God. My inward soul hung back, and there was no going out of my heart to God. I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope.

The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul; and yet I was going to break my vow. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees.

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone, approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner as I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will harken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; **but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state.** I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to him, "Lord, I take thee at thy word. Now thou knowest that I do search for thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to thee; and thou hast promised to hear me."

That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take him at his word; that he could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that he heard my prayer, and that he would be found of me.

He then gave me many other promises, both from the Old and the New Testament, especially some most precious promises respecting, our Lord Jesus Christ. I never can, in words, make any human being, understand how precious and true those promises appeared to me. I took them one after the other as infallible truth, the assertions of God who could not lie. They did not seem so much to fall into my intellect as into my heart, to be put within the grasp of the voluntary powers of my mind; and I seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man.

I continued thus to pray, and to receive and appropriate promises for a long time, I know not how long. I prayed till my mind became so full that, before I was aware of it, I was on my feet and tripping up the ascent toward the road. The question of my being converted, had not so much as arisen to my thought; but as I went up, brushing through the leaves and bushes, I recollect saying with great emphasis, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the Gospel."

I soon reached the road that led to the village, and began to reflect upon what had passed; and I found that my mind had become most wonderfully quiet and peaceful. I said to myself, "What is this? I must have grieved the Holy Ghost entirely away. I have lost all my conviction. I have not a particle of concern about my soul; and it must be that the Spirit has left me." "Why!" thought I, "I never was so far from being concerned about my own salvation in my life."

Then I remembered what I had said to God while I was on my knees—that I had said I would take him at his word; and indeed I recollected a good many things that I had said, and concluded that it was no wonder that the Spirit had left me; that for such a sinner as I was to take hold of God's word in that way, was presumption if not blasphemy. I concluded that in my excitement I had grieved the Holy Spirit, and perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened. It was on the 10th of October, and a very pleasant day. I had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast; and when I returned to the village I found it was dinner time. Yet I had been wholly unconscious of the time that had passed; it appeared to me that I had been gone from the village but a short time.

But how was I to account for the quiet of my mind? I tried to recall my convictions, to get back again the load of sin under which I had been laboring.

But all sense of sin, all consciousness of present sin or guilt, had departed from me.

I said to myself, "What is this, that I cannot arouse any sense of guilt in my soul, as great a sinner as I am?" I tried in vain to make myself anxious about my present state. I was so quiet and peaceful that I tried to feel concerned about that, lest it should be a result of my having grieved the Spirit away. But take any view of it I would, I could not be anxious at all about my soul, and about my spiritual state. The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I never can describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquillity had taken full possession of me. This was a great mystery; but it did not distress or perplex me.

I went to my dinner; and found I had no appetite to eat. I then went to the office, and found that Squire W___ had gone to dinner. I took down my bass-viol, and, as I was accustomed to do, began to play and sing some pieces of sacred music. But as soon as I began to sing those sacred words, I began to weep. It seemed as if my heart was all liquid; and my feelings were in such a state that I could not hear my own voice in singing without causing my sensibility to overflow. I wondered at this, and tried to suppress my tears, but could not. After trying in vain to suppress my tears, I put up my instrument and stopped singing.

After dinner we were engaged in removing our books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to ruffle or disturb me in the least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again—that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fire place, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W____, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me good night and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my whole soul out to God." The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that he stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched him, that I recollect.

I must have continued in this state for a good while; but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to recollect anything that I said. But I know, as soon as my mind became calm enough to break off from the interview, I returned to the front office, and found that the fire that I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. **But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.**

No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more;" yet I had no fear of death.

How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir—for I was the leader of the choir—came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this state of loud weeping, and said to me, "Mr. Finney, what ails you?" I could make him no answer for some

time. He then said, "Are you in pain?" I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, "No, but so happy that I cannot live."

He turned and left the office, and in a few minutes returned with one of the elders of the church, whose shop was nearly across the way from our office. This elder was a very serious man; and in my presence had been very watchful, and I had scarcely ever seen him laugh. When he came in, I was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt, and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything, he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.

There was a young man in the neighborhood who was preparing for college, with whom I had been very intimate. Our minister, as I afterward learned, had repeatedly talked with him on the subject of religion, and warned him against being misled by me. He informed him that I was a very careless young man about religion; and he thought that if he associated much with me his mind would be diverted, and he would not be converted.

After I was converted, and this young man was converted, he told me that he had said to Mr. Gale several times, when he had admonished him about associating so much with me that my conversations had often affected him more, religiously, than his preaching. I had, indeed, let out my feelings a good deal to this young man.

But just at the time when I was giving an account of my feelings to this elder of the church, and to the other member who was with him, this young man came into the office. I was sitting with my back toward the door, and barely observed that he came in. He listened with astonishment to what I was saying, and the first I knew he partly fell upon the floor, and cried out in the greatest agony of mind, "Do pray for me!" The elder of the church and the other member knelt down and began to pray for him; and when they had prayed, I prayed for him myself. Soon after this they all retired and left me alone.

The question then arose in my mind, "Why did Elder B___ laugh so? Did he not think that I was under a delusion, or crazy?" This suggestion brought a kind of darkness over my mind; and I began to query with myself whether it was proper for me—such a sinner as I had been—to pray for that young man. A cloud seemed to shut in over me; I had no hold upon anything in which I could rest; and after a little while I retired to bed, not distressed in mind, but still at a loss to know what to make of my present state. Notwithstanding **the baptism I had received**, this temptation so obscured my view that I went to bed without feeling sure that my peace was made with God.

I soon fell asleep, but almost as soon awoke again on account of the great flow of the love of God that was in my heart. I was so filled with love that I could not sleep. Soon I fell asleep again, and awoke in the same manner. When I awoke, this temptation would return upon me, and the love that seemed to be in my heart would abate; but as soon as I was asleep, it was so warm within me that I would immediately awake. Thus I continued till, late at night, I obtained some sound repose.

When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that this sunlight made upon me. **Instantly the baptism that I had received the night before, returned upon me in the same manner. I AROSE UPON MY KNEES IN THE BED AND WEPT ALOUD WITH JOY, AND REMAINED FOR SOME TIME TOO MUCH OVERWHELMED WITH THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT TO DO ANYTHING BUT POUR OUT MY SOUL TO GOD. IT SEEMED AS IF THIS MORNING'S BAPTISM WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH A GENTLE REPROOF, AND THE SPIRIT SEEMED TO SAY TO ME, "WILL YOU DOUBT?" "WILL YOU DOUBT?" I CRIED, "NO! I WILL NOT DOUBT; I CANNOT DOUBT." HE THEN CLEARED THE SUBJECT UP SO MUCH TO MY MIND THAT IT WAS IN FACT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO**

DOUBT THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAD TAKEN POSSESSION OF MY SOUL.

In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience. That doctrine had never taken any such possession of my mind, that I had ever viewed it distinctly as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Indeed, I did not know at all what it meant in the proper sense. But I could now see and understand what was meant by the passage, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I could see that the moment I believed, while up in the woods all sense of condemnation had entirely dropped out of my mind; and that from that moment I could not feel a sense of guilt or condemnation by any effort that I could make. My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; **AND I DO NOT THINK I FELT ANY MORE SENSE OF GUILT THAN IF I NEVER HAD SINNED.**

THIS WAS JUST THE REVELATION THAT I NEEDED. I FELT MYSELF JUSTIFIED BY FAITH; AND, SO FAR AS I COULD SEE, I WAS IN A STATE IN WHICH I DID NOT SIN.

Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God. Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of **THIS EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION.**

CHAPTER 3

BEGINNING OF THIS WORK

This morning, of which I have just spoken, I went down into the office, and there I was having the renewal of these mighty waves of love and salvation flowing over me, when Squire W___ came into the office. I said a few words to him on the subject of his salvation. He looked at me with astonishment, but made no reply whatever, that I recollect. He dropped his head, and after standing a few minutes left the office. I thought no more of it then, but afterward found that the remark I made pierced him like a sword; and he did not recover from it till he was converted.

Soon after Mr. W___ had left the office, Deacon B___ came into the office and said to me, "Mr. Finney, do you recollect that my cause is to be tried at ten o'clock this morning? I suppose you are ready?" I had been retained to attend this suit as his attorney. I replied to him, "Deacon B___, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and I cannot plead yours." He looked at me with astonishment, and said, "What do you mean?" I told him, in a few words, that I had enlisted in the cause of Christ; and then repeated that I had a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and that he must go and get somebody else to attend his law-suit; I could not do it. He dropped his head, and without making any reply, went out. A few moments later, in passing the window, I observed that Deacon B___ was standing in the road, seemingly lost in deep meditation. He went away, as I afterward learned, and immediately settled his suit. He then betook himself to prayer, and soon got into a much higher religious state than he had ever been in before.

I soon sallied forth from the office to converse with those whom I should meet about their souls. I had the impression, which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the Gospel, and that I must begin immediately. I somehow seemed to know it. If you ask me how I knew it, I cannot tell how I know it, any more than I can tell how I knew that that was the love of God and the baptism of the Holy

Ghost which I had received. I did somehow know it with a certainty that was past all possibility of doubt. And so I seemed to know that the Lord commissioned me to preach the Gospel.

When I was first convicted, the thought had occurred to my mind that if I was ever converted I should be obliged to leave my profession, of which I was very fond, and go to preaching the Gospel. This at first stumbled me. I thought I had taken too much pains, and spent too much time and study in my profession to think now of becoming a Christian, if by doing so I should be obliged to preach the Gospel. However, I at last came to the conclusion that I must submit that question to God; that I had never commenced the study of law from any regard to God, and that I had no right to make any conditions with him; and I therefore had laid aside the thought of becoming a minister, until it was spring in my mind, as I have related, on my way from my place of prayer in the woods.

But now after receiving these baptisms of the Spirit I was quite willing to preach the Gospel. Nay, I found that I was unwilling to do anything else. I had no longer any desire to practice law. Everything in that direction was shut up, and had no longer any attractions for me at all. I had no disposition to make money. I had no hungering and thirsting after worldly pleasures and amusements in any direction. My whole mind was taken up with Jesus and his salvation; and the world seemed to me of very little consequence. Nothing, it seemed to me, could be put in competition with the worth of souls; and no labor, I thought, could be so sweet, and no employment so exalted, as that of holding up Christ to a dying world.

With this impression, as I said, I sallied forth to converse with any with whom I might meet. I first dropped in at the shop of a shoemaker, who was a pious man, and one of the most praying Christians, as I thought, in the church. I found him in conversation with a son of one of the elders of the church; and this young man was defending Universalism. Mr. W____, the shoemaker, turned to me and said, "Mr. Finney, what do you think of the argument of this young man;" and he then stated what he had been saying in defence of Universalism. The answer appeared to me so ready that in a moment I was enabled to blow his argument to the wind. The young man saw at once that his argument was gone; and he rose up without making any reply, and went suddenly out. But soon I observed, as I stood in the middle of the room, that the young man, instead of going along the street, had passed around the shop, had climbed over the fence, and was steering straight across the fields toward the woods. I thought no more of it until evening, when the young man came out, and appeared to be a bright convert, giving a relation of his experience. He went into the woods, and there, as he said, gave his heart to God.

I spoke with many persons that day, and I believe the Spirit of God made lasting impressions upon every one of them. I cannot remember one whom I spoke with, who was not soon after converted. Just at evening I called at the house of a friend, where a young man lived who was employed in distilling whiskey. The family had heard that I had become a Christian; and as they were about to sit down to tea, they urged me to sit down and take tea with them. The man of the house and his wife were both professors of religion. But a sister of the lady, who was present, was an unconverted girl; and this young man of whom I have spoken, a distant relative of the family, was a professed Universalist. He was rather an outspoken and talkative Universalist, and a young man of a good deal of energy of character.

I sat down with them to tea, and they requested me to ask a blessing. It was what I had never done; but I did not hesitate a moment, but commenced to ask the blessing of God as we sat around the table. I had scarcely more than begun before the state of these young people rose before my mind, and excited so much compassion that I burst into weeping, and was unable to proceed. Every one around the table sat speechless for a short time, while I continued to weep. Directly, the young man moved back from the table and rushed out of the room. He fled to his room and locked himself in, and was not seen again till the next morning, when he came out expressing a blessed hope in Christ. He has been for many years an able minister of the Gospel.

In the course of the day, a good deal of excitement was created in the village by its being reported what the Lord had done for my soul. Some thought one thing, and some another. At evening, without my appointment having been made that I could learn, I observed that the people were going to the place where they usually held their conference and prayer meetings. My conversion had created a good deal of astonishment in the village. I afterward learned that some time before this some members of the church had proposed, in a church meeting, to make me a particular subject of prayer, and that Mr. Gale had discouraged them, saying that he did not believe I would ever be converted; that from conversing with me he had found that I was very much enlightened upon the subject of religion, and very much hardened. And furthermore, he said he was almost discouraged; that I led the choir, and taught

the young people sacred music; and that they were so much under my influence that he did not believe that, while I remained in Adams, they would ever be converted.

I found after I was converted, that some of the wicked men in the place had hid behind me. One man in particular, a Mr. C___, who had a pious wife, had repeatedly said to her, "If religion is true, why don't you convert Finney? If you Christians can convert Finney, I will believe in religion."

An old lawyer by the name of M___, living in Adams, when he heard it rumored that day that I was converted, said that it was all a hoax; that I was simply trying to see what I could make Christian people believe.

However, with one consent the people seemed to rush to the place of worship. I went there myself. The minister was there, and nearly all the principal people in the village. No one seemed ready to open the meeting; but the house was packed to its utmost capacity. I did not wait for anybody, but arose and began by saying that I then knew that religion was from God. I went on and told such parts of my experience as it seemed important for me to tell. This Mr. C___, who had promised his wife that if I was converted he would believe in religion, was present. Mr. M___, the old lawyer, was also present. What the Lord enabled me to say seemed to take a wonderful hold upon the people. Mr. C___ got up, pressed through the crowd, and went home, leaving his hat. Mr. M___ also left and went home, saying I was crazy. "He is in earnest," said he, "there is no mistake; but he is deranged, that is clear."

As soon as I had done speaking, Mr. Gale, the minister, arose and made a confession. He said he believed he had been in the way of the church; and then confessed that he had discouraged the church when they had proposed to pray for me. He said also that when he had heard that day that I was converted, he had promptly said that he did not believe it. He said he had no faith. He spoke in a very humble manner.

I had never made a prayer in public. But soon after Mr. Gale was through speaking, he called on me to pray. I did so, and think I had a good deal of enlargement and liberty in prayer. We had a wonderful meeting that evening; and, from that day, we had a meeting every evening for a long time. The work spread on every side.

As I had been a leader among the young people, I immediately appointed a meeting for them, which they all attended—that is, all of the class with which I was acquainted. I gave up my time to labor for their conversion; and the Lord blessed every effort that was made, in a very wonderful manner. They were converted one after another, with great rapidity; and the work continued among them until but one of their number was left unconverted.

The work spread among all classes; and extended itself, not only through the village, but out of the village in every direction. My heart was so full that, for more than a week, I did not feel at all inclined to sleep or eat. I seemed literally to have meat to eat that the world knew nothing of. I did not feel the need of food, or of sleep. My mind was full of the love of God to overflowing. I went on in this way for a good many days, until I found that I must rest and sleep, or I should become insane. From that point I was more cautious in my labors; and ate regularly, and slept as much as I could.

The word of God had wonderful power; and I was every day surprised to find that a few words, spoken to an individual, would stick in his heart like an arrow.

After a short time I went down to Henderson, where my father lived, and visited him. He was an unconverted man; and only one of the family, my youngest brother, had ever made a profession of religion. My father met me at the gate and said, "How do you do, Charles?" I replied, "I am well, father, body and soul. But, father, you are an old man; all your children are grown up and have left your house; and I never heard a prayer in my father's house." Father dropped his head, and burst into tears, and replied, "I know it, Charles; come in and pray yourself."

We went in and engaged in prayer. My father and mother were greatly moved; and in a very short time thereafter they were both hopefully converted. I do not know but my mother had had a secret hope before; but if so, none of the family, I believe, ever knew it.

I remained in that neighborhood, I think, for two or three days, and conversed more or less with such people as I could meet with. I believe it was the next Monday night, they had a monthly concert of

prayer in that town. There were there a Baptist church that had a minister, and a small Congregational church without a minister. The town was very much of a moral waste, however; and at this time religion was at a very low ebb.

My youngest brother attended this monthly concert of which I have spoken, and afterward gave me an account of it. The Baptists and Congregationalists were in the habit of holding a union monthly concert. But few attended, and therefore it was held at a private house. On this occasion they met, as usual, in the parlor of a private house. A few of the members of the Baptist church, and a few Congregationalists, were present.

The deacon of the Congregational church was a spare, feeble old man, by the name of M____. He was quiet in his ways, and had a good reputation for piety; but seldom said much upon the subject. He was a good specimen of a New England deacon. He was present, and they called upon him to lead the meeting. He read a passage of Scripture according to their custom. They then sung a hymn, and Deacon M____ stood up behind his chair, and led in prayer. The other persons present, all of them professors of religion, and younger people, knelt down around the room.

My brother said that Deacon M____ began as usual in his prayer, in a low, feeble voice; but soon began to wax warm and to raise his voice, which became tremulous with emotion. He proceeded to pray with more and more earnestness, till soon he began to rise upon his toes and come down upon his heels; and then to rise upon his toes and drop upon his heels again, so that they could feel the jar in the room. He continued to raise his voice, and to rise upon his toes, and come down upon his heels more emphatically. And as the spirit of prayer led him onward he began to raise his chair together with his heels, and bring that down upon the floor; and soon he raised it a little higher, and brought it down with still more emphasis. He continued to do this, and grew more and more engaged, till he would bring the chair down as if he would break it to pieces.

In the meantime the brethren and sisters that were on their knees, began to groan, and sigh, and weep, and agonize in prayer. The deacon continued to struggle until he was about exhausted; and when he ceased, my brother said that no one in the room could get off from his knees. They could only weep and confess, and all melt down before the Lord. From this meeting the work of the Lord spread forth in every direction all over the town. And thus it spread at that time from Adams as a centre, throughout nearly all the towns in the county.

I have spoken of the conviction of Squire W____, in whose office I studied law. I have also said that when I was converted, it was in a grove where I went to pray. Very soon after my conversion, several other cases of conversion occurred that were reported to have taken place under similar circumstances; that is, persons went up into the grove to pray, and there made their peace with God.

When Squire W____ heard them tell their experience, one after the other, in our meetings, he thought that he had a parlor to pray in; and that he was not going up into the woods, to have the same story to tell that had been so often told. To this, it appeared, he strongly committed himself. Although this was a thing entirely immaterial in itself; yet it was a point on which his pride had become committed, and therefore he could not get into the kingdom of God.

I have found in my ministerial experience a great many cases of this kind; where upon some question, perhaps immaterial in itself, a sinner's pride of heart would commit him. In all such cases the dispute must be yielded, or the sinner never will get into the kingdom of God. I have known persons to remain for weeks in great tribulation of mind, pressed by the Spirit; but they could make no progress till the point upon which they were committed was yielded. Mr. W____ was the first case of the kind that had ever come to my notice.

After he was converted, he said the question had frequently come up when he was in prayer; and that he had been made to see that it was pride that made him take that stand, and that kept him out of the kingdom of God. But still he was not willing to admit this, even to himself. He tried in every way to make himself believe, and to make God believe, that he was not proud. One night, he said, he prayed all night in his parlor that God would have mercy on him; but in the morning he felt more distressed than ever. He finally became enraged that God did not hear his prayer, and was tempted to kill himself. He was so tempted to use his pen knife for that purpose, that he actually threw it as far as he could, that it might be lost, so that this temptation should not prevail. He said that, one night, on returning from meeting, he was so pressed with a sense of his pride, and with the fact that it prevented his going up into the woods

to pray, that he was determined to make himself believe, and make God believe, that he was not proud; and he sought around for a mud puddle in which to kneel down, that he might demonstrate that it was not pride which kept him from going into the woods. Thus he continued to struggle for several weeks.

But one afternoon I was sitting in our office, and two of the elders of the church with me; when the young man that I had met at the shoemaker's shop, came hastily into the office, and exclaimed as he came, "Squire W___ is converted!" and proceeded to say: "I went up into the woods to pray, and heard some one over in the valley shouting very loud. I went up to the brow of the hill, where I could look down, and I saw Squire W___ pacing to and fro, and singing as loud as he could sing; and every few moments he would stop and clap his hands with his full strength, and shout, 'I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!' Then he would march and sing again; and then stop, and shout, and clap his hands." While the young man was telling us this, behold, Squire W___ appeared in sight, coming over the hill. As he came down to the foot of the hill we observed that he met Father T___, as we all called him, an aged Methodist brother. He rushed up to him, and took him right up in his arms. After setting him down, and conversing a moment, he came rapidly toward the office. When he came in, he was in a profuse perspiration—he was a heavy man, and he cried out, "I've got it! I've got it!" clapped his hands with all his might, and fell upon his knees and began to give thanks to God. He then gave us an account of what had been passing in his mind, and why he had not obtained a hope before. He said as soon as he gave up that point and went into the woods, his mind was relieved; and when he knelt down to pray, the Spirit of God came upon him and filled him with such unspeakable joy that it resulted in the scene which the young man witnessed. Of course from that time Squire W___ took a decided stand for God.

Toward spring the older members of the church began to abate in their zeal. I had been in the habit of rising early in the morning, and spending a season of prayer alone in the meeting house; and I finally succeeded in interesting a considerable number of brethren to meet me there in the morning for a prayer meeting. This was at a very early hour; and we were generally together long before it was light enough to see to read. I persuaded my minister to attend these morning meetings.

But soon they began to be remiss; whereupon I would get up in time to go around to their houses and wake them up. Many times I went round and round, and called the brethren that I thought would be most likely to attend, and we would have a precious season of prayer. But still the brethren, I found, attended with more and more reluctance; which fact greatly tried me.

One morning I had been around and called the brethren up, and when I returned to the meeting house but few of them had got there. Mr. Gale, my minister, was standing at the door of the church, and as I came up, all at once the glory of God shone upon and round about me, in a manner most marvellous. The day was just beginning to dawn. But all at once a light perfectly ineffable shone in my soul, that almost prostrated me to the ground. In this light it seemed as if I could see that all nature praised and worshipped God except man. This light seemed to be like the brightness of the sun in every direction. It was too intense for the eyes. I recollect casting my eyes down and breaking into a flood of tears, in view of the fact that mankind did not praise God. I think I knew something then, by actual experience, of that light that prostrated Paul on his way to Damascus. It was surely a light such as I could not have endured long.

When I burst out into such loud weeping, Mr. Gale said, "What is the matter, brother Finney?" I could not tell him. I found that he had seen no light; and that he saw no reason why I should be in such a state of mind. I therefore said but little. I believe I merely replied, that I saw the glory of God; and that I could not endure to think of the manner in which he was treated by men. Indeed, it did not seem to me at the time that the vision of his glory which I had, was to be described in words. I wept it out; and the vision, if it may be so called, passed away and left my mind calm.

I used to have, when I was a young Christian, many seasons of communing with God which can not be described in words. And not unfrequently those seasons would end in an impression on my mind like this: "Go, see that thou tell no man." I did not understand this at the time, and several times I paid no attention to this injunction; but tried to tell my Christian brethren what communications the Lord had made to me, or rather what seasons of communion I had with him. But I soon found that it would not do to tell my brethren what was passing between the Lord and my soul. They could not understand it. They would look surprised, and sometimes, I thought, incredulous; and I soon learned to keep quiet in regard to those divine manifestations, and say but little about them.

I used to spend a great deal of time in prayer; sometimes, I thought, literally praying "without ceasing." I also found it very profitable, and felt very much inclined to hold frequent days of private fasting. On those days I would seek to be entirely alone with God, and would generally wander off into the woods, or get into the meeting house, or somewhere away entirely by myself.

Sometimes I would pursue a wrong course in fasting, and attempt to examine myself according to the ideas of self examination then entertained by my minister and the church. I would try to look into my own heart, in the sense of examining my feelings; and would turn my attention particularly to my motives, and the state of my mind. When I pursued this course, I found invariably that the day would close without any perceptible advance being made. Afterwards I saw clearly why this was so. Turning my attention, as I did, from the Lord Jesus Christ, and looking into myself, examining my motives and feelings, my feelings all subsided of course. But whenever I fasted, and let the Spirit take his own course with me, and gave myself up to let him lead and instruct me, I universally found it in the highest degree useful. I found I could not live without enjoying the presence of God; and if at any time a cloud came over me, I could not rest, I could not study, I could not attend to anything with the least satisfaction or benefit, until the medium was again cleared between my soul and God.

I had been very fond of my profession. But as I have said, when I was converted all was dark in that direction, and I had, no more, any pleasure in attending to law business. I had many very pressing invitations to conduct lawsuits, but I uniformly refused. I did not dare to trust myself in the excitement of a contested lawsuit; and furthermore, the business itself of conducting other people's controversies, appeared odious and offensive to me.

The Lord taught me, in those early days of my Christian experience, many very important truths in regard to the spirit of prayer. Not long after I was converted, a woman with whom I had boarded—though I did not board with her at this time, was taken very sick. She was not a Christian, but her husband was a professor of religion. He came into our office one evening, being a brother of Squire W____, and said to me, "My wife cannot live through the night." This seemed to plant an arrow, as it were, in my heart. It came upon me in the sense of a burden that crushed me, the nature of which I could not at all understand; but with it came an intense desire to pray for that woman. The burden was so great that I left the office almost immediately, and went up to the meeting house, to pray for her. There I struggled, but could not say much. I could only groan with groanings loud and deep.

I stayed a considerable time in the church, in this state of mind, but got no relief. I returned to the office; but I could not sit still. I could only walk the room and agonize. I returned to the meeting house again, and went through the same process of struggling. For a long time I tried to get my prayer before the Lord; but somehow words could not express it. I could only groan and weep, without being able to express what I wanted in words. I returned to the office again, and still found I was unable to rest; and I returned a third time to the meeting house. At this time the Lord gave me power to prevail. I was enabled to roll the burden upon him; and I obtained the assurance in my own mind that the woman would not die, and indeed that she would never die in her sins.

I returned to the office. My mind was perfectly quiet; and I soon left and retired to rest. Early the next morning the husband of this woman came into the office. I enquired how his wife was. He, smiling said, "She's alive, and to all appearance better this morning." I replied, "Brother, W____, she will not die with this sickness; you may rely upon it. And she will never die in her sins." I do not know how I was made sure of this; but it was in some way made plain to me, so that I had no doubt that she would recover. She did recover, and soon after obtained a hope in Christ. At first I did not understand what this exercise of mind that I had passed through, was. But shortly after in relating it to a Christian brother he said to me, "Why, that was the travail of your soul." A few minutes' conversation, and pointing me to certain scriptures, gave me to understand what it was.

Another experience which I had soon after this, illustrates the same truth. I have spoken of one young woman as belonging to the class of young people of my acquaintance, who remained unconverted. This attracted a good deal of attention; and there was considerable conversation among Christians about her case. She was naturally a charming girl, and very much enlightened on the subject of religion, but she remained in her sins.

One of the elders of the church and myself agreed to make her a daily subject of prayer, to continue to present her case at the throne of grace, morning, noon, and evening, until she was either converted, or should die, or we should be unable to keep our covenant. I found my mind greatly exercised about her;

and more and more, as I continued to pray for her. I soon found, however, that the elder who had entered into this arrangement with me, was losing his spirit of prayer for her. But this did not discourage me. I continued to hold on with increasing importunity. I also availed myself of every opportunity to converse plainly and searchingly with her on the subject of her salvation.

After I had continued in this way for sometime, one evening I called to see her just as the sun was setting. As I came up to the door I heard a shriek from a female voice, and a scuffling and confusion inside the door; and stood and waited for the confusion to be over. The lady of the house soon came and opened the door, and held in her hand a portion of a book, which had evidently been torn in two. She was pale and very much agitated. She held out that portion of the book which she had in her hand, and said, "Mr. Finney, don't you think my sister has become a Universalist?" The book was a defense of Universalism. Her sister had detected her reading it in a private way, and tried to get it away from her; and it was the struggle to obtain that book which I had heard.

I received this information at the door; whereupon I declined to go in. It struck me very much in the same way as had the announcement that the sick woman, already mentioned, was about to die. It loaded me down with great agony. As I returned to my room, at some distance from that house, I felt almost as if I should stagger under the burden that was on my mind; and I struggled, and groaned, and agonized, but could not frame to present the case before God in words, but only in groans and tears.

It seemed to me that the discovery that that young woman, instead of being converted, was becoming a Universalist, so astounded me that I could not break through with my faith, and get hold of God in reference to her case. There seemed to be a darkness hanging over the question, as if a cloud had risen up between me and God, in regard to prevailing for her salvation. But still the Spirit struggled within me with groanings that could not be uttered.

However, I was obliged to retire that night without having prevailed. But as soon as it was light I awoke; and the first thought that I had was to beseech the God of grace again for that young woman. I immediately arose and fell upon my knees. No sooner was I upon my knees than the darkness gave way, and the whole subject opened to my mind; and as soon as I plead for her God said to me, "Yes! yes!" If he had spoken with an audible voice, it would not have been more distinctly understood than was this word spoken within my soul. It instantly relieved all my solicitude. My mind became filled with the greatest peace and joy; and I felt a complete certainty that her salvation was secure.

I drew a false inference, however, in regard to the time; which indeed was not a thing particularly impressed upon my mind at the time of my prayer. Still I expected her to be converted immediately; but she was not. She remained in her sins for several months. In its proper place I shall have occasion to speak of her conversion. I felt disappointed, at the time, that she was not converted at once; and was somewhat staggered upon the question whether I had really prevailed with God in her behalf.

Soon after I was converted, the man with whom I had been boarding for some time, who was a magistrate, and one of the principal men in the place, was deeply convicted of sin. He had been elected a member of the legislature of the state. I was praying daily for him, and urging him to give his heart to God. His conviction became very deep; but still, from day to day, he deferred submission, and did not obtain a hope. My solicitude for him increased.

One afternoon several of his political friends had a protracted interview with him. On the evening of the same day I attempted again to carry his case to God; as the urgency in my mind for his conversion had become very great. In my prayer I had drawn very near to God. I do not remember ever to have been in more intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ than I was at that time. Indeed his presence was so real that I was bathed in tears of joy, and gratitude, and love; and in this state of mind I attempted to pray for this friend. But the moment I did so, my mouth was shut. I found it impossible to pray a word for him. The Lord seemed to say to me, "No; I will not hear." An anguish seized upon me; I thought at first it was a temptation. But the door was shut in my face. It seemed as if the Lord said to me, "Speak no more to me of that matter." It pained me beyond expression. I did not know what to make of it.

The next morning I saw him; and as soon as I brought up the question of submission to God, he said to me, "Mr. Finney, I shall have nothing more to do with it until I return from the legislature. I stand committed to my political friends to carry out certain measures in the legislature, that are incompatible with my first becoming a Christian; and I have promised that I will not attend to the subject until after I have returned from Albany."

From the moment of that exercise the evening before, I had no spirit of prayer for him at all. As soon as he told me what he had done, I understood it. I could see that his convictions were all gone, and that the Spirit of God had left him. From that time he grew more careless and hardened than ever.

When the time arrived he went to the legislature; and in the Spring he returned an almost insane Universalist. I say almost insane, because, instead of having formed his opinions from any evidence or course of argument, he told me this: he said, "I have come to that conclusion, not because I have found it taught in the Bible. but because such a doctrine is so opposed to the carnal mind. It is a doctrine so generally rejected and spoken against, as to prove that it is distasteful to the carnal, or unconverted mind." This was astonishing to me. But everything else that I could get out of him was as wild and absurd as this. He remained in his sins, finally fell into decay, and died at last, as I have been told, a dilapidated man, and in the full faith of his Universalism.

CHAPTER 4

HIS DOCTRINAL EDUCATION AND OTHER EXPERIENCES AT ADAMS

SOON AFTER I WAS CONVERTED I CALLED ON MY PASTOR, AND HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH HIM ON THE ATONEMENT. HE WAS A PRINCETON STUDENT, AND OF COURSE HELD THE LIMITED VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT—THAT IT WAS MADE FOR THE ELECT AND AVAILABLE TO NONE ELSE. OUR CONVERSATION LASTED NEARLY HALF A DAY. HE HELD THAT JESUS SUFFERED FOR THE ELECT THE LITERAL PENALTY OF THE DIVINE LAW; THAT HE SUFFERED JUST WHAT WAS DUE TO EACH OF THE ELECT ON THE SCORE OF RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE. I OBJECTED THAT THIS WAS ABSURED; AS IN THAT CASE HE SUFFERED THE EQUIVALENT OF ENDLESS MISERY MULTIPLIED BY THE WHOLE NUMBER OF THE ELECT. HE INSISTED THAT THIS WAS TRUE. HE AFFIRMED THAT JESUS LITERALLY PAID THE DEBT OF THE ELECT, AND FULLY SATIFIED RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE. ON THE CONTRARY IT SEEMED TO ME THAT JESUS ONLY SATISFIED PUBLIC JUSTICE, AND THAT THAT WAS ALL THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD COULD REQUIRE.

I was however but a child in theology. I was but a novice in religion and in Biblical learning; but I thought he did not sustain his views from the Bible, and told him so. **I had read nothing on the subject except my Bible; and what I had there found upon the subject, I had interpreted as I would have understood the same or like passages in a law book.** I thought he had evidently interpreted those texts in conformity with an established theory of the atonement. I had never heard him preach the views he maintained in that discussion. I was surprised in view of his positions, and withstood them as best I could.

He was alarmed, I dare say, at what appeared to him to be my obstinacy. I thought that my Bible clearly taught that the atonement was made for all men. He limited it to a part. I could not accept this view, for I could not see that he fairly proved it from the Bible. His rules of interpretation did not meet my views. They were much less definite and intelligible than those to which I had been accustomed in my law studies. To the objections which I urged, he could make no satisfactory reply. I asked him if the Bible did not require all who hear the Gospel to repent, believe the Gospel, and be saved. He admitted that it did require all to believe, and be saved. But how could they believe and accept a salvation which was not provided for them?

We went over the whole field of debate between the old and new school divines, upon the subject of atonement,

as my subsequent theological studies taught me. I do not recollect to have ever read a page upon the subject except what I had found in the Bible. I had never, to my recollection, heard a sermon or any discussion whatever upon the question.

This discussion was often renewed, and continued through my whole course of theological studies under him. He expressed concern lest I should not accept the orthodox faith. I believe he had the strongest conviction that I was truly converted; but he felt the greatest desire to keep me within the strict lines of Princeton theology.

He had it fixed in his mind that I should be a minister; and he took pains to inform me that if I did become a minister, the Lord would not bless my labors, and his Spirit would not bear witness to my preaching, unless I preached the truth. I believed this myself. But this was not to me a very strong argument in favor of his views; for he informed me—but not in connection with this conversation, that he did not know that he had ever been instrumental in converting a sinner.

I had never heard him preach particularly on the subject of the atonement; I think he feared to present his particular views to the people. His church, I am sure, did not embrace his view of a limited atonement.

After this we had frequent conversations, not only on the question of the atonement, but on various theological questions, of which I shall have occasion to speak more fully hereafter.

I have said that in the spring of the year the older members of the church began manifestly to decline in their engagedness and zeal for God. This greatly oppressed me as it did also the young converts generally. About this time I read in a newspaper an article under the head of, "A revival revived." The substance of it was, that in a certain place there had been a revival during the winter; that in the spring it declined; and that upon earnest prayer being offered for the continued out pouring of the Spirit, the revival was powerfully revived. This article set me into a flood of weeping.

I was at that time boarding with Mr. Gale, and I took the article to him. I was so overcome with a sense of the divine goodness in hearing and answering prayer, and with a felt assurance that he would hear and answer prayer for the revival of his work in Adams, that I went through the house weeping aloud like a child. Mr. Gale seemed surprised at my feelings, and my expressed confidence that God would revive his work. The article made no such impression on him as it did on me.

At the next meeting of the young people, I proposed that we should observe a closet concert of prayer for the revival of God's work; that we should pray at sunrise, at noon, and at sunset, in our closets, and continue this for one week; when we should come together again and see what farther was to be done. No other means were used for the revival of God's work. But the spirit of prayer was immediately poured out wonderfully upon the young converts. Before the week was out I learned that some of them, when they would attempt to observe this season of prayer, would lose all their strength and be unable to rise to their feet, or even stand upon their knees in their closets; and that some would lie prostrate on the floor, and pray with unutterable groanings for the out pouring of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit was poured out, and before the week ended all the meetings were thronged; and there was as much interest in religion, I think, as there had been at any time during the revival.

And here, I am sorry to say, a mistake was made, or, perhaps I should say, a sin committed, by some of the older members of the church, which resulted in great evil. As I afterward learned, a considerable number of the older people resisted this new movement among the young converts. They were jealous of it. They did not know what to make of it, and felt that the young converts were getting out of their place, in being so forward and so urgent upon the older members of the church. This state of mind finally grieved the Spirit of God. It was not long before alienations began to arise among these older members of the church, which finally resulted in great evil to those who had allowed themselves to resist this latter revival.

The young people held out well. The converts, so far as I know, were almost universally sound, and have been thoroughly efficient Christians.

In the Spring of this year, 1822, I put myself under the care of the Presbytery as a candidate for the Gospel ministry. Some of the ministers urged me to go to Princeton to study theology, but I declined. When they asked me why I would not go to Princeton, I told them that my pecuniary circumstances forbade it. This was true; but they said they would see that my expenses were paid. Still I refused to go; and when urged to give them my reasons, I plainly told them that I would not put myself under such an influence as they had been under; that I was confident they had been wrongly educated, and they were not ministers that met my ideal of what a minister of Christ should be. I told them this reluctantly, but I could not honestly withhold it. They appointed my pastor to superintend my studies. He offered me the use of his library, and said he would give what attention I needed to my theological studies.

But my studies, so far as he was concerned as my teacher, were little else than controversy. He held to the old school doctrine of original sin, or that the human constitution was morally depraved. He held also, that men were utterly unable to comply with the terms of the Gospel, to repent, to believe, or to do anything that God required them to do; that while they were free to all evil, in the sense of being able to commit any amount of sin, yet they were not free to perform any good; that God had condemned men for their sinful nature; and for this, as well as for their transgressions, they deserved eternal death.

He held also that the influences of the Spirit of God on the minds of men were physical, acting directly upon the substance of the soul; that men were passive in regeneration; and IN SHORT HE HELD ALL THOSE DOCTRINES THAT LOGICALLY FLOW FROM THE FACT OF A NATURE SINFUL IN ITSELF.

THESE DOCTRINES I COULD NOT RECEIVE. I COULD NOT RECEIVE HIS VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF ATONEMENT, REGENERATION, FAITH, REPENTANCE, THE SLAVERY OF THE WILL, OR ANY OF THE KINDRED DOCTRINES.

But of these views he was quite tenacious; and he seemed sometimes not a little impatient because I did not receive them without question.

He used to insist that if I would reason on the subject, I would probably land in infidelity. And then he would remind me that some of the students who had been at Princeton had gone away infidels, because they would reason on the subject, and would not accept the confession of faith, and the teaching of the doctors at that school. He furthermore warned me repeatedly, and very feelingly, that as a minister I should never be useful unless I embraced the truth, meaning the truth as he believed and taught it.

I am sure I was quite willing to believe what I found taught in the Bible, and told him so. We used to have many protracted discussions; and I would often come from his study greatly depressed and discouraged, saying to myself, "I cannot embrace these views come what will. I can not believe they are taught in the Bible." And several times I was on the point of giving up the study for the ministry altogether.

There was but one member of the church to whom I opened my mind freely on this subject; and that was Elder H____, a very godly, praying man. He had been educated in Princeton views, and held pretty strongly the higher doctrines of Calvinism. Nevertheless, as we had frequent and protracted conversations, he became satisfied that I was right; and he would call on me frequently to have seasons of prayer with me, to strengthen me in my studies, and in my discussions with Mr. G____, and to decide me more and more firmly that, come what would, I would preach the Gospel.

Several times he fell in with me when I was in a state of great depression, after coming from Mr. Gale's study. At such times he would go with me to my room; and sometimes we would continue till a late hour at night crying to God for light and strength, and for faith to accept and do his perfect will. He lived more than three miles from the village; and frequently he has stayed with me till ten or eleven o'clock at night, and then walked home. The dear old man! I have reason to believe that he prayed for me daily as long as he lived.

After I got into the ministry and great opposition was raised to my preaching, I met Elder H____ at one time, and he alluded to the opposition, and said, "Oh! my soul is so burdened that I pray for you day and night. But I am sure that God will help. Go on," he said, "go on, brother Finney; the Lord will give you deliverance."

One afternoon Mr. Gale and I had been conversing for a long time on the subject of the atonement, and the hour arrived for us to attend the conference meeting. We continued our conversation on that subject until we got into the house. As we were early, and very few persons had arrived, we continued our conversation. The people kept coming in; and they would sit down and listen with the greatest attention to what we were saying. Our discussion was very earnest, though I trust conducted in a Christian spirit. The people became more and more interested in hearing our discussion, and when we proposed to stop and commence our meeting, they earnestly begged us to proceed with our discussion and let that be our meeting. We did so; and spent the whole evening, I think very much to the satisfaction of those present, and I trust to their permanent edification.

After I had been studying theology for a few months, and Mr. Gale's health was such that he was unable to preach; a Universalist minister came in and began to promulgate his objectionable doctrines. The impenitent part of the community seemed very much disposed to hear him, and finally people became so interested that there was a large number that seemed to be shaken in their minds, in regard to the commonly received views of the Bible.

IN THIS STATE OF THINGS, MR. GALE, TOGETHER WITH SOME OF THE ELDERS OF HIS CHURCH, DESIRED ME TO ADDRESS THE PEOPLE ON THE SUBJECT, AND SEE IF I COULD NOT REPLY TO THE ARGUMENTS OF THE UNIVERSALIST. THE GREAT EFFORT OF THE UNIVERSALIST WAS OF COURSE TO SHOW THAT SIN DID NOT DESERVE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT. HE INVEIGHED AGAINST THE DOCTRINE

OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT AS UNJUST, INFINITELY CRUEL AND ABSURD. GOD WAS LOVE; AND HOW COULD A GOD OF LOVE PUNISH MEN ENDLESSLY?

I arose in one of our evening meetings and said, "This Universalist preacher holds forth doctrines that are new to me, and I do not believe they are taught in the Bible. But I am going to examine the subject, and if I cannot show that his views are false, I will become a Universalist myself." I then appointed a meeting the next week, at which time I proposed to deliver a lecture in opposition to his views. The Christian people were rather startled at my boldness in saying that I would be a Universalist, if I could not prove that his doctrines were false. However, I felt sure that I could.

When the evening came for my lecture, the house was crowded. I took up the question of the justice of endless punishment, and discussed it through that and the next evening. There was general satisfaction with the presentation.

The Universalist himself found that the people were convinced that he was wrong, and then he took another tack. Mr. Gale, together with his school of theology, maintained that the atonement of Christ was the literal payment of the debt of the elect, a suffering of just what they deserved to suffer; so that the elect were saved upon principles of exact justice; Christ, so far as they were concerned, having fully answered the demands of the law. The Universalist seized upon this view, assuming that this was the real nature of the atonement. He had only to prove that the atonement was made for all men, and then he could show that all men would be saved; because the debt of all mankind had been literally paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Universalism would follow on the very ground of justice; for God could not justly punish those whose debt was paid.

I saw, and the people saw—those of them who understood Mr. Gale's position, that the Universalist had got him into a tight place. For it was easy to prove that the atonement was made for all mankind; and if the nature and value of the atonement were as Mr. Gale held, universal salvation was an inevitable result.

This again carried the people away; and Mr. Gale sent for me and requested that I should go on and reply to him further. He said he understood that the question on the ground of law was settled; but now I must answer his argument upon the ground of the Gospel. I said to him, "Mr. Gale, I cannot do it without contradicting your views on that subject, and setting them all aside. With your views of the atonement he cannot be answered. For if you have the right view of the atonement, the people can easily see that the Bible proves that Christ died for all men, for the whole world of sinners; and therefore unless you will allow me to sweep your views of the atonement all away, I can say nothing to any purpose." "Well," said Mr. Gale, "it will never do to let the thing remain as it is. You may say what you please; only go on and answer him in your own way. If I find it necessary to preach on the subject of the atonement, I shall be obliged to contradict you." "Very well," said I, "let me but show my views, and I can answer the Universalist; and you may say to the people afterward what you please."

I then appointed to lecture on the Universalist's argument founded on the Gospel. I delivered two lectures upon the atonement. In these I think I fully succeeded in showing that the atonement did not consist in the literal payment of the debt of sinners, in the sense which the Universalist maintained; that it simply rendered the salvation of all men possible, and did not of itself lay God under obligation to save anybody; that it was not true that Christ suffered just what those for whom he died deserved to suffer; that

no such thing as that was taught in the Bible, and no such thing was true; that, on the contrary, CHRIST DIED SIMPLY TO REMOVE AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE OUT OF THE WAY OF GOD'S FORGIVING SINNERS, SO AS TO RENDER IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO PROCLAIM A UNIVERSAL AMNESTY, INVITING ALL MEN TO REPENT, TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST, AND TO ACCEPT SALVATION; THAT INSTEAD OF HAVING SATISFIED RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, AND BORNE JUST WHAT SINNERS DESERVE. CHRIST HAD ONLY SATISFIED PUBLIC JUSTICE, BY HONORING THE LAW, BOTH IN HIS OBEDIENCE AND DEATH, THUS RENDERING IT SAFE FOR GOD TO PARDON SIN, TO PARDON THE SINS OF ANY MAN AND OF ALL MEN WHO WOULD REPENT AND BELIEVE IN HIM. I MAINTAINED THAT CHRIST, IN HIS ATONEMENT, MERELY DID THAT WHICH WAS NECESSARY AS A CONDITION OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN; AND NOT THAT WHICH CANCELLED SIN, IN THE SENSE OF LITERALLY PAYING THE INDEBTEDNESS OF SINNERS.

This answered the Universalist, and put a stop to any further proceedings or excitement on that subject. But what was very striking, these lectures secured the conversion of the young woman for whom, as I have said, such earnest and agonizing prayer had been offered. This was very astonishing to Mr. Gale; for the evidence was that the Spirit of God had blessed my views of the atonement. This, I think, staggered him considerably in regard to the correctness of his view. I could see, in conversing with him, that he felt very much surprised that this view of the atonement should be instrumental in converting that young woman.

After many such discussions with Mr. Gale in pursuing my theological studies, **the presbytery was finally called together at Adams to examine me; and, if they could agree to do so, to license me to preach the Gospel. This was in March 1824. I expected a severe struggle with them in my examination; but I found them a good deal softened. The manifest blessing that had attended my conversations, and my teaching in prayer and conference meetings, and in these lectures of which I have spoken, rendered them, I think, more cautious than they would otherwise have been in getting into any controversy with me. In the**

course of my examination they avoided asking any such question as would naturally bring my views in collision with theirs.

When they had examined me, they voted unanimously to license me to preach. UNEXPECTEDLY TO MYSELF THEY ASKED ME IF I RECEIVED THE CONFESSION OF FAITH OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. I HAD NOT EXAMINED IT—THAT IS, THE LARGE WORK CONTAINING THE CATECHISM AND CONFESSION. THIS HAD MADE NO PART OF MY STUDY. I REPLIED THAT I RECEIVED IT FOR SUBSTANCE OF DOCTRINE, SO FAR AS I UNDERSTOOD IT. BUT I SPOKE IN A WAY THAT PLAINLY IMPLIED, I THINK, THAT I DID NOT PRETEND TO KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT. HOWEVER, I ANSWERED HONESTLY AS I UNDERSTOOD IT AT THE TIME. THEY HEARD THE TRIAL SERMONS WHICH I HAD WRITTEN, ON TEXTS WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN ME BY THE PRESBYTERY; AND WENT THROUGH WITH ALL THE ORDINARY DETAILS OF SUCH AN EXAMINATION.

At this meeting of presbytery I first saw Rev. Daniel Nash, who is generally known as "Father Nash." He was a member of the presbytery. A large congregation was assembled to hear my examination. I got in a little late, and saw a man standing in the pulpit speaking to the people, as I supposed. He looked at me, I observed, as I came in; and was looking at others as they passed up the aisles.

As soon as I reached my seat and listened, I observed that he was praying. I was surprised to see him looking all over the house, as if he were talking to the people; while in fact he was praying to God. Of course it did not sound to me much like prayer; and he was at that time indeed in a very cold and back-slidden state. I shall have occasion frequently to mention him hereafter.

The next Sabbath after I was licensed, I preached for Mr. Gale. When I came out of the pulpit he said to me. "Mr. Finney, I shall be very much ashamed to have it known, wherever you go, that you studied theology with me." This was so much like him, and like what he had repeatedly said to me, that I made little or no reply to it. I held down my head, and felt discouraged, and went my way.

He afterwards viewed this subject very differently; and told me that he blessed the Lord that in all our discussion, and in all he had said to me, he had not had the least influence to change my views. He very frankly confessed his error in the manner in which he had dealt with me; and said that if I had listened to him I should have been ruined as a minister.

The fact is that Mr. Gale's education for the ministry had been entirely defective. He had imbibed a set of opinions, both theological and practical, that were a strait jacket to him. He could accomplish very little or nothing if he carried out his own principles. I had the use of his library, and searched it thoroughly on all the questions of theology, which came up for examination; and the more I examined the books, the more was I dissatisfied.

I had been used to the close and logical reasonings of the judges, as I found them reported in our law works; but when I went to Mr. Gale's old school library, I found almost nothing proved to my satisfaction. I am sure it was not because I was opposed to the truth, but I was dissatisfied because the positions of

these theological authors were unsound and not satisfactorily sustained. They often seemed to me to state one thing and prove another, and frequently fell short of logically proving anything.

I finally said to Mr. Gale, "If there is nothing better than I find in your library to sustain the great doctrines taught by our church, I must be an infidel." And I have always believed that had not the Lord led me to see the fallacy of those arguments, and to see the real truth as presented in the Scriptures; especially had he not so revealed himself to me personally that I could not doubt the truth of the Christian religion, I should have been forced to be an infidel.

At first, being no theologian, my attitude in respect to his peculiar views was rather that of negation or denial, than that of opposing any positive view to his. I said, "Your positions are not proved." I often said, "They are unsusceptible of proof." So I thought then, and so I think now. But after all, he would insist upon it that I ought to defer to the opinions of the great and good men who, after much consultation and deliberation, had come to those conclusions; that it was unbecoming in me, a young man, bred to the profession of law, and having no theological education, to oppose my views to those of the great men and profound theologians, whose opinions I found in his library. He urged that if I persisted in having my intelligence satisfied, on those points, with argument, I should become an infidel. He believed that the decisions of the church ought to be respected by a young man like myself, and that I should surrender my own judgment to that of others of superior wisdom.

Now I could not deny that there was a good deal of force in this; but still I found myself utterly unable to accept doctrine on the ground of authority. If I tried to accept those doctrines as mere dogmas, I could not do it. I could not be honest in doing it; I could not respect myself in doing it. Often when I left Mr. Gale, I would go to my room and spend a long time on my knees over my Bible. Indeed I read my Bible on my knees a great deal during those days of conflict, beseeching the Lord to teach me his own mind on those points. I had no where to go but directly to the Bible, and to the philosophy or workings of my own mind, as revealed in consciousness.

My views took on a positive type but slowly. At first I found myself unable to receive his peculiar views; and then gradually formed views of my own in opposition to them, which appeared to me to be unequivocally taught in the Bible.

But not only were Mr. Gale's theological views such as to cripple his usefulness; his practical views were equally erroneous. Hence he prophesied, with respect to my views, every kind of evil. He assured me, that the Spirit of God would not approve and cooperate with my labors; that if I addressed men as I told him I intended to, they would not hear me; that if they came for a short time, they would soon become offended, and my congregation would all fall off; that unless I wrote my sermons I should immediately become stale and uninteresting, and could not satisfy the people; and that I should divide and scatter instead of building up the congregation, wherever I preached. Indeed I found his views to be almost the reverse of those which I entertained, on all such practical questions relating to my duty as a minister.

I do not wonder, and did not at the time, that he was shocked at my views and purposes in relation to preaching the Gospel. With his education it could not be otherwise. He followed out his views with very little practical result. I pursued mine, and by the blessing of God the results were the opposite of those which he predicted. When this fact came out clearly, it completely upset his theological and practical ideas as a minister. This result, as I shall mention in its place, at first annihilated his hope as a Christian, and finally made him quite another man as a minister.

But there was another defect in brother Gale's education, which I regarded as fundamental. If he had ever been converted to Christ, he had failed to receive that divine anointing of the Holy Ghost that would make him a power in the pulpit and in society, for the conversion of souls. **He had fallen short of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is indispensable to ministerial success.** .

When Christ commissioned his apostles to go and preach, he told them to abide at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. **This power, as every one knows, was the baptism of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. This was an indispensable qualification for success in their ministry.** I did not suppose then, nor do I now, that this baptism was simply the power to work miracles. The power to work miracles and the gift of tongues were given as signs to attest the reality of their divine commission. But the baptism itself was a divine purifying, an anointing bestowing on them a divine illumination, filling them with faith, and love, with peace and

power; so that their words were made sharp in the hearts of God's enemies, quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword. This is an indispensable qualification of a successful ministry; and I have often been surprised and pained that to this day so little stress is laid upon this qualification for preaching Christ to a sinful world. **Without the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit**, a man will never make much progress in preaching the Gospel. The fact is, unless he can preach the Gospel as an experience, present religion to mankind as a matter of consciousness, his speculations and theories will come far short of preaching the Gospel.

I have said that Mr. Gale afterward concluded that he had not been converted. That he was a sincere, good man, in the sense of honestly holding his opinions, I do not doubt. But he was sadly defective in his education, theologically, philosophically and practically; and so far as I could learn, his spiritual state, he had not the peace of the Gospel, when I sat under his ministry.

Let not the reader, from anything that I have said, suppose that I did not love Mr. Gale, and highly respect him. I did both. He and I remained the firmest friends, so far as I know, to the day of his death. I have said what I have in relation to his views, because I think it applicable, I am afraid I must say, to many of the ministers even of the present day. I think that their practical views of preaching the Gospel, whatever their theological views may be, are very defective indeed; and that their want of unction, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, is a radical defect in their preparation for the ministry. I say not this censoriously; but still I would record it as a fact which has long been settled in my mind, and over which I have long had occasion to mourn. And as I have become more and more acquainted with the ministry in this and other countries, I am persuaded that, with all their training, and discipline, and education, there is a lack in practical views of the best way of presenting the Gospel to men, and in adapting means to secure the end; and especially in their want of the power of the Holy Ghost.

I have spoken at considerable length of my protracted controversy with my theological teacher, Mr. Gale. Upon reflection I think that I should state a little more definitely some of the points upon which we had so much discussion. **I COULD NOT RECEIVE THAT**

THEOLOGICAL FICTION OF IMPUTATION. I WILL STATE, AS NEARLY AS I CAN, THE EXACT GROUND THAT HE MAINTAINED AND INSISTED UPON. FIRST, HE MAINTAINED THAT THE GUILT OF ADAM'S FIRST TRANSGRESSION IS LITERALLY IMPUTED TO ALL HIS POSTERITY; SO THAT THEY ARE JUSTLY SENTENCED AND EXPOSED TO ETERNAL DAMNATION FOR ADAM'S SIN. SECOND, HE MAINTAINED THAT WE RECEIVED FROM ADAM, BY NATURAL GENERATION, A NATURE WHOLLY SINFUL, AND MORALLY CORRUPT IN EVERY FACULTY OF SOUL AND BODY; SO THAT WE ARE TOTALLY UNABLE TO PERFORM ANY ACT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, AND ARE NECESSITATED BY OUR SINFUL NATURE TO TRANSGRESS HIS LAW, IN EVERY ACTION OF OUR LIVES. AND THIS, HE INSISTED, IS THE ESTATE INTO WHICH ALL MEN FELL BY THE FIRST SIN OF ADAM. FOR THIS

SINFUL NATURE, THUS RECEIVED FROM ADAM BY NATURAL GENERATION, ALL MANKIND ARE ALSO SENTENCED TO, AND ARE DESERVING OF ETERNAL DAMNATION. THEN, THIRD, IN ADDITION TO THIS, HE MAINTAINED THAT WE ARE ALL JUSTLY CONDEMNED AND SENTENCED TO ETERNAL DAMNATION FOR OUR OWN UNAVOIDABLE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW . Thus we find ourselves justly subject to a triple eternal damnation.

THEN THE SECOND BRANCH OF THIS WONDERFUL IMPUTATION IS AS FOLLOWS: THE SIN OF ALL THE ELECT, BOTH ORIGINAL AND ACTUAL—THAT IS, THE GUILT OF ADAM'S SIN, TOGETHER WITH THE GUILT OF THEIR SINFUL NATURE, AND ALSO GUILT OF THEIR PERSONAL TRANSGRESSIONS, ARE ALL LITERALLY IMPUTED TO CHRIST ; and therefore the

divine government regarded him as an embodiment of all the sins and guilt of the elect, and treated him accordingly; that is, the Father punished the Son precisely as much as all the elect deserved. Hence their debt being thus fully discharged by the punishment of Christ, they are saved upon principles of "exact justice."

The third branch of this wonderful theological fiction is as follows: First—The obedience of Christ to the divine law is literally imputed to the elect; so that in him they are regarded as having always perfectly obeyed the law . Second—His

death for them is also imputed to the elect; so that in him they are regarded as having fully suffered all that they deserve on account of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and on account of their sinful nature, and also on account of all their personal transgressions. Third—Thus by their surety the elect have first perfectly obeyed the law; and then they have by and in their surety suffered the full penalty to which they were subject in consequence of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and also the guilt of their sinful nature, with all their blame-worthiness for their personal transgressions. Thus they have suffered in Christ, just as if they had not obeyed in him. He, first, perfectly obeys for them, which obedience is strictly imputed to them, so that they are regarded by the government of God as having fully obeyed in their surety; second, he has suffered for them the penalty of the law, just as if no obedience had been rendered; third, after the law has been doubly satisfied, **the elect are required to repent as if no satisfaction had been rendered** ; fourth, payment in full having been rendered twice over, the discharge of the elect is claimed to be an act of infinite grace. **Thus the elect are saved by grace on principles of justice, so that there is strictly no grace or mercy in our forgiveness, but the whole grace of our salvation is found in the obedience and sufferings of Christ** .

It follows that the elect may demand their discharge on the score of strict justice. **They need not pray for pardon or forgiveness; it is all a mistake to do so. This inference is my own**; but it follows, as every one can see, irresistibly, from what the confession of faith itself asserts, that the elect are saved on principles of exact and perfect justice.

I FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO AGREE WITH MR. GALE ON THESE POINTS. I COULD NOT BUT REGARD AND TREAT THIS WHOLE QUESTION OF IMPUTATION AS A THEOLOGICAL FICTION.

Upon these points we had constant discussion, in some shape, during the whole course of my study.

I do not recollect that Mr. Gale ever insisted that the confession of faith taught these principles, as I learned that it did when I came to study it. I was not aware that the rules of the presbytery required them to ask a candidate if he accepted the Presbyterian confession of faith. As soon as I learned what were the unambiguous teachings of the confession of faith upon these points, I did not hesitate on all suitable occasions to declare my dissent from them. I repudiated and exposed them. Wherever I found that any class of persons were hidden behind these dogmas, I did not hesitate to demolish them, to the best of my ability.

I have not caricatured these positions of Mr. Gale, but have stated them, as nearly as I can, in the very language in which he would defend them, when I presented them to him in controversy. He did not pretend that they were rational, or that they would bear reasoning upon. Hence he insisted that my reasoning would lead me into infidelity. But I insisted that our reason was given us for the very purpose of enabling us to justify the ways of God; and that no such fiction of imputation could by any possibility be true.

Of course there were many other points that were so related to these as necessarily to come under discussion, upon which we had a good deal of controversy. But our controversy always turned upon this as the foundation. If man had a sinful nature, then regeneration must consist in a change of nature. If man's nature was sinful, the influence of the Holy Spirit that must regenerate him, must be physical and not moral. If man had a sinful nature, there was no adaptation in the gospel to change his nature, and consequently no connection, in religion, between means and end.

This brother Gale sternly held; and consequently in his preaching he never seemed to expect, nor even to aim at converting anybody, by any sermon that I ever heard him preach. And yet he was an able preacher as preaching was then estimated. The fact is, these dogmas were a perfect strait-jacket to him. If he preached repentance, he must be sure before he sat down, to leave the impression on his people that they could not repent. If he called them to believe he must be sure to inform them that, until their nature was changed by the Holy Spirit, faith was impossible to them. And so his orthodoxy was a perfect snare to himself and to his hearers. I could not receive it. I did not so understand my Bible; nor could he make me see that it was taught in the Bible.

When I came to read the confession of faith, and saw the passages that were quoted to sustain these peculiar positions, I was absolutely ashamed of it. I could not feel any respect for a document that would undertake to impose on mankind such dogmas as those, sustained, for the most part, by passages of Scripture that were totally irrelevant; and not in a single instance sustained by passages which, in a court of law, would have been considered at all conclusive. But the presbytery, so far as I know, were all of one way of thinking at that time. They subsequently, however, I believe, all gave in; and when Mr. Gale changed his views, I heard no more from any of the members of the presbytery in defense of those views.

[Chapters 5 and 6 omitted - aal]

CHAPTER 7

REMARKS UPON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

In what I say upon this subject I hope my brethren will not impute to me any other motive than a kind and benevolent regard for their highest usefulness. I have always taken their criticisms kindly, and given them credit for benevolent intentions. Now I am an old man, and many of the results of my views and methods are known to the public. Is it out of place in me to speak freely to the ministry, upon this subject? In reply to their objections, I have sometimes told them what a judge of the supreme court remarked to me, upon this subject. "Ministers," said he, "do not exercise good sense in addressing the people. They are afraid of repetition. They use language not well understood by the common people. Their illustrations are not taken from the common pursuits of life. They write in too elevated a style, and read without repetition, and are not understood by the people. Now," said he, "if lawyers should take such a course, they would ruin themselves and their cause. When I was at the bar," he added, "I used to take it for granted, when I had before me a jury of respectable men, that I should have to repeat over my main positions about as many times as there were persons in the jury box. I learned that unless I did so, illustrated, and repeated, and turned the main points over—the main points of law and of evidence, I should lose my cause. Our object," he said, "in addressing a jury, is to get their minds settled before they leave the jury box; not to make a speech in language but partially understood by them; not to let ourselves out in illustrations entirely above their apprehension; not to display our oratory, and then let them go. We are set on getting a verdict. Hence we are set upon being understood. We mean to convince them; and if they have doubts as to the law, we make them understand it, and rivet it in their minds. In short, we expect to get a verdict, and to get it upon the spot; so that when they go to their room, it will be found that they have understood us, and that they have been convinced by the facts and arguments. If we do not thus take pains to urge home every thought and every word, and every point, so as to lodge it in their convictions, we are sure to lose our cause. We must overcome their prejudices; we must overcome their ignorance; we must try to overcome even their interest, if they have any, against our client. Now," said he, "if ministers would do this, the effects of their preaching would be unspeakably different from what they are. They go into their study and write a sermon; they go into their pulpit and read it, and those that listen to it but poorly understand it. Many words used they will not understand, until they go home and consult their dictionaries. They do not address the people, expecting to convince them, and to get their verdict in favor of Christ, upon the spot. They seek no such object. They rather seem to aim at making fine literary productions, and displaying great eloquence and an ornate use of language." Of course I do not profess, at this distance of time, to give the exact language used by the judge; but I have given his remarks in substance, as made to me at the time.

I never entertained the least hard feeling toward my brethren for the roughness with which they often treated me. I knew that they were very anxious to have me do good; and really supposed that I should do much more good, and much less evil, if I should adopt their views. But I was of a different opinion.

I could mention many facts illustrative of the views of ministers, and of the manner in which they sometimes treated me. When I was preaching in Philadelphia, for example, Dr.____, the celebrated temperance lecturer from Connecticut, came there and heard me preach. He was indignant at the manner in which I let down the dignity of the pulpit. His principal conversation, however, was with Mr. Patterson, with whom, at the time, I labored. He insisted upon it that I should not be allowed to preach till I had a ministerial education; that I should stop preaching and go to Princeton and learn theology, and get better views of the way in which the Gospel should be preached.

Let not anything I say on this subject leave the impression on any mind, that I thought either my views or my methods perfect, for I had no such thought. I was aware that I was but a child. I had not enjoyed the advantages of the higher schools of learning; and so conscious had I been all along that I lacked those qualifications that would make me acceptable, especially to ministers, and I feared to the people in large places, that I had never had any higher ambition or purpose than to go into the new settlements and places where they did not enjoy the Gospel. Indeed I was often surprised myself, in the first years of my preaching, to find it so edifying and acceptable to the most educated classes. This was more than I had expected, greatly more than my brethren had expected, and more than I had dared to hope myself. I always endeavored to improve in everything in which I discovered myself to be in error. But the longer I preached, the less reason had I to think that my error lay in the direction in which it was supposed to lie, by my brother ministers.

The more experience I had, the more I saw the results of my method of preaching, the more I conversed with all classes, high and low, educated and uneducated, the more was I confirmed in the fact that God had led me, had taught me, had given me right conceptions in regard to the best manner of winning souls. I say that God taught me; and I know it must have been so; for surely I never had

obtained these notions from man. And I have often thought that I could say with perfect truth, as Paul said, that I was not taught the Gospel by man, but by the Spirit of Christ himself. And I was taught it by the Spirit of the Lord in a manner so clear and forcible, that no argument of my ministerial brethren, with which I was plied so often and so long, had the least weight with me.

I mention this as a matter of duty. For I am still solemnly impressed with the conviction, that the schools are to a great extent spoiling the ministers. Ministers in these days have great facilities for obtaining information on all theological questions; and are vastly more learned, so far as theological, historical, and Biblical learning is concerned, than they perhaps ever have been in any age of the world. Yet with all their learning, they do not know how to use it. They are, after all, to a great extent, like David in Saul's armor. A man can never learn to preach except by preaching.

But one great thing above all others ministers need, and that is singleness of eye. If they have a reputation to secure and to nurse, they will do but little good. Many years ago a beloved pastor of my acquaintance, left home for his health, and employed a young man, just from the seminary, to fill his pulpit while he was absent. This young man wrote and preached as splendid sermons as he could. The pastor's wife finally ventured to say to him, "You are preaching over the heads of our people. They do not understand your language or your illustrations. You bring too much of your learning into the pulpit." He replied, "I am a young man. I am cultivating a style. I am aiming to prepare myself for occupying a pulpit and surrounding myself with a cultivated congregation. I cannot descend to your people. I must cultivate an elevated style." I have had my thought and my eye upon this man ever since. I am not aware that he is yet dead; but I have never seen his name connected with any revival, amidst all the great revivals that we have had, from year to year, since that time; and I never expect to, unless his views are radically changed, and unless he addresses the people from an entirely different stand-point, and from entirely different motives.

I could name ministers who are yet alive, old men like myself, who were greatly ashamed of me when I first began to preach, because I was so undignified in the pulpit, used such common language, addressed the people with such directness, and because I aimed not at all at ornament, or at supportillg the dignity of the pulpit.

Dear brethren they were; and I always felt in the kindest manner toward them, and do not know that in a single instance I was ruffled or angry at what they said. I was from the very first aware that I should meet with this opposition; and that there was this wide gulf in our views, and would be in practice, between myself and other ministers. I seldom felt that I was one of them, or that they regarded me as really belonging to their fraternity. I was bred a lawyer. I came right forth from a law office to the pulpit, and talked to the people as I would have talked to a jury.

It was very common, as I learned, among ministers in my earlier years of preaching, to agree among themselves that if I were to succeed in the ministry, it would bring the schools into disrepute; and men would come to think it hardly worth while to support them with their funds, if a man could be accepted as a successful preacher without them. Now I never had a thought of undervaluing the education furnished by colleges or theological seminaries; though I did think, and think now, that in certain respects they are greatly mistaken in their modes of training their students. They do not encourage them to talk to the people, and accustom themselves to extemporaneous addresses to the people in the surrounding country, while pursuing their studies. Men cannot learn to preach by study without practice. The students should be encouraged to exercise, and prove, and improve, their gifts and calling of God, by going out into any places open to them, and holding Christ up to the people in earnest talks. They must thus learn to preach. Instead of this, the students are required to write what they call sermons, and present them for criticism; to preach, that is, read them to the class and the professor. Thus they play preaching. No man can preach in this manner. These so-called sermons will of course, under the criticism they receive, degenerate into literary essays. The people have no respect for such sermons, as sermons. This reading of elegant literary essays, is not to them preaching. It is gratifying to literary taste, but not spiritually edifying. It does not meet the wants of the soul. It is not calculated to win souls to Christ. The students are taught to cultivate a fine, elevated style of writing. As for real eloquence, that gushing, impressive, and persuasive oratory, that naturally flows from an educated man whose soul is on fire with his subject, and who is free to pour out his heart to a waiting and earnest people, they have none of it.

A reflecting mind will feel as if it were infinitely out of place to present in the pulpit to immortal souls, hanging upon the verge of everlasting death, such specimens of learning and rhetoric. They know that

men do not do so on any subject where they are really in earnest. The captain of a fire company, when a city is on fire, does not read to his company an essay, or exhibit a fine specimen of rhetoric, when he shouts to them and directs their movements. It is a question of urgency, and he intends that every word shall be understood. He is entirely in earnest with them; and they feel that criticism would be out of place in regard to the language he uses.

So it always is when men are entirely in earnest. Their language is in point, direct and simple. Their sentences are short, cogent, powerful. The appeal is made directly for action; and hence all such discourses take effect. This is the reason why, formerly, the ignorant Methodist preachers, and the earnest Baptist preachers produced so much more effect than our most learned theologians and divines. They do so now. The impassioned utterance of a common exhorter will often move a congregation far beyond anything that those splendid exhibitions of rhetoric can effect. Great sermons lead the people to praise the preacher. Good preaching leads the people to praise the Savior.

Our theological schools would be of much greater value than they are, if they were much more practical. I heard a theological teacher read a sermon on the importance of extemporaneous preaching. His views on that subject were correct; but his practice entirely contradicted them. He seemed to have studied the subject, and to have attained to practical views of the highest importance. But yet I have never known one of his students, in practice, to adopt those views. I have understood that he says that if he were to begin his life anew as a preacher, he would practice according to his present views; and that he laments that his education was wrong in this respect, and consequently his practice has been wrong.

In our school at Oberlin our students have been led—not by myself, I am bound to say—to think that they must write their sermons; and very few of them, notwithstanding all I could say to them, have the courage to launch out, and commit themselves to extemporaneous preaching. They have been told again and again: "You must not think to imitate Mr. Finney. You cannot be Finneys."

Ministers do not like to get up and talk to the people as best they can, and break themselves at once into the habit of talking to the people. They must preach; and if they must preach in the common acceptance of the term, they must write. Hence, according to that view, I have never preached. Indeed, people have often said to me: "Why, you do not preach. You talk to the people." A man in London went home from one of our meetings greatly convicted. He had been a sceptic; and his wife seeing him greatly excited, said to him, "Husband, have you been to hear Mr. Finney preach?" He replied: "I have been to Mr. Finney's meeting. He don't preach; he only explains what other people preach." This, in substance, I have heard over and over again. "Why!" they say, "anybody could preach as you do. You just talk to the people. You talk as if you were as much at home as if you sat in the parlor." Others have said: "Why it don't seem like preaching; but it seems as if Mr. Finney had taken me alone, and was conversing with me face to face."

Ministers generally avoid preaching what the people before them will understand as addressed particularly to them. They will preach to them about other people, and the sins of other people, instead of addressing them and saying, "You are guilty of these sins;" and, "The Lord requires this of you." They often preach about the Gospel instead of preaching the Gospel. They often preach about sinners instead of preaching to them. They studiously avoid being personal, in the sense of making the impression on any one present that he is the man. Now I have thought it my duty to pursue a different course; and I always have pursued a different course. I have often said, "Do not think I am talking about anybody else; but I mean you, and you, and you."

Ministers told me at first that people would never endure this; but would get up and go out, and never come to hear me again. But this is all a mistake. Very much, in this as in everything else, depends on the spirit in which it is said. If the people see that it is said in the spirit of love, with a yearning desire to do them good; if they cannot call it an ebullition ["a sudden outburst" - *Webster's New World Dictionary*. Second Edition, 1982- aal] of personal animosity, but if they see, and cannot deny that it is telling the truth in love; that it is coming right home to them to save them individually, there are very few that will continue to resent it. If at the time they feel pointed at and rebuked, nevertheless the conviction is upon them that they needed it, and it will surely ultimately do them great good.

I have often said to people, when I saw that they looked offended, "Now you resent this, and you will go away and say that you will not come again; but you will. Your own convictions are on my side. You

know that what I tell you is true; and that I tell it for your own good; and that you cannot continue to resent it." And I have always found this to be true.

My experience has been, that even in respect to personal popularity, "honesty is the best policy" in a minister; that if he means to maintain his hold upon the confidence, and respect, and affection of any people, he must be faithful to their souls. He must let them see that he is not courting them for any purpose of popularity, but that he is trying to save their souls. Men are not fools. They have no solid respect for a man that will go into the pulpit and preach smooth things. They cordially despise it in their inmost souls. And let no man think that he will gain permanent respect, that he will be permanently honored by his people, unless as an ambassador of Christ he deals faithfully with their souls.

The great argument in opposition to my views of preaching the Gospel was, that I should not give nearly so much instruction to the people, as I should if I wrote my sermons. They said I would not study; and consequently, although I might succeed as an evangelist, where I labored but a few weeks or months in a place, still it would never do for a pastor to preach extemporaneously.

Now I have the best of reasons for believing that preachers of written sermons do not give their people so much instruction as they think they do. The people do not remember their sermons. I have in multitudes of instances heard people complain—"I cannot carry home anything that I hear from the pulpit." They have said to me in hundreds of instances: "We always remember what we have heard you preach. We remember your text, and the manner in which you handled it; but written sermons we cannot remember."

I have been a pastor now for many years—indeed, ever since 1832; and I have never heard any complaint that I did not instruct the people. I do not believe it is true that my people are not as well instructed, so far as pulpit instruction is concerned, as those people are who sit under the preaching of written sermons. It is true that a man may write his sermons without studying much; as it is true that he may preach extemporaneously without much study or thought. Many written sermons, that I have heard, manifested anything but profound, accurate thought.

My habit has always been to study the Gospel, and the best application of it, all the time. I do not confine myself to hours and days of writing my sermons; but my mind is always pondering the truths of the Gospel, and the best ways of using them. I go among the people and learn their wants. Then, in the light of the Holy Spirit, I take a subject that I think will meet their present necessities. I think intensely on it, and pray much over the subject on Sabbath morning, for example, and get my mind full of it, and then go and pour it out to the people. Whereas one great difficulty with a written sermon is, that a man after he has written it, needs to think but little of the subject. He needs to pray but little. He perhaps reads over his manuscript Saturday evening, or Sabbath morning; but he does not feel the necessity of being powerfully anointed, that his mouth may be opened and filled with arguments, and that he may be enabled to preach out of a full heart. He is quite at ease. He has only to use his eyes and his voice, and he can preach, in his way. It may be a sermon that has been written for years; it may be a sermon that he has written, every word of it, within the week. But on Sabbath day there is no freshness in it. It does not come necessarily new and fresh, and as an anointed message from God to his heart, and through his heart to the people.

I am prepared to say, most solemnly, that I think I have studied all the more for not having written my sermons. I have been obliged to make the subjects upon which I preached familiar to my thoughts, to fill my mind with them, and then go and talk them off to the people. I simply note the heads upon which I wish to dwell in the briefest possible manner, and in language not a word of which I use, perhaps, in preaching. I simply jot down the order of my propositions, and the positions which I propose to take; and in a word, sketch an outline of the remarks and inferences with which I conclude.

But unless men will try it, unless they will begin and talk to the people, as best they can, keeping their hearts full of truth and full of the Holy Ghost, they will never make extemporaneous preachers. I believe that half an hour's earnest talk to the people from week to week, if the talk be pointed, direct, earnest, logical, will really instruct them more than the two labored sermons that those who write, get off to their people on the Sabbath. I believe the people would remember more of what is said, be more interested in it, and would carry it away with them to be pondered, vastly more than they do what they get from the labored written sermons.

I have spoken of my method of preparing for the pulpit in more recent years. When I first began to preach, and for some twelve years of my earliest ministry, I wrote not a word; and was most commonly obliged to preach without any preparation whatever, except what I got in prayer. Oftentimes I went into the pulpit without knowing upon what text I should speak, or a word that I should say. I depended on the occasion and the Holy Spirit to suggest the text, and to open up the whole subject to my mind; and certainly in no part of my ministry have I preached with greater success and power. IF I DID NOT PREACH FROM INSPIRATION, I DON'T KNOW HOW I DID PREACH.

It was a common experience with me, and has been during all my ministerial life, that the subject would open up to my mind in a manner that was surprising to myself. It seemed that I could see with intuitive clearness just what I ought to say; and whole platoons of thoughts, words, and illustrations, came to me as fast as I could deliver them. When I first began to make "skeletons," I made them after, and not before I preached. It was to preserve the outline of the thought which had been given me, on occasions such as I have just mentioned. I found when the Spirit of God had given me a very clear view of a subject, I could not retain it, to be used on any other occasion, unless I jotted down an outline of the thoughts. But after all, I have never found myself able to use old skeletons in preaching, to any considerable extent, without remodelling them, and having a fresh and new view of the subject given me by the Holy Spirit. I almost always get my subjects on my knees in prayer; and it has been a common experience with me, upon receiving a subject from the Holy Spirit, to have it make so strong an impression on my mind as to make me tremble, so that I could with difficulty write. When subjects are thus given me that seem to go through me, body and soul, I can in a few moments make out a skeleton that shall enable me to retain the view presented by the Spirit; and I find that such sermons always tell with great power upon the people.

Some of the most telling sermons that I have ever preached in Oberlin, I have thus received after the bell had rung for church; and I was obliged to go and pour them off from my full heart, without jotting down more than the briefest possible skeleton, and that sometimes not covering half the ground that I covered in my sermon.

I tell this, not boastfully, but because it is a fact, and to give the praise to God, and not to any talents of my own. Let no man think that those sermons which have been called so powerful, were productions of my own brain, or of my own heart, unassisted by the Holy Ghost. They were not mine, but from the Holy Spirit in me.

And let no man say that this is claiming a higher inspiration than is promised to ministers, or than ministers have a right to expect. For I believe that all ministers, called by Christ to preach the Gospel, ought to be, and may be, in such a sense inspired, as to "preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." What else did Christ mean when he said, "Go and disciple all nations; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?" What did he mean when he said, speaking of the Holy Spirit, "He shall take of mine and show it unto you?" "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you?" What did he mean when he said, "If any man believe in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water?" "This spake he of the Spirit, that they which believe on him should receive." All ministers may be, and ought to be, so filled with the Holy Spirit that all who hear them shall be impressed with the conviction that "God is in them of a truth."

[Two page hand written sermon outline -- NOT READABLE - aal]

NOTE.—Here we present a facsimile of one of Mr. Finney's "skeletons"—taken at random from the hundreds which he has left.—EDITOR

[Chapter 8 omitted - aal].

CHAPTER 9

RETURN TO EVANS' MILLS

At this time I was earnestly pressed to remain at Evans' Mills, and finally gave them encouragement that I would abide with them, at least one year. Being engaged to marry, I went from there to Whitestown, Oneida county, and was married in October; 1824. My wife had made preparations for housekeeping; and a day or two after our marriage I left her, and returned to Evans' Mills, to obtain conveyance to transport our goods to that place. I told her that she might expect me back in about a week.

The fall previous to this, I had preached a few times, in the evening, at a place called Perch River, still farther north-west from Evans' Mills about a dozen miles. I spent one Sabbath at Evals' Mills, and intended to return for my wife, about the middle of that week. But a messenger from Perch River came up that Sabbath, and said there had been a revival working its way slowly among the people ever since I preached there; and he begged me to go down and preach there, at least once more. I finally sent an appointment to be there Tuesday night. But I found the interest so deep that I stayed and preached Wednesday night, and Thursday night; and I finally gave up returning that week, for my wife, and continued to preach in that neighborhood.

The revival soon spread in the direction of Brownville, a considerable village several miles, I think, in a southwestern direction from that place. Finally, under the pressing invitation of the minister and church at Brownville, I went there and spent the winter, having written to my wife, that such were the circumstances that I must defer coming for her, until God seemed to open the way.

At Brownville there was a very interesting work. But still the church was in such a state that it was very difficult to get them into the work. I could not find much that seemed to me to be sound-hearted piety; and the policy of the minister was really such as to forbid anything like a general sweep of a revival. I labored there that winter with great pain, and had many serious obstacles to overcome. Sometimes I would find that the minister and his wife were away from our meetings, and would learn afterwards that they had stayed away to attend a party.

I was the guest at that place of a Mr. B___, one of the elders of the church, and the most intimate and influential friend of the minister. One day as I came down from my room, and was going out to call on some inquirers, I met Mr. B___ in the hall; and he said to me, "Mr. Finney, what should you think of a man that was praying week after week for the Holy Spirit, and could get no answer?" I replied that I should think he was praying from false motives. "But from what motives," said he, "should a man pray? If he wants to be happy, is that a false motive?" I replied, "Satan might pray with as good a motive as that;" and then quoted the words of the Psalmist: "Uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." "See!" said I, "the Psalmist did not pray for the Holy Spirit that he might be happy, but that he might be useful, and that sinners might be converted to Christ." I said this and turned and went immediately out; and he turned very short and went back to his room.

I remained out till dinner time; and when I returned, he met me, and immediately began to confess. "Mr. Finney," said he, "I owe you a confession. I was angry when you said that to me; and I must confess that I hoped I should never see you again. What you said," he continued, "forced the conviction upon me, that I never had been converted, that I never had had any higher motive than a mere selfish desire for my own happiness. I went away," said he, "after you left the house, and prayed to God to take my life. I could not endure to have it known that I had always been deceived. I have been most intimate with our minister. I have journeyed with him, and slept with him, and conversed with him, and have been more intimate with him than any other member of the church; and yet I saw that I had always been a deceived hypocrite. The mortification was intolerable; and," said he, "I wanted to die, and prayed the Lord to take my life." However, he was all broken down then, and from that time became a new man.

That conversion did a great deal of good. I might relate many other interesting facts connected with this revival; but as there were so many things that pained me, in regard to the relation of the pastor to it, and especially of the pastor's wife, I will forbear.

Early in the spring, 1825, I left Brownville, with my horse and cutter, to go after my wife. I had been absent six months since our marriage; and as mails then were between us, we had seldom been able to exchange letters. I drove on some fifteen miles, and the roads were very slippery. My horse was smooth shod, and I found I must have his shoes re-set. I stopped at Le Rayville, a small village about three miles south of Evans' Mills. While my horse was being shod, the people finding that I was there,

ran to me, and wanted to know if I would not preach, at one o'clock, in the school-house; for they had no meeting-house.

At one o'clock the house was packed; and while I preached, the Spirit of God came down with great power upon the people. So great and manifest was the out-pouring of the Spirit, that in compliance with their earnest entreaty I concluded to spend the night there, and preach again in the evening. But the work increased more and more; and in the evening I appointed another meeting in the morning, and in the morning I appointed another in the evening; and soon I saw that I should not be able to go any farther after my wife. I told a brother that if he would take my horse and cutter and go after my wife, I would remain. He did so, and I went on preaching, from day to day, and from night to night; and there was a powerful revival.

I should have said that, while I was at Brownville, God revealed to me, all at once, in a most unexpected manner, the fact that he was going to pour out his Spirit at Gouverneur, and that I must go there and preach. Of the place I knew absolutely nothing, except that, in that town there was so much opposition manifested to the revival in Antwerp, the year before. I can never tell how, or why, the Spirit of God made that revelation to me. But I knew then, and I have no doubt now, that it was a direct revelation from God to me . I had not thought of the place, that I know of, for months; but in prayer the thing was all shown to me, as clear as light, that I must go and preach in Gouverneur, and that God would pour out his Spirit there.

Very soon after this, I saw one of the members of the church from Gouverneur, who was passing through Brownville. I told him what God had revealed to me. He stared at me as if he supposed that I was insane. But I charged him to go home, and tell the brethren what I said, that they might prepare themselves for my coming, and for the outpouring of the Lord's Spirit. From him I learned that they had no minister; that there were two churches and two meeting houses, in the town, standing near together; that the Baptists had a minister, and the Presbyterians no minister; that an elderly minister lived there who had formerly been their pastor, but had been dismissed; and that they were having, in the Presbyterian church, no regular Sabbath services. From what he said, I gathered that religion was in a very low state; and he himself was as cold as an iceberg.

But now I return to my labors in Le Rayville. After laboring there a few weeks, the great mass of the inhabitants were converted; and among the rest Judge C____, a man in point of influence, standing head and shoulders above all the people around him. My wife arrived, of course, a few days after I sent for her; and we accepted the invitation of Judge C____ and his wife, to become their guests. But after a few weeks, the people urged me to go and preach in a Baptist church in the town of Rutland, where Rutland joins Le Ray. I made an appointment to preach there one afternoon. The weather had become warm, and I walked over, through a pine grove, about three miles to their place of worship. I arrived early, and found the house open, but nobody there. I was warm from having walked so far, and went in and took my seat near the broad aisle, in the center of the house. Very soon people began to come in and take their seats here and there, scattered over the house. Soon the number increased so that they were coming continually. I sat still; and, being an entire stranger there, no person came in that I knew, and I presume that no person that came in knew me.

Presently a young woman came in, who had two or three tall plumes in her bonnet, and was rather gaily dressed. She was slender, tall, dignified, and decidedly handsome. I observed, as soon as she came in, that she waved her head and gave a very graceful motion to her plumes. She came as it were sailing around, and up the broad aisle toward where I sat, mincing as she came, at every step, waving her great plumes most gracefully, looking around just enough to see the impression she was making. For such a place the whole thing was so peculiar that it struck me very much. She entered a slip directly behind me, in which, at the time, nobody was sitting. Thus we were near together, but each occupying a separate slip. I turned partly around, and looked at her from head to foot. She saw that I was observing her critically, and looked a little abashed. In a low voice I said to her, very earnestly, "Did you come in here to divide the worship of God's house, to make people worship you, to get their attention away from God and his worship?" This made her writhe; and I followed her up, in a voice so low that nobody else heard me, but I made her hear me distinctly. She quailed under the rebuke, and could not hold up her

head. She began to tremble, and when I had said enough to fasten the thought of her insufferable vanity on her mind, I arose and went into the pulpit. As soon as she saw me go into the pulpit, and that I was the minister that was about to preach, her agitation began to increase—so much so as to attract the attention of those around her. The house was soon full, and I took a text and went on to preach.

The Spirit of the Lord was evidently poured out on the congregation; and at the close of the sermon, I did what I do not know I had ever done before, called upon any who would give their hearts to God, to come forward and take the front seat. The moment I made the call, this young woman was the first to arise. She burst out into the aisle, and came forward, like a person in a state of desperation. She seemed to have lost all sense of the presence of anybody but God. She came rushing forward to the front seats, until she finally fell in the aisle, and shrieked with agony. A large number arose in different parts of the house and came forward; and a goodly number appeared to give their hearts to God upon the spot, and among them this young woman. On inquiry I found that she was rather the belle of the place; that she was an agreeable girl, but was regarded by everybody as very vain and dressy.

Many years afterwards, I saw a man who called my attention to that meeting. I inquired after this young woman. He informed me that he knew her well; that she still resided there, was married, and was a very useful woman; and had always, from that time, been a very earnest Christian.

I preached a few times at this place, and then the question of Gouverneur came up again; a God seemed to say to me, "Go to Gouverneur; the time has come." Brother Nash had come a few days before this, and was spending some time with me. At the time of this last call to Gouverneur. I had some two or three appointments ahead, in that part of Rutland. I said therefore to brother Nash, "You must go to Gouverneur and see what is there, and come back and make your report."

He started the next morning, and after he had been gone two or three days, returned, saying, that he had found a good many professors of religion, under considerable exercise of mind, and that he was confident that there was a good deal of the Spirit of the Lord among the people; but that they were not aware what the state of things really was. I then informed the people where I was preaching, that I was called to Gouverneur, and could make no more appointments to preach in that place. I requested Brother Nash to return immediately, informing the people that they might expect me on a certain day that week.

CHAPTER 10

REVIVAL AT GOUVERNEUR

Brother Nash accordingly returned the next day, and made the appointment as I desired. I had to ride nearly thirty miles, I believe, to reach the place. In the morning it rained very hard; but the rain abated in time for me to ride to Antwerp. While I was getting dinner at that place, the rain came on again, and literally poured, until quite late in the afternoon. It seemed in the morning before I started, and at noon, that I should not be able to reach my appointment. However; the rain abated again, in time for me to ride rapidly to Gouverneur. I found that the people had given up expecting me that day, in consequence of the great rain.

Before I reached the village, I met a Mr. S___, one of the principal members of the church, returning from the church meeting to his house, which I had just passed. He stopped his carriage, and, addressing me, said, "Is this Mr. Finney?" After my reply in the affirmative, he says, "Please to go back to my house, for I shall insist on your being my guest. You are fatigued with the long ride and the roads are so bad, you will not have any meeting tonight." I replied that I must fulfil my appointment, and asked him if the church meeting had adjourned. He said it had not, when he left; and he thought it possible I might reach the village before they would dismiss.

I rode rapidly on, alighted at the meeting house door and hurried in. Brother Nash stood in front of the pulpit, having just risen up to dismiss the meeting. On seeing me enter, he held up his hands, and waited till I came near the pulpit, and then he took me right in his arms. After thus embracing me, he introduced me to the congregation. In a word I informed them that I had come to fulfil my appointment; and, the Lord willing, I would preach at a certain hour which I named.

When the hour arrived, the house was filled. The people had heard enough, for and against me, to have their curiosity excited, and there was a general turning out. The Lord gave me a text, and I went into the pulpit and let my heart out to the people. The word took powerful effect. That was very manifest to everybody, I think. I dismissed the meeting, and that night got some rest.

The village hotel was at that time kept by a Dr. S___, an avowed Universalist. The next morning I went out, as usual, to call on the people, and converse with them about their souls, and found the village excited. After making a few calls, I dropped into a tailor's shop, where I found a number of people discussing the subject of the sermon the night before.

Dr. S___, at that time, I had never heard of; but I found him among the number at this tailor's shop, and defending his Universalist sentiments. As I went in, the remarks that were made immediately opened the conversation; and Dr. S___ stepped forward, manifestly sustained by the whole influence of his comrades, to dispute the positions that I had advanced, and to maintain, as opposed to them, the doctrine of universal salvation. Somebody introduced him to me; and I said to him, "Doctor, I should be very happy to converse with you about your views; but if we are going to have a conversation, we must first agree upon the method upon which we are going to discuss." I was too much used to discussing with Universalists, to expect any good to come from it, unless certain terms were agreed upon and adhered to, in the discussion. I proposed, therefore, first that we should take up one point at a time, and discuss it till we had settled it, or had no more to say upon it, and then another, and another, confining ourselves to the point immediately in debate; secondly, that we should not interrupt each other, but each one should be at liberty to give his views upon the point, without interruption; and thirdly, that there should be no cavilling or mere banter, but that we should observe candor and courtesy, and give to every argument due weight, on whichever side it was presented. I knew they were all of one way of thinking; and I could easily see that they were banded together, and had come together that morning, for the sake of sustaining each other in their views.

Having settled the preliminaries, we commenced the argument. It did not take long to demolish every position that he assumed. He really knew but little of the Bible. He had a way of disposing of the principal passages, as he remembered them, that are generally arrayed against the doctrine of Universalism. But, as Universalists always do, he dwelt mainly on the utter injustice of endless punishment.

I soon showed him, and those around him, that he had but slender ground to stand on, so far as the Bible was concerned; and he very soon took the position, that whatever the Bible said about it, endless punishment was unjust; and that therefore, if the Bible threatened men with endless punishment, it could not be true. This settled the question, so far as the Bible was concerned. In fact I could easily see that they were all skeptics, and would not at all give in because they saw that the Bible contradicted their views. I then closed in with him on the justice of endless punishment. I saw that his friends became agitated, and felt as if the foundations were giving away under them. Pretty soon one of them went out; and as I proceeded, another went out, and finally they all forsook him, seeing, as they must have done, one after the other, that he was utterly wrong.

He had been their leader; and God gave me thus an opportunity to use him entirely up, in the presence of his followers. When he had nothing more to say, I urged upon him with warmth, the question of immediate attention to salvation, and very kindly bid him good morning, and went away, feeling sure that I should soon hear from that conversation again.

The doctor's wife was a christian woman, and a member of the church. She told me a day or two after, that the Doctor came home from that conversation apparently greatly agitated, though she did not know where he had been. He would walk the room, and then sit down, but could not remain sitting. He would thus walk and sit alternately; and she could see in his countenance that he was greatly troubled. She said to him, " Doctor, what is the matter? " " Nothing," was his reply. But his agitation increased; and she inquired again, " Doctor, do tell me what is the matter." She suspected that he had somewhere fallen in with me; and she said to him, "Doctor, have you seen Mr. Finney this morning?" This brought him to a stand; and he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Yes! and he has turned my weapons on my own head!" His agony became intense; and as soon as the way was opened for him to sneak out, he surrendered himself up to his convictions, and soon after expressed hope in Christ. In a few days his companions were brought in, one after the other, till, I believe, the revival made a clean sweep of them.

I have said that there was a Baptist church, and a Presbyterian, each having, a meeting house standing upon the green, not far apart; and that the Baptist church had a pastor, but the Presbyterian had none. As soon as the revival broke out, and attracted general attention, the Baptist brethren began to oppose it. They spoke against it, and used every objectionable means indeed to arrest its progress. This encouraged a set of young men to join hand in hand, to strengthen each other in opposition to the work. The Baptist church was quite influential; and the stand that they took greatly emboldened the opposition, and seemed to give it a peculiar bitterness and strength, as might be expected. Those young men seemed to stand like a bulwark in the way of the progress of the work.

In this state of things, brother Nash and myself, after consultation, made up our minds that the thing must be overcome by prayer, and that it could not be reached in any other way. We therefore retired to a grove and gave ourselves up to prayer until we prevailed, and we felt confident that no power which earth or hell could interpose, would be allowed permanently to stop the revival.

The next Sabbath, after preaching morning and afternoon myself—for I did the preaching altogether, and brother Nash gave himself up almost continually to prayer—we met at five o'clock in the church, for a prayer meeting. The meeting-house was filled. Near the close of the meeting, brother Nash arose, and addressed that company of young men who had joined hand in hand to resist the revival. I believe they were all there, and they sat braced up against the Spirit of God. It was too solemn for them really to make ridicule of what they heard and saw; and yet their brazen-facedness and stiff-neckedness were apparent to everybody.

Brother Nash addressed them very earnestly, and pointed out the guilt and danger of the course they were taking. Toward the close of his address, he waxed exceeding warm, and said to them, "Now, mark me, young men! God will break your ranks in less than one week, either by converting some of you, or by sending some of you to hell. He will do this as certainly as the Lord is my God!" He was standing where he brought his hand down on the top of the pew before him, so as to make it thoroughly jar. He sat immediately down, dropped his head, and groaned with pain.

The house was as still as death, and most of the people held down their heads. I could see that the young men were agitated. For myself, I regretted that brother Nash had gone so far. He had committed himself, that God would either take the life of some of them, and send them to hell, or convert some of them, within a week. However, on Tuesday morning of the same week, the leader of these young men came to me, in the greatest distress of mind. He was all prepared to submit; and as soon as I came to press him he broke down like a child, confessed, and manifestly gave himself to Christ. Then he said, "What shall I do, Mr. Finney?" I replied "Go immediately to all your young companions, and pray with them, and exhort them, at once to turn to the Lord." He did so; and before the week was out, nearly if not all of that class of young men, were hoping in Christ.

There was a merchant living in the village by the name of S____. He was a very amiable man, a gentleman, but a deist. His wife was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. She was his second wife; and his first had also been the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. He had thus married into two ministers' families. His fathers-in-law had taken the greatest pains to secure his conversion to Christ. He was a reading, reflective man. Both of his fathers-in-law were old school Presbyterians, and had put into his hands the class of books that presented their peculiar views. This had greatly stumbled him; and the more he had read, the more he was fixed in his convictions that the Bible was a fable.

His wife urgently entreated me to come and converse with her husband. She informed me of his views, and of the pains that had been taken to lead him to embrace the Christian religion. But she said he was so firmly settled in his views, she did not know that any conversation could meet the case. Nevertheless, I promised to call and see him, and did so. His store was in the front part of the building in which they resided. She went into the store, and requested him to come in. He declined. He said it would do no good; that he had talked with ministers enough; that he knew just what I would say, beforehand, and he could not spend the time; beside, it was very repulsive to his feelings. She replied to him, "Mr. S____, you have never been in the habit of treating ministers, who called to see you, in this way. I have invited Mr. Finney to call and see you, to have a conversation on the subject of religion; and I shall be greatly grieved and mortified, if you decline to see him.

He greatly respected and loved his wife; and she was indeed a gem of a woman. To oblige her, he consented to come in. Mrs. S____ introduced me to him, and left the room. I then said to him, "Mr. S____, I have not come in here to have any dispute with you at all; but if you are willing to converse, it is possible that I may suggest something that may help you over some of your difficulties, in regard to

the Christian religion, as I probably have felt them all myself." As I addressed him in great kindness, he immediately seemed to feel at home with me, and sat down near me and said, "Now, Mr. Finney, there is no need of our having a long conversation on this point. We are both of us so familiar with the arguments, on both sides, that I can state to you, in a very few minutes, just the objections to the Christian religion on which I rest, and which I find myself utterly unable to overcome. I suppose I know beforehand how you will answer them, and that the answer will be utterly unsatisfactory to me. But if you desire it, I will state them."

I begged him to do so; and he began, as nearly as I can recollect, in this way: "You and I agree in believing in the existence of God." "Yes." "Well, we agree that he is infinitely wise, and good, and powerful." "Yes." "We agree that he has, in our very creation, given us certain irresistible convictions of right and wrong, of justice and injustice." "Yes." "Well, we agree, then, that whatever contravenes our irresistible convictions of justice, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said. "What, according to our irresistible convictions, is neither wise nor good, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said, "we agree in that." "Well now," said he, "the Bible teaches us that God has created us with a sinful nature, or that we come into existence totally sinful and incapable of any good, and this in accordance with certain preestablished laws of which God is the author; that notwithstanding this sinful nature, which is utterly incapable of any good, God commands us to obey him, and to be good, when to do so is utterly impossible to us; and he commands this on pain of eternal death."

I replied, "Mr. S____, have you a Bible? Will you not turn to the passage that teaches this?" "Why, there is no need of that," he says; "you admit that the Bible teaches it." "No," I said, "I do not believe any such thing." "Then," he continued, "the Bible teaches that God has imputed Adam's sin to all his posterity; that we inherit the guilt of that sin by nature, and are exposed to eternal damnation for the guilt of Adam's sin. Now," said he, "I do not care who says it, or what book teaches such a thing, I know that such teaching cannot be from God. This is a direct contradiction of my irresistible convictions of right and justice." "Yes," I replied, "and so it is directly in contradiction of my own. But now," said I, "where is this taught in the Bible?"

He began to quote the catechism, as he had done before. "But," I replied, "that is catechism, not Bible." "Why," said he, "you are a Presbyterian minister, are you not? I thought the catechism was good authority for you." "No," I said; "we are talking about the Bible now—whether the Bible is true. Can you say that this is the doctrine of the Bible?" "Oh," he said, "if you are going to deny that it is taught in the Bible—why, that is taking such ground as I never knew a Presbyterian minister to take." He then proceeded to say that the Bible commanded men to repent, but at the same time taught them that they could not repent; it commanded them to obey and believe, and yet at the same time taught them that this was impossible. I of course closed with him again, and asked him where these things were taught in the Bible. He quoted catechism; but I would not receive it.

He went on to say that the Bible taught also, that Christ died only for the elect; and yet it commanded all men everywhere, whether elect or non-elect, to believe, on pain of eternal death. "The fact is," said he, "the Bible, in its commands and teachings, contravenes my innate sense of justice at every step. I cannot, I will not receive it!" He became very positive and warm. But I said to him: "Mr. S____, there is a mistake in this. These are not the teachings of the Bible. They are the traditions of men rather than the teachings of the Bible." "Well then," said he, "Mr. Finney, do tell me what you do believe!" This he said with a considerable degree of impatience. I said to him, "If you will give me a hearing for a few moments, I will tell you what I do believe. I then began and told him what my views of both the law and the gospel were. He was intelligent enough to understand me easily and quickly. In the course of an hour, I should think, I took him over the whole ground of his objections. He became intensely interested; and I saw that the views that I was presenting, were new to him.

When I came to dwell upon the atonement, and showed that it was made for all men—dwelt upon its nature, its design, its extent, and the freeness of salvation through Christ, I saw his feelings rise, till at last he put both hands over his face, threw his head forward upon his knees, and trembled all over with emotion. I saw that the blood rushed to his head, and that the tears began to flow freely. I rose quickly and left the room without saying another word. I saw that an arrow had transfixed him, and I expected him to be converted immediately. It turned out that he was converted before he left the room.

Very soon after, the meeting-house bell tolled for a prayer and conference meeting. I went into the meeting and soon after the meeting commenced, Mr. and Mrs. S____ came in. His countenance showed that he had been greatly moved. The people looked around, and appeared surprised to see Mr.

S_____ come into a prayer meeting. He had always been in the habit of attending worship on the Sabbath, I believe; but to come into a prayer meeting, and that in the daytime, was something new. For his sake, I took up a good deal of the time, at that meeting, in remarks, to which he paid the utmost attention.

His wife afterward told me, that as he walked home when the prayer meeting was over, he said, "My dear, where has all my infidelity gone? I cannot recall it. I cannot make it look as if it had any sense in it. It appears to me as if it always had been perfect nonsense. And how I could ever have viewed the subject as I did, or respected my own arguments as I did, I cannot imagine. It seems to me," said he, "as if I had been called to pass judgment on some splendid piece of architecture, some magnificent temple; and that as soon as I came in view of one corner of the structure, I fell into disgust, and turned away and refused to inspect it farther. I condemned the whole, without at all regarding its proportions. Just so I have treated the government of God." She said he had always been particularly bitter against the doctrine of endless punishment. But on this occasion, as they were walking home, he said that, for the manner in which he had treated God, he deserved endless damnation.

His conversion was very clear and decided. He warmly espoused the cause of Christ, and enlisted heartily in the promotion of the revival. He joined the church, and soon after became a deacon; and to the day of his death, as I have been told, was a very useful man.

After the conversion of Mr. S_____, and of that class of young men to whom I have alluded, I thought it was time, if possible, to put a stop to the opposition of the Baptist church and minister. I therefore had an interview first with a deacon of the Baptist church, who had been very bitter in his opposition; and said to him, "Now you have carried your opposition far enough. You must be satisfied that this is the work of God. I have made no allusion in public to your opposition, and I do not wish to do so, or to appear to know that there is any such thing; but you have gone far enough; and I shall feel it my duty, if you do not stop immediately, to take you in hand, and expose your opposition from the pulpit." Things had got into such a state that I was sure that both God and the public would sustain me in carrying out the measure that I proposed.

He confessed, and said that he was sorry; and promised that he would make confession, and that he would not oppose the work any more. He said that he had made a great mistake, and had been deceived; but that he also had been very wicked about it. He then went after his minister; and I had a long conversation with them together. The minister confessed that he had been all wrong; that he had been deceived, and had been wicked; and that his sectarian feeling had carried him too far. He hoped that I would forgive him, and prayed God to forgive him. I told him that I should take no notice whatever of the opposition of his church, provided they stopped it; which they promised to do.

But I then said to him, "Now a considerable number of the young people, whose parents belong to your church, have been converted." If I recollect right, as many as forty of their young people had been converted in that revival. "Now," said I, "if you go to proselytizing, that will create a sectarian feeling in both churches, and will be worse than any opposition which you have offered." I said to him, "In spite of your opposition, the work has gone on; because the Presbyterian brethren have kept clear of a sectarian spirit, and have had the spirit of prayer. But if you go to proselytizing, it will destroy the spirit of prayer; and will stop the revival immediately." He knew it, he said; and therefore he would say nothing about receiving any of the converts, and would not open the doors of the church for their reception, until the revival was over; and then, without any proselytizing, let the converts all join which church they pleased.

This was on Friday. The next day, Saturday, was the day for their monthly covenant meeting. When they had gathered, instead of keeping his word, he threw the doors of the church open and invited the converts to come forward and tell their experience and join the church. As many as could be persuaded to do so, told their experience; and the next day there was a great parade in baptizing them. The minister sent off immediately, and secured the help of one of the most proselytizing Baptist ministers that I ever knew. He came in and began to preach and lecture on baptism.

They traversed the town for converts in every direction; and whenever they could find any one to join, they would get up a procession, and march, and sing, and make a great parade in going to the water and baptizing them. This soon so grieved the Presbyterian church, as to destroy their spirit of prayer and faith, and the work came to a dead stand. For six weeks there was not a single conversion. All, both saints and sinners, were discussing the question of baptism.

There was a considerable number of men, and some of them prominent men, in the village, that had been under strong conviction, and appeared to be near conversion, who had been entirely diverted by this discussion of baptism; and indeed, this seemed to be the universal effect. Everybody could see that the revival had stopped; and that the Baptists, although they had opposed the revival from the beginning, were bent upon having all the converts join their church. However, I think that a majority of those converted, could not be persuaded to be immersed, although nothing had been said to them on the other side.

I finally said to the people on the Sabbath, "You see how it is—that the work of conversion is suspended, and we do not know that a conversion has occurred now for six weeks; and you know the reason." I did not tell them, at all, how the pastor of the Baptist church had violated his word, nor did I allude to it; for I knew that it would do no good, but much hurt, to inform the people that he had been guilty of taking such a course. But I said to them, "Now I do not want to take up a Sabbath in preaching on this subject; but if you will come on Wednesday afternoon at one o'clock, and bring your Bibles, and your lead pencils to mark the passages? I will read to you all the passages in the Bible that relate to the mode of baptism; and I will give you as nearly as I understand them, the views of our Baptist brethren on all those passages, together with my own; and you shall judge for yourselves where the truth lies.

When Wednesday came, the house was crowded. I saw quite a number of the Baptist brethren present. I began and read, first in the Old Testament, and then in the New, all the passages that had any reference to the mode of baptism, so far as I knew. I gave the views that the Baptists had of those texts, and the reasons for their views. I then gave my own views, and my reasons for them. I saw that the impression was decided and good, and that no bad spirit prevailed; and the people appeared satisfied in regard to the mode of baptism. The Baptist brethren, so far as I know, were quite satisfied that I stated their views fairly, and as strongly as they could state them themselves, and also their reasons for them. Before I dismissed the meeting I said, "If you will come tomorrow, at the same hour, at one o'clock, I will read to you all the passages in the Bible that relate to the subjects of baptism, and pursue the same course as I have done today."

The next day the house was crowded, if possible more than the day before. Quite a number of the principal Baptist brethren were present; and I observed the old elder, the great proselyter, sitting in the congregation. After going through with the introductory services, I arose and commenced my reading. At this point the elder arose and said, "Mr. Finney, I have an appointment, and cannot stay to hear your readings. But I shall wish to answer you; and how shall I know what course you take?" I replied to him: "Elder, I have before me a little skeleton, wherein I quote all the passages that I shall read, and note the order in which I discuss the subject. You can have my skeleton, if you please, and reply to it." He then went out, and, as I supposed, went away to attend his appointment.

I then took up the covenant made with Abraham; and read every thing in the old Testament that directly bore upon the question of the relation of families and of children, to that covenant. I gave the Baptist view of the passages that I read, together with my own, with the reasons on both sides, as I had done the day before. I then took up the New Testament, and went through with all the passages in that, referring to the subject. The people waxed very mellow; and the tears flowed very freely when I held up that covenant, as still the covenant which God makes with parents and their household. The congregation was much moved and melted.

Just before I was through, the deacon of the Presbyterian church had occasion to go out, with a child that had sat with him during the long meeting. He told me afterwards that, as he went into the vestibule of the church, he found the old elder sitting there with the door ajar, and listening to what I was saying, and absolutely weeping himself.

When I was done, the people thronged around me on every side, and with tears thanked me for so full and satisfactory an exhibition of that subject. I should have said that the meeting was attended, not only by members of the church, but by the community generally. The question was intelligently settled, and soon the people ceased to talk about it. In the course of a few days the spirit of prayer returned, and the revival was revived and went on again with great power. Not long after, the ordinances were administered, and a large number of the converts united with the church.

I have already intimated that I was a guest of Mr. S____. He had a very interesting family. He and his wife,—called by everybody, "Aunt Lucy"—had no children of their own; but they had, from time to time,

through the yearnings of their hearts, adopted one child after another, until they had ten; and they were so nearly of an age that, at this time, his family was composed of himself, and "Aunt Lucy," his wife, and ten young people, I think about equally divided, young men and young women. They were all soon converted, and their conversions were very striking. They were bright converts, and very intelligent young people; and a happier and more lovely family I never saw than they were when they were all converted.

But Aunt Lucy had been converted under other circumstances, when there was no revival; and she had never before seen the freshness, and strength, and joy of converts in a powerful revival. Their faith and love, their joy and peace, completely stumbled her. She began to think that she was never converted; and although she had given herself, heart and soul, to the promotion of the work, yet, right in the midst of it, she fell into despair, in spite of all that could be said or done. She concluded that she never had been converted, and of course that she never could be.

This introduced into the family a matter of great pain and concern. Her husband thought she would go deranged. The young people, who all regarded her as a mother, were filled with concern about her; and indeed the house was thrown into mourning. Mr. S____ gave up his time to converse and to pray with her, and to try to revive her hope. I had several conversations with her; but in the great light which the experience of those young converts, to which she was daily listening, threw around her, she could not be persuaded to believe, either that she ever was converted, or ever could be.

This state of things continued day after day, till I began myself to think that she would be deranged. The street on which they lived was a thickly settled street, almost a village, for some three miles in extent. The work had extended on that street until there was but one adult unconverted person left. He was a young man, by the name of B____ H____, and he was almost frantic in his opposition to the work. Almost the whole neighborhood gave themselves to prayer for this young man, and his case was in almost everybody's mouth.

One day I came in, and found Aunt Lucy taking on very much about this B____ H____. "Oh dear!" she said; "what will become of him? Why, Mr. S____! he will certainly lose his soul! What will become of him?" She seemed to be in the greatest agony, lest that young man should lose his soul. I listened to her for a few moments, and then looked gravely at her, and said: "Aunt Lucy, when you and B____ H____ die, God will have to make a partition in hell, and give you a room by yourself." She opened her large blue eyes, and looked at me with a reproving look. "Why, Mr. Finney!" said she. "Just so," I said. "Do you think God will be guilty of so great an impropriety, as to put you and B____ H____ in the same place? Here he is, raving against God; and you are almost insane in feeling the abuse which he heaps upon God, and with the fear that he is going to hell. Now can two such persons, in two such opposite states of mind, do you think, be sent to the same place?" I calmly met her reproving gaze, and looked her steadily in the face. In a few moments her features relaxed, and she smiled, the first time for many days. "It is just so, my dear," said Mr. S____, "just so. How can you and B____ H____ go to the same place?" She laughed and said, "We cannot." From that moment her despair cleared up; and she came out clear, and as happy as any of the young converts. This B____ H____ was afterward converted.

About three-quarters of a mile from Mr. S____'s lived a Mr. M____, who was a strong Universalist, and, for a considerable time, kept away from our meetings. One morning, Father Nash, who was at the time with me at Mr. S____'s, rose up, as his custom was, at a very early hour; and went back to a grove some fifty rods, perhaps, from the road, to have a season of prayer alone. It was before sunrise; and brother Nash, as usual, became very much engaged in prayer. It was one of those clear mornings, on which it is possible to hear sounds a great distance. Mr. M____ had risen, and was out of doors at that early hour in the morning, and heard the voice of prayer. He listened, and could distinctly hear Father Nash's voice. He knew it was prayer, he afterward said; though he could not distinguish much that was said. He, however, said that he knew what it was, and who it was. And it lodged an arrow in his heart. He said it brought a sense of the reality of religion over him, such as he never had experienced before. The arrow was fastened. He found no relief, till he found it in believing in Jesus.

I do not know the number of those converted in that revival. It was a large farming town, settled by well-to-do inhabitants. The great majority of them, I am confident, were, in that revival, converted to Christ.

I have not been in that place for many years. But I have often heard from there; and have always understood that there has been a very healthful state of religion in that place, and that they have never had anything like a discussion on the subject of baptism since.

The doctrines preached in promoting that revival, were those that I have preached everywhere. The total moral, voluntary depravity of unregenerate man; the necessity of a radical change of heart, through the truth, by the agency of the Holy Ghost; the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; his vicarious atonement, equal to the wants of all mankind; the gift, divinity and agency of the Holy Ghost: repentance, faith, justification by faith, SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH; PERSISTENCE IN HOLINESS AS A CONDITION OF SALVATION; indeed all the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, were stated and set forth with as much clearness, and point, and power, as were possible to me under the circumstances.

A great spirit of prayer prevailed; and after the discussion on baptism, a spirit of most interesting unity, brotherly love, and Christian fellowship prevailed. I never had occasion finally, to rebuke the opposition of the Baptist brethren publicly. In my readings on the subject of baptism, the Lord enabled me to maintain such a spirit that no controversy was started, and no controversial spirit prevailed. The discussion produced no evil result, but great good, and, so far as I could see, only good.

CHAPTER 11

REVIVAL AT DE KALB

From Gouverneur I went to De Kalb, another village still farther north, some sixteen miles, I think. Here were a Presbyterian church and minister; but the church was small, and the minister seemed not to have a very strong hold upon the people. However, I think he was decidedly a good man. I began to hold meetings in De Kalb, in different parts of the town. The village was small and the people were very much scattered. The country was new, and the roads were new and bad. But a revival commenced immediately, and went forward with a good deal of power, for a place where the inhabitants were so much scattered.

A few years before, there had been a revival there under the labors of the Methodists. It had been attended with a good deal of excitement; and many cases had occurred of, what the Methodists call, "Falling under the power of God." This the Presbyterians had resisted, and, in consequence, a bad state of feeling had arisen, between the Methodists and the Presbyterians; the Methodists accusing the Presbyterians of having opposed the revival among them because of these cases of falling. As nearly as I could learn, there was a good deal of truth in this, and the Presbyterians had been decidedly in error.

I had not preached long, before, one evening, just at the close of sermon, I observed a man fall from his seat near the door; and the people gathered around him to take care of him. From what I saw, I was satisfied that it was a case of falling under the power of God, as the Methodists would express it, and supposed that it was a Methodist. I must say that I had a little fear that it might reproduce that state of division and alienation that had before existed. But on inquiry I learned that it was one of the principal members the Presbyterian church, that had fallen. And it was remarkable that during this revival, there were several cases of this kind among the Presbyterians, and none a among the Methodists. This led to such confessions and explanations among the members of the different churches, as to secure a state of great cordiality and good feeling among them.

While laboring at De Kalb, I first became acquainted with Mr. F____, of Ogdensburgh. He heard of the revival in De Kalb, and came from Ogdensburgh, some sixteen miles, to see it. He was wealthy, and very benevolent. He proposed to employ me as his missionary, to work in the towns throughout that county, and he would pay me a salary. However I declined to pledge myself to preach in any particular place, or to confine my labors within any given lines.

Mr. F____ spent several days with me, in visiting from house to house, and in attending our meetings. He had been educated in Philadelphia, an old school Presbyterian, was himself an elder in the

Presbyterian church in Ogdensburgh. On going away, he left a letter for me, containing three ten dollar bills. A few days later he came up again, and spent two or three days, and attended our meetings, and became very much interested in the work. When he went away he left another letter, containing, as before, three ten dollar bills. Thus I found myself possessed of sixty dollars, with which I immediately purchased a buggy. Before this time, though I had a horse, I had no carriage; and my young wife and myself used to go a good deal on foot, to meeting.

The revival took a very strong hold of the church in this place; and among others, one of the elders of the church, by the name of B___, was thoroughly broken up and broken down, and became quite another man. The impression deepened on the public mind from day to day.

One Saturday, just before evening, a German merchant tailor, from Ogdensburgh, by the name of F___, called on me, and informed me that Squire F___ had sent him from Ogdensburgh, to take my measure for a suit of clothes. I had begun to need clothes, and had once, not long before, spoken to the Lord about it, that my clothes were getting shabby; but it had not occurred to me again. Mr. F___, however, had observed it; and sent this man, who was a Roman Catholic, to take my measure. I asked him if he would not stay over the Sabbath, and take my measure Monday morning. I said, "It is too late for you to return tonight, and if I allow you to take my measure tonight, you will go home tomorrow." He admitted that he expected to do so. I said, "Then you shall not take it. If you will not stay till Monday morning, I will not be measured for a suit of clothes." He remained.

The same afternoon there were other arrivals from Ogdensburgh; and among them was an elder S___, who was a brother elder in the same church with Mr. F___. Mr. S___'s son, an unconverted young man, came with him.

Elder S___ attended meeting in the morning, and at the intermission was invited by elder B___ to go home with him, and get some refreshment. Elder B___ was full of the Holy Spirit; and on the way home he preached to elder S___, who was at the time very cold and backward in religion. Elder S___ was very much penetrated by his words.

Soon after they entered the house the table was spread, and they were invited to sit down and take some refreshment. As they drew around the table, elder S___ said to elder B___, "How did you get this blessing?" Elder B___ replied, "I stopped lying to God." Said he, "All my Christian life I have been making pretences, and asking God for things that I was not, on the whole, willing to have; and I had gone on and prayed as other people prayed, and often had been insincere, and really lied to God." He continued: "As soon as I made up my mind that I never would say anything to God in prayer, that I did not really mean, God answered me; and **the Spirit came down, and I was filled with the Holy Ghost.**"

At this moment Mr. S___, who had not commenced to eat, shoved his chair back from the table, and fell on his knees and began to confess how he had lied to God; and how he had played the hypocrite in his prayers, as well as in his life. The Holy Ghost fell upon him immediately, and filled him as full as he could hold.

In the afternoon the people had assembled for worship, and I was standing in the pulpit reading a hymn. I heard somebody talking very loud, and approaching the house, the door and windows being open. Directly two men came in. Elder B___ I knew; the other man was a stranger. As soon as he came in at the door, he lifted his eyes to me, came straight into the desk, and took me up in his arms:—"God bless you!" said he "God bless you!" He then began and told me, and told the congregation, what the Lord had just done for his soul.

His countenance was all in a glow; and he was so changed in his appearance, that those that knew him were perfectly astonished at the change. His son who had not known of this change in his father, when he saw and heard him, rose up and was hastening out of the church. His father cried out, "Do not leave the house, my son; for I never loved you before." He went on to speak; and the power with which he spoke was perfectly astonishing. The people melted down on every side; and his son broke down almost immediately.

Very soon the Roman Catholic tailor, Mr. F___, rose up, and said, "I must tell you what the Lord has done for my soul. I was brought up, a Roman Catholic; and I

never dared to read my Bible. I was told that if I did, the devil would carry me off bodily. Sometimes when I dared to look into it, it seemed as if the devil was peering over my shoulder, and had come to carry me off. But," said he, "I see it is all a delusion." And he went on to tell what the Lord had done for him, just there on the spot-**what views the Lord had given him of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ**. It was evident to everybody that he was converted.

This made a great impression on the congregation. **I could not preach**. The whole course of the meeting had taken on a type which the Lord had given it. I sat still, and saw the salvation of God. All that afternoon, conversions were multiplied in every part of the congregation. As they arose one after another, and told what the Lord had done, and was doing, for their souls, the impression increased; and so spontaneous a movement by the Holy Ghost, in convicting and converting sinners, I had scarcely ever seen.

The next day this elder S___ returned to Ogdensburgh. But, as I understand, he made many calls on the way, and conversed and prayed with many families; and thus the revival was extended to Ogdensburgh.

In the early part of October, the synod to which I belonged, met in Utica. I took my wife, and we went down to Utica to attend the synod, and to visit her father's family living near Utica.

Mr. Gale, my theological teacher, had left Adams not long after I left it myself; and had removed to a farm in the town of Western, Oneida county, where he was endeavoring to regain his health, and was employed in teaching some young men, who proposed to prepare themselves to preach the Gospel. I spent a few days at the synod at Utica, and then set out on my return to my former field of labor, in St. Lawrence county.

We had not gone more than a dozen miles when we met Mr. Gale in his carriage, on his way to Utica. He leaped from his carriage and said, "God bless you, Brother Finney! I was going down to the synod to see you. You must go home with me; I cannot be denied. I do not believe that I ever was converted; and I wrote the other day to Adams, to know where a letter would reach you, as I wanted to open my mind to you on the subject." He was so importunate that I consented; and we drove immediately to Western.

In reflecting upon what I have said of the revivals of religion, in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties, I am not quite sure that I have laid as much stress as I intended upon the manifest agency of the Holy Spirit, in those revivals. I wish it to be distinctly understood, in all that I shall say, in my narrative of the revivals that I have witnessed, that I always in my own mind, and practically, laid the utmost stress upon this fact, underlying, directing, and giving efficiency to the means, without which nothing would be accomplished.

I have said, more than once, that the spirit of prayer that prevailed in those revivals was a very marked feature of them. It was common for young converts to be greatly exercised in prayer; and in some instances, so much so, that they were constrained to pray whole nights, and until their bodily strength was quite exhausted, for the conversion of souls around them. There was a great pressure of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of Christians; and they seemed to bear about with them the burden of immortal souls. They manifested the greatest solemnity of mind, and the greatest watchfulness in all their words and actions. It was very common to find Christians, whenever they met in any place, instead of engaging in conversation, to fall on their knees in prayer.

Not only were prayer meetings greatly multiplied and fully attended, not only was there great solemnity in those meetings; but there was a mighty spirit of secret prayer. Christians prayed a great deal, many of them spending many hours in private prayer. It was also the case that two, or more, would take the promise: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," and make some particular person a subject of prayer; and it was wonderful to what an extent they prevailed. Answers to prayer were so manifestly multiplied on every side, that no one could escape the conviction that God was daily and hourly answering prayer.

If anything occurred that threatened to mar the work, if there was any appearance of any root of bitterness springing up, or any tendency to fanaticism or disorder, Christians would take the alarm, and give themselves to prayer that God would direct and control all things; and it was surprising to see, to what extent, and by what means, God would remove obstacles out of the way, in answer to prayer.

In regard to my own experience, I will say that unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing. If even for a day or an hour I lost the spirit of grace and supplication, I found myself unable to preach with power and efficiency, or to win souls by personal conversation. In this respect my experience was what it has always been.

For several weeks before I left De Kalb to go to the synod, I was very strongly exercised in prayer, and had an experience that was somewhat new to me. I found myself so much exercised, and so borne down with the weight of immortal souls, that I was constrained to pray without ceasing. Some of my experiences, indeed, alarmed me. A spirit of importunity sometimes came upon me so that I would say to God that he had made a promise to answer prayer, and I could not, and would not, be denied. I felt so certain that he would hear me, and that faithfulness to his promises, and to himself, rendered it impossible that he should not hear and answer, that frequently I found myself saying to him, "I hope thou dost not think that I can be denied. I come with thy faithful promises in my hand, and I cannot be denied." I cannot tell how absurd unbelief looked to me, and how certain it was, in my mind, that God would answer prayer-those prayers that, from day to day, and from hour to hour, I found myself offering in such agony and faith. I had no idea of the shape the answer would take, the locality in which the prayers would be answered, or the exact time of the answer. My impression was that the answer was near, even at the door; and I felt myself strengthened in the divine life, put on the harness for a mighty conflict with the powers of darkness, and expected soon to see a far more powerful outpouring of the Spirit of God, in that new country where I had been laboring.

[CHAPTER 12 omitted – aal].

CHAPTER 13

REVIVAL AT ROME

At this time Rev. Moses Gillett, pastor of the Congregational Church in Rome, hearing what the Lord was doing in Western, came, in company with a Miss H___, one of the prominent members of his church, to see the work that was going on. They were both greatly impressed with the work of God. I could see that the Spirit of God was stirring them up to the deepest foundations of their minds. After a few days, Mr. Gillett and Miss H___ came up again. Miss H___ was a very devout and earnest Christian girl. On their second coming up, Mr. Gillett says to me, "Brother Finney, it seems to me that I have a new Bible. I never before understood the promises as I do now; I never got hold of them before; I cannot rest," said he; "my mind is full of the subject, and the promises are new to me." This conversation, protracted as it was for some time, gave me to understand that the Lord was preparing him for a great work in his own congregation.

Soon after this, and when the revival was in its full strength at Western, Mr. Gillett persuaded me to exchange a day with him. I consented reluctantly.

On the Saturday before the day of our exchange, on my way to Rome, I greatly regretted that I had consented to the exchange. I felt that it would greatly mar the work in Western, because Mr. Gillett would preach some of his old sermons, which I knew very well could not be adapted to the state of things. However the people were praying; and it would not stop the work, although it might retard it. I went to Rome and preached three times on the Sabbath. To me it was perfectly manifest that the word took great effect. I could see during the day that many heads were down, and that a great number of them were bowed down with deep conviction for sin. I preached in the morning on the text "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and followed it up with something in the same direction, in the afternoon and evening. I waited on Monday morning, till Mr. Gillett returned from Western. I told him what my impressions were in respect to the state of the people. He did not seem to realize that the work was beginning with such power as I supposed. But he wanted to call for inquirers, if there were any in the congregation, and wished me to be present at the meeting. I have said before, that the means that I had all along used, thus far, in promoting revivals, were much prayer, secret and social, public preaching, personal conversation, and visitation from house to house; and when inquirers became multiplied, I pointed meetings for them, and invited those that were inquiring to meet for instruction, suited to their necessities. These were the means and the only means, that I had thus far used, in attempting to secure the conversion of souls.

Mr. Gillett asked me to be present at the proposed meeting of inquiry. I told him I would; and that he might circulate information through the village, that there would be a meeting of inquiry, on Monday evening. I would go to Western, and return just at evening; it being understood that he was not to let the people know that he expected me to be present. The meeting was called at the house of one of his deacons. When we arrived, we found the large sitting room crowded to its utmost capacity. Mr. Gillett looked around with surprise, and manifest agitation; for he found that the meeting was composed of many of the most intelligent and influential members of his congregation; and especially was largely composed of the prominent young men in the town. We spent a little while in attempting to converse with them; and I soon saw that the feeling was so deep, that there was danger of an outburst of feeling, that would be almost uncontrollable. I therefore said to Mr. Gillett, "It will not do to continue the meeting in this shape. I will make some remarks, such as they need, and then dismiss them."

Nothing had been said or done to create any excitement in the meeting. The feeling was all spontaneous. The work was with such power, that even a few words of conversation would make the stoutest men writhe on their seats, as if a sword had been thrust into their hearts. It would probably not be possible for one who had never witnessed such a scene, to realize what the force of the truth some times is, under the power of the Holy Ghost. It was indeed, a sword, and a two edged sword. The pain that it produced when searchingly presented in a few words of conversation, would create a distress that seemed unendurable.

Mr. Gillett became very much agitated. He turned pale; and with a good deal of excitement he said, "What shall we do? What shall we do?" I put my hand on his shoulder, and in a whisper said, "Keep quiet, keep quiet, brother Gillett." I then addressed them in as gentle but plain a manner as I could; calling their attention at once to their only remedy, and assuring them that it was a present and all-sufficient remedy. I pointed them to Christ, as the Savior of the world; and kept on in this strain as long as they could well endure it, which, indeed, was but a few moments.

Mr. Gillett became so agitated that I stepped up to him, and taking him by the arm I said, "Let us pray." We knelt down in the middle of the room where we had been standing. I led in prayer, in a low, unimpassioned voice; but interceded with the Savior to interpose his blood, then and there, and to lead all these sinners to accept the salvation which he proffered, and to believe to the saving of their souls. The agitation deepened every moment; and as I could hear their sobs, and sighs, I closed my prayer and rose suddenly from my knees. They all arose, and I said, "Now please go home without speaking a word to each other. Try to keep silent, and do not break out into any boisterous manifestation of feeling; but go without saying a word, to your rooms."

At this moment a young man by the name of W___, a clerk in Mr. H___'s store, being one of the first young men in the place, so nearly fainted, that he fell upon some young men that stood near him; and they all of them partially swooned away, and fell together. This had well nigh produced a loud shrieking; but I hushed them down, and said to the young men, "Please set that door wide open, and go out, and let all retire in silence." They did as I requested. They did not shriek; but they went out sobbing and sighing, and their sobs and sighs could be heard till they got out into the street.

This Mr. W___, to whom I have alluded, kept silence till he entered the door where he lived; but he could contain himself no longer. He shut the door, fell upon the floor, and burst out into a loud wailing, in view of his awful condition. This brought the family around him, and scattered conviction among the whole of them.

I afterwards learned that similar scenes occurred in other families. Several, as it was afterwards ascertained, were converted at the meeting, and went home so full of joy, that they could hardly contain themselves.

The next morning, as soon as it was fairly day, people began to call at Mr. Gillett's, to have us go and visit members of their families, whom they represented as being under the greatest conviction. We took a hasty breakfast, and started out. As soon as we were in the streets, the people ran out from many houses, and begged us to go into their houses. As we could only visit but one place at a time, when we went into a house, the neighbors would rush in and fill the largest room. We would stay and give them instruction for a short time, and then go to another house, and the people would follow us.

We found a most extraordinary state of things. Convictions were so deep and universal, that we would sometimes go into a house, and find some in a kneeling posture, and some prostrate on the floor. We visited, and conversed, and prayed in this manner, from house to house, till noon. I then said to Mr. Gillett, "This will never do; we must have a meeting of inquiry. We cannot go from house to house, and we are not meeting the wants of the people at all." He agreed with me; but the question arose, where shall we have the meeting?

A Mr. F____, a religious man, at that time kept a hotel, on the corner, at the centre of the town. He had a large, dining room; and Mr. Gillett said, "I will step in and see if I cannot be allowed to appoint the meeting of inquiry in his dining room." Without difficulty he obtained consent, and then went immediately to the public schools, and gave notice that at one o'clock there would be a meeting of inquiry at Mr. F____'s dining room. We went home, and took our dinner, and started for the meeting. We saw people hurrying, and some of them actually running to the meeting. They were coming from every direction. By the time we were there, the room, though a large one, was crammed to its utmost capacity. Men, women, and children crowded the apartment.

This meeting was very much like the one we had had the night before. The feeling was overwhelming. Some men of the strongest nerves were so cut down by the remarks which were made, that they were unable to help themselves, and had to be taken home by their friends. This meeting lasted till nearly night. It resulted in a great number of hopeful conversions, and was the means of greatly extending the work on every side.

I preached that evening, and Mr. Gillett appointed a meeting for inquiry, the next morning, in the court house. This was a much larger room than the dining hall, though it was not so central. However, at the hour, the court house was crowded; and we spent a good part of the day in giving instruction, and the work went on with wonderful power. I preached again in the evening, and Mr. Gillett appointed a meeting of inquiry, the next morning, at the church; as no other room in the village was then large enough to hold the inquirers.

At evening, if I rightly remember the order of thing, we undertook to hold a prayer and conference meeting in a large school house. But the meeting was hardly begun before the feeling deepened so much that, to prevent an undesirable outburst of overwhelming feeling, I proposed to Mr. Gillett that we should dismiss the meeting, and request the people to go in silence, and Christians to spend the evening in secret prayer, or in family prayer, as might seem most desirable. Sinners we exhorted not to sleep, until they gave their hearts to God. After this the work became so general that I preached every night, I think, for twenty nights in succession, and twice on the Sabbath. Our prayer meetings during this time were held in the church, in the daytime. The prayer meeting was held one part of the day, and a meeting for inquiry the other part. Every day, if I remember aright, after the work had thus commenced, we held a prayer meeting and a meeting for inquiry, with preaching in the evening. There was a solemnity throughout the whole place, and an awe that made everybody feel that God was there.

Ministers came in from neighboring towns, and expressed great astonishment at what they saw and heard, as well they might. Conversions multiplied so rapidly, that we had no way of learning who were converted. Therefore every evening, at the close of my sermon, I requested all who had been converted that day, to come forward and report themselves in front of the pulpit, that we might have a little conversation with them. We were every night surprised by the number and the class of persons that came forward.

At one of our morning prayer meetings, the lower part of the church was full. I arose and was making some remarks to the people, when an unconverted man, a merchant, came into the meeting. He came along till he found a seat in front of me, and near where I stood speaking. He had sat but a few moments, when he fell from his seat as if he had been shot. He writhed and groaned in a terrible manner. I stepped to the pew door, and saw that it was altogether an agony of mind.

A sceptical physician sat near him. He stepped out of his slip, and came and examined this man who was thus distressed. He felt his pulse, and examined the case for a few moments. He said nothing, but turned away, and leaned his head against a post that supported the gallery, and manifested great agitation.

He said afterward that he saw at once that it was distress of mind, and it took his scepticism entirely away. He was soon after hopefully converted. We engaged in prayer for the man who fell in the pew; and before he left the house, I believe, his anguish passed away, and he rejoiced in Christ.

Another physician, a very amiable man but a sceptic, had a little daughter and a praying wife. Little H___, a girl perhaps eight or nine years old, was strongly convicted of sin, and her mother was greatly interested in her state of mind. But her father was, at first, quite indignant. He said to his wife, "The subject of religion is too high for me. I never could understand it. And do you tell me that that little child understands it so as to be intelligently convicted of sin? I do not believe it. I know better. I cannot endure it. It is fanaticism; it is madness." Nevertheless the mother of the child held fast in prayer. The doctor made these remarks, as I learned, with a good deal of spirit. Immediately he took his horse, and went several miles to see a patient. On his way, as he afterward remarked, that subject took possession of his mind in such a manner, that it was all opened to his understanding; and the whole plan of salvation by Christ was so clear to him that he saw that a child could understand it. He wondered that it had ever seemed so mysterious to him. He regretted exceedingly that he had said what he had to his wife about little H___, and felt in haste to get home that he might take it back. He soon came home, another man; told his wife what had passed in his own mind; encouraged dear little H___ to come to Christ; and both father and daughter have since been earnest Christians, and have lived long and done much good.

But in this revival, as in others that I have known, God did some terrible things in righteousness. On one Sabbath while I was there, as we came out of the pulpit, and were about to leave the church, a man came in haste to Mr. Gillett and myself, and requested us to go to a certain place, saying that a man had fallen down dead there. I was engaged in conversing with somebody, and Mr. Gillett went alone. When I was through with the conversation, I went to Mr. Gillett's house, and he soon returned and related this fact. Three men who had been opposing the work, had met that Sabbath day, and spent the day in drinking and ridiculing the work. They went on in this way until one of them suddenly fell dead. When Mr. Gillett arrived at the house, and the circumstances were related to him, he said, "There! there is no doubt but that man has been stricken down by God, and has been sent to hell." His companions were speechless. They could say nothing; for it was evident to them that their conduct had brought upon him this awful stroke of divine indignation.

As the work proceeded, it gathered in nearly the whole population. Nearly every one of the lawyers, merchants, and physicians, and almost all the principal men, and indeed, nearly all the adult population of the village, were brought in, especially those who belonged to Mr. Gillett's congregation. He said to me before I left, "So far as my congregation is concerned, the millennium is come already. My people are all converted. Of all my past labors I have not a sermon that is suited at all to my congregation, for they, are all Christians." Mr. Gillett afterward reported that, during the twenty days that I spent at Rome, there were five hundred conversions in that town.

During the progress of this work, a good deal of excitement sprung up in Utica, and some there, were disposed to ridicule the work at Rome. Mr. H___, who lived at Rome, was a very prominent citizen, and was regarded as standing at the head of society there, in point of wealth and intelligence. But he was sceptical; or, perhaps I should say, he held Unitarian views. He was a very moral and respectable man, and held his peculiar views unobtrusively, saying very little to anybody about them. The first Sabbath I preached there, Mr. H___ was present; and he was so astonished, as he afterwards told me, at my preaching, that he made up his mind that he would not go again. He went home and said to his family: "That man is mad, and I should not be surprised if he set the town on fire." He stayed away from the meeting for some two weeks. In the meantime the work became so great as to confound his scepticism, and he was in a state of great perplexity.

He was president of a bank in Utica, and used to go down to attend the weekly meeting of the directors. On one of these occasions, one of the directors began to rally him on the state of things in Rome, as if they were all running mad there. Mr. H___ remarked, "Gentlemen, say what you will, there is something very remarkable in the state of things in Rome. Certainly no human power or eloquence has produced what we see there. I cannot understand it. You say it will soon subside. No doubt the intensity of feeling that is now in Rome, must soon subside, or the people will become insane. But, gentlemen," said he, "there is no accounting for that state of feeling by any philosophy, unless there be something divine in it."

After Mr. H___ had stayed away from the meeting about two weeks, a few of us assembled one afternoon, to make him a special subject of prayer. The Lord gave us strong faith in praying for him; and we felt the conviction that the Lord was working in his soul. That evening he came to meeting. When he came into the house, Mr. Gillett whispered to me as we sat in the pulpit, and said, "Brother Finney, Mr. H___ has come. I hope you will not say anything that will offend him." "No," said I, "but I shall not spare him." In those days I was obliged to preach altogether without premeditation; for I had not an hour in a week, which I could take to arrange my thoughts beforehand.

I chose my subject and preached. The word took a powerful hold; and, as I hoped and intended, it took a powerful hold of Mr. H___ himself. I think it was that very night, when I requested, at the close of the meeting, all those who had been converted that day and evening to come forward and report themselves, Mr. H___ was one who came deliberately, solemnly forward, and reported himself as having given his heart to God. He appeared humble and penitent, and I have always supposed, was truly converted to Christ.

The state of things in the village, and in the neighborhood round about, was such that no one could come into the village, without feeling awe stricken with the impression that God was there, in a peculiar and wonderful manner. As an illustration of this, I will relate an incident. The sheriff of the county resided in Utica. There were two court houses in the county, one at Rome, and the other at Utica; consequently the sheriff, B___ by name, had much business at Rome. He afterwards told me that he had heard of the state of things at Rome; and he, together with others, had a good deal of laughing, in the hotel where he boarded, about what they had heard.

But one day it was necessary for him to go, to Rome. He said that he was glad to have business there; for he wanted to see for himself what it was that people talked so much about, and what the state of things really was in Rome. He drove on in his one horse sleigh, as he told me, without any particular impression upon his mind at all, until he crossed what was called the old canal, a place about a mile, I think, from the town. He said as soon as he crossed the old canal, a strange impression came over him, an awe so deep that he could not shake it off. He felt as if God pervaded the whole atmosphere. He said that this increased the whole way, till he came to the village. He stopped at Mr. F___'s hotel, and the hostler came out and took his horse. He observed, he said, that the hostler looked just as he himself felt, as if he were afraid to speak. He went into the house, and found the gentleman there with whom he had business. He said they were manifestly all so much impressed, they could hardly attend to business. He said that several times, in the course of the short time he was there, he had to rise from the table abruptly, and go to the window and look out, and try to divert his attention, to keep from weeping. He observed, he said, that everybody else appeared to feel just as he did. Such an awe, such a solemnity, such a state of things, he had never had any conception of before. He hastened through with his business, and returned to Utica; but, as he said, never to speak lightly of the work at Rome again. A few weeks later, at Utica, he was hopefully converted; the circumstances of which I shall relate in the proper place.

I have spoken of Wright's settlement, a village northeast of Rome, some two or three miles. The revival took powerful effect there, and converted the great mass of the inhabitants.

The means that were used at Rome, were such as I had used before, and no others; preaching, public, social, and private prayer, exhortations, and personal conversation. It is difficult to conceive so deep and universal a state of religious feeling, with no instance of disorder, or tumult, or fanaticism, or anything that was objectionable, as was witnessed at Rome. There are many of the converts of that revival, scattered all through the land, living to this day; and they can testify that in those meetings the greatest order and solemnity prevailed, and the utmost pains were taken to guard against everything that was to be deplored.

The Spirit's work was so spontaneous, so powerful and so overwhelming, as to render it necessary to exercise the greatest caution and wisdom, in conducting all the meetings, in order to prevent an undesirable outburst of feeling, that soon would have exhausted the sensibility of the people, and brought about a reaction. But no reaction followed, as every body knows who is acquainted with the facts. They kept up a sunrise prayer meeting for several months, and I believe for more than a year afterwards, at all seasons of the year, that was very fully attended, and was as full of interest as perhaps a prayer meeting could well be. The moral state of the people was so greatly changed, that Mr. Gillett often remarked that it did not seem like the same place. Whatever of sin was left, was obliged to hide its head. No open immorality could be tolerated there for a moment. I have given only a very faint

outline of what passed at Rome. A faithful description of all the moving incidents that were crowded into that revival, would make a volume of itself.

I should say a few words in regard to the spirit of prayer which prevailed at Rome at this time. I think it was on the Saturday that I came down from Western to exchange with Mr. Gillett, that I met the church in the afternoon in a prayer meeting, in their house of worship. I endeavored to make them understand that God would immediately answer prayer, provided they fulfilled the conditions upon which he had promised to answer prayer; and especially if they believed, in the sense of expecting him to answer their requests. I observed that the church were greatly interested in my remarks, and their countenances manifested an intense desire to see an answer to their prayers. Near the close of the meeting I recollect making this remark. "I really believe, if you will unite this afternoon in the prayer of faith to God, for the immediate outpouring of his Spirit, that you will receive an answer from heaven, sooner than you would get a message from Albany, by the quickest post that could be sent."

I said this with great emphasis, and felt it; and I observed that the people were startled with my expression of earnestness and faith in respect to an immediate answer to prayer. The fact is, I had so often seen this result in answer to prayer, that I made the remark without any misgiving. Nothing was said by any of the members of the church at the time; but I learned after the work had begun, that three or four members of the church called in at Mr. Gillett's study, and felt so impressed with what had been said about speedy answers to prayer, that they determined to take God at his word, and see whether he would answer while they were yet speaking. One of them told me afterwards that they had wonderful faith given them by the Spirit of God, to pray for an immediate answer; and he added, "The answer did come quicker than we could have got an answer from Albany, by the quickest post we could have sent."

Indeed the town was full of prayer. Go where you would, you heard the voice of prayer. Pass along the street, and if two or three Christians happened to be together, they were praying. Wherever they met they prayed. Wherever there was a sinner unconverted, especially if he manifested any opposition, you would find some two or three brethren or sisters agreeing to make him a particular subject of prayer.

There was the wife of an officer in the United States army residing at Rome, the daughter of a prominent citizen of that place. This lady manifested a good deal of opposition to the work, and, as was reported, said some strong things against it; and this led to her being made a particular subject of prayer. This had come to my knowledge but a short time before the event occurred, which I am about to relate. I believe, in this case, some of the principal women made this lady a particular subject of prayer, as she was a person of prominent influence in the place. She was an educated lady, of great force of character, and of strong will; and of course she made her opposition felt. But almost as soon as this was known, and the spirit of prayer was given for her in particular, the Spirit of God took her case in hand. One evening, almost immediately after I had heard of her case, and perhaps the evening of the very day that the facts came to my knowledge, after the meeting was dismissed, and the people had retired, Mr. Gillett and myself had remained to the very last, conversing with some persons who were deeply bowed down with conviction. As they went away, and we were about to retire, the sexton came hurriedly to us as we were going out, and said, "There is a lady in yonder pew that cannot get out; she is helpless. Will you not come and see her?" We returned, and lo! down in the pew, was this lady of whom I have spoken, perfectly overwhelmed with conviction. The pew had been full, and she had attempted to retire with the others that went out; but as she was the last to go out, she found herself unable to stand, and sunk down upon the floor, and did so without being noticed by those that preceded her. We had some conversation with her, and found that the Lord had stricken her with unutterable conviction of sin. After praying with her, and giving her the solemn charge to give her heart immediately to Christ, I left her; and Mr. Gillett, I believe, helped her home. It was but a few rods to her house. We afterwards learned, that when she got home she went into a chamber by herself and spent the night. It was a cold winter's night. She locked herself in, and spent the night alone. The next day she expressed hope in Christ, and so far as I have known, proved to be soundly converted.

I think I should mention also the conversion of Mrs. Gillett, during this revival. She was a sister of the missionary Mills, who was one of the young men whose zeal led to the organization of the American Board. She was a beautiful woman, considerably younger than her husband, and his second wife. She had been, before Mr. Gillett married her, under conviction for several weeks, and had become almost deranged. She had the impression, if I recollect right, that she was not one of the elect, and that there was no salvation for her. Soon after the revival began in Rome, she was powerfully convicted again by the Spirit of the Lord.

She was a woman of refinement, and fond of dress; and as is very common, wore about her head and upon her person some trifling ornaments; nothing, however, that I should have thought of as being any stumbling block in her way, at all. Being her guest, I conversed repeatedly with her as her convictions increased; but it never occurred to me that her fondness for dress could stand in the way of her being converted to God. But as the work became so powerful, her distress became alarming; and Mr. Gillett, knowing what had formerly occurred in her case, felt quite alarmed lest she should get into that state of despondency, in which she had been years before. She threw herself upon me for instruction. Every time I come into the house, almost, she would come to me and beg me to pray for her, and tell me that her distress was more than she could bear. She was evidently going fast to despair; but I could see that she was depending too much on me; therefore I tried to avoid her.

It went on thus, until one day I came into the house, and turned into the study. In a few moments, as usual, she was before me, begging me to pray for her, and complaining that there was no salvation for her. I got up abruptly and left her, without praying with her, and saying to her that it was of no use for me to pray for her, that she was depending upon my prayers. When I did so, she sunk down as if she would faint. I left her alone, notwithstanding, and went abruptly from the study to the parlor. In the course of a few moments she came rushing across the hall into the parlor, with her face all in a glow, exclaiming, "O Mr. Finney! I have found the Savior! I have found the Savior! Don't you think that it was the ornaments in my hair that stood in the way of my conversion? I have found when I prayed that they would come up before me; and I would be tempted, as I supposed, to give them up. But," said she, "I thought they were trifles, and that God did not care about such trifles. This was a temptation of Satan. But the ornaments that I wore, continually kept coming up before my mind, whenever I attempted to give my heart to God. When you abruptly left me," she said, "I was driven to desperation. I cast myself down, and, lo! these ornaments came up again; and I said, I will not have these things come up again, I will put them away from me forever." Said she, "I renounced them, and hated them as things standing in the way of my salvation. As soon as I promised to give them up, the Lord revealed himself to my soul; and O!" said she, "I wonder I have never understood this before This was really the great difficulty with me before, when I was under conviction, my fondness for dress; and I did not know it."

CHAPTER 14

REVIVAL AT UTICA. NEW YORK.

When I had been at Rome about twenty days, one of the elders of Mr. Aiken's church in Utica, a very prominent and a very useful man, died; and I went down to attend his funeral. Mr. Aiken conducted the funeral exercises; and I learned from him that the spirit of prayer was already manifest in his congregation, and in that city. He told me that one of his principal women had been so deeply exercised in her soul about the state of the church, and of the ungodly in that city, that she had prayed for two days and nights, almost incessantly, until her strength was quite overcome; that she had literal travail of soul, to such an extent that when her own strength was exhausted, she could not endure the burden of her mind, unless somebody was engaged in prayer with her, upon whose prayer she could lean—some one who could express her desires to God.

I understood this, and told Mr. Aiken that the work had already begun in her heart. He recognized it, of course; and wished me to commence labor with him and his people immediately. I soon did so, and, be sure, the work began at once. The word took immediate effect, and the place became filled with the manifested influence of the Holy Spirit. Our meetings were crowded every night, and the work spread and went on powerfully, especially in the two Presbyterian congregations; of one of which Mr. Aiken was pastor, and Mr. Brace of the other. I divided my labors between the two congregations.

Soon after I commenced in Utica. I observed to Mr. Aiken. that Mr. B___, the sheriff of whom I have made mention, did not attend the meetings, as I saw. But a few evenings afterward, just as I was about to begin to preach, Mr. Aiken whispered to me that Mr. B___ had come in. He pointed him out to me, as he made his way up the aisle to his seat. I took my text, and proceeded to address the congregation. I had spoken but a few moments, when I observed Mr. B___ rise up in the slip, turn deliberately around, wrap his great coat about him, and kneel down. I observed that it excited the attention of those that sat near, who knew him, and produced a considerable sensation in that part of the house. The sheriff continued on his knees during the whole service. He then retired to his room at the hotel in which he boarded. He was a man, perhaps fifty years old, and unmarried.

He afterwards told me that his mind was greatly burdened when he went home, and brought up the subject to which he had been listening. I had pressed the congregation to accept Christ, just as he was presented in the Gospel. The question of the present acceptance of Christ, and the whole situation in regard to the sinner's relation to him, and his relation to the sinner, had been the subject of discourse. He said that he had treasured up in his mind the points that had been made, and that he presented them solemnly before himself, and said, "My soul, will you consent to this? Will you accept of Christ, and give up sin, and give up yourself? And will you do it now?" He said he had thrown himself, in the agony of his mind, upon his bed. He made this point with himself, and conjured his soul, to accept "now, and here." Right there, he said, his distress left him so suddenly that he fell asleep, and did not wake for several hours. When he did awake, he found his mind full of peace and rest in Christ; and from this moment he became an earnest worker for Christ among his acquaintances.

The hotel at which he boarded, was at that time kept by a Mr. S____. The Spirit took powerful hold in that house. Mr. S____ himself, was soon made a subject of prayer, and became converted; and a large number of his family and of his boarders. Indeed that largest hotel in the town became a centre of spiritual influence, and many were converted there. The stages, as they passed through, stopped at the hotel; and so powerful was the impression in the community, that I heard of several cases of persons that just stopped for a meal, or to spend a night, being powerfully convicted and converted before they left the town. Indeed, both in this place and in Rome, it was a common remark that nobody could be in the town, or pass through it, without being aware of the presence of God; that a divine influence seemed to pervade the place, and the whole atmosphere to be instinct with a divine life.

A merchant from Lowville came to Utica, to do some business in his line. He stopped at the hotel where Mr. B____ boarded. He found the whole conversation in the town was such as greatly to annoy him, for he was an unconverted man. He was vexed, and said he could do no business there; it was all religion; and he resolved to go home. He could not go into a store, but religion was intruded upon him, and he could do no business with them. That evening he would go home.

These remarks had been made in the presence of some of the young converts who boarded at the hotel, and I think especially in the presence of Mr. B____. As the stage was expected to leave late at night, he was observed to go to the bar, just before he retired, to pay his bill; saying that Mr. S____ would not probably be up when the stage passed through, and he wished therefore to settle his bill before he retired. Mr. S____ said that he observed, while he was settling his bill, that his mind was very much exercised, and he suggested to several of the gentleman boarders that they should make him a subject of prayer. They took him, I believe, to Mr. B____'s room, and conversed with him, and prayed with him and before the stage came, he was a converted man. And so concerned did he feel immediately about the people of his own place, that when the stage came he took passage, and went immediately home. As soon as he arrived at home, he told his family his experience, and called them together and prayed with them. As he was a very prominent citizen, and very outspoken, and everywhere proclaiming what the Lord had done for his soul, it immediately produced a very solemn impression in Lowville, and soon resulted in a great revival in that place.

It was in the midst of the revival in Utica, that we first heard of the opposition to those revivals, that was springing up in the East. Mr. Nettleton wrote some letters to Mr. Aiken, with whom I was laboring; in which it was manifest that he was very much mistaken with regard to the character of those revivals. Mr. Aiken showed me those letters; and they were handed around among the ministers in the neighborhood, as they were intended to be. Among them was one in which Mr. Nettleton stated fully what he regarded as objectionable in the conduct of these revivals; but as no such things as he complained of were done in those revivals, or had been known at all, we took no other notice of the letters than to read them, and let them pass. Mr. Aiken, however, replied privately to one or two of them, assuring Mr. Nettleton that no such things were done. I do not recollect now whether Mr. Nettleton complained of the fact, that women would sometimes pray in the social meetings. It was true, however, that in a few instances women, and some very prominent women, who were strongly pressed in spirit, would lead in prayer, in the social meetings which we held daily from house to house. No opposition, that I know of, was manifested to this, either at Utica or at Rome. I had no agency in introducing the practice among the people, and do not know whether it had existed there before or not. Indeed it was not a subject of much conversation or thought, so far as I know, in the neighborhood where it occurred.

I have already said that Mr. Weeks, who maintained the most offensive doctrines on the subject of divine efficiency, was known to be opposed to those revivals. For the information of those who may not know that any such doctrines were ever held, I would say, that Mr. Weeks, and those that agreed with him, held that both sin and holiness were produced in the mind by a direct act of almighty power; that God made men sinners or holy, at his sovereign discretion, but in both cases by a direct act of almighty power, an act as irresistible as that of creation itself; that in fact God was the only proper agent in the universe, and that all creatures acted only as they were moved and compelled to act, by his irresistible power; that every sin in the universe, both of men and of devils, was the result of a direct, irresistible act on the part of God. This they attempted to prove from the Bible.

Mr. Weeks' idea of conversion, or regeneration, was that God, who had made men sinners, brought them also, in regenerating them, to admit that he had a right to make them sinners, for his glory, and to send them to hell for the sins which he had directly created in them, or compelled them to commit, by the force of omnipotence. In conversion; that did not bring sinners to accept this view of the subject, he had no confidence. Those that have read Mr. Weeks nine sermons on the subject, will see that I have not misrepresented his views. And as this view of Mr. Weeks, was embraced, to a considerable extent, by ministers and professors of religion in that region, his known opposition, together with that of some other ministers, greatly emboldened and increased the opposition of others.

The work, however, went on with great power, converting all classes, until Mr. Aiken reported the hopeful conversion of five hundred in the course of a few weeks, most of them I believe, belonging to his own congregation. Revivals were comparatively a new thing in that region; and the great mass of the people had not become convinced that they were the work of God. They were not awed by them, as they afterwards became. It seemed to be extensively the impression that those revivals would soon pass away, and would prove to have been but a mere excitement of animal feeling. I do not mean that those that were interested in the work, had any such idea.

One circumstance occurred, in the midst of that revival, that made a powerful impression. The Oneida presbytery met there, while the revival was going on in its full strength. Among others there was an aged clergyman, a stranger to me, who was very much annoyed by the heat and fervor of the revival. He found the public mind all absorbed on the subject of religion; that there was prayer and religious conversation everywhere, even in the stores and other public places. He had never seen a revival, and had never heard what he heard there. He was a Scotchman, and, I believe, had not been very long in this country.

On Friday afternoon, before presbytery adjourned, he arose and made a violent speech against the revival, as it was going on. What he said, greatly shocked and grieved the Christian people who were present. They felt like falling on their faces before God, and crying to him to prevent what he had said from doing any mischief.

The presbytery adjourned just at evening. Some of the members went home, and others remained over night. Christians gave themselves to prayer. There was a great crying to God that night, that he would counteract any evil influence that might result from that speech. The next morning, this man was found dead in his bed.

In the course of these revivals, persons from a distance, in almost every direction, hearing what the Lord was doing, or being attracted by curiosity and wonder at what they heard, came to see for themselves; and many of them were converted to Christ. Among these visitors, Dr. Garnet Judd, who soon after went to the Sandwich Islands as a missionary, and has been well known to lovers of missions for many years, was one. He belonged to the congregation of Mr. Weeks, to whom I have referred. His father, old Dr. Judd, was an earnest Christian man. He came down to Utica and sympathized greatly with the revival.

About the same time a young woman, Miss F___ T___, from some part of New England, came to Utica under the following circumstances: she was teaching a high school, in the neighborhood of Newburgh, New York. As much was said in the newspapers about the revival in Utica, Miss T___, among others, became filled with wonder and astonishment, and with a desire to go and see for herself what it meant. She dismissed her school for ten days, and took the stage for Utica. As she passed through Genesee street to the hotel, she observed on one of the signs, the name of B___T___. She was an entire stranger in Utica, and did not know that she had an acquaintance or relative there. But after stopping a day or two at her hotel, and inquiring who B___ T___ was, she dropped him a note, saying that the

daughter of a Mr. T____, naming her father, was at the hotel, and would be pleased to see him. Mr. T____ waited upon her and found that she was a distant relative of his, and invited her immediately to his house. She accepted his invitation, and he being an earnest Christian man, immediately took her to all the meetings, and tried to interest her in religion. She was greatly surprised at all that she saw, and a good deal annoyed.

She was an energetic, highly cultivated, and proud young lady; and the manner in which people conversed with her, and pressed upon her the necessity of immediately giving her heart to God, very much disturbed her. The preaching which she heard, from night to night, took a deep hold upon her. The guilt of sinners was larger insisted upon; and their desert and danger of eternal damnation, were made prominent in what she heard. This aroused her opposition; but still the work of conviction went powerfully on in her heart.

In the meantime I had not seen her, to converse with her; but had heard from Mr. T____ of her state of mind. After writhing under the truth for a few days, she called at my lodging. She sat down upon the sofa in the parlor. I drew up my chair in front of her, and began to press her with the claims of God. She referred to my preaching that sinners deserved to be sent to an eternal hell; and said that she could not receive it, that she did not believe that God was such a being. I replied, "Nor do you yet understand what sin is, in its true nature and ill desert; if you did, you would not complain of God for sending the sinner to an eternal hell." I then spread out that subject before her in conversation, as plainly as I could. Much as she hated to believe it, still the conviction of its truth was becoming irresistible. I conversed in this strain for some time, until I saw that she was ready to sink under the ripened conviction; and turned and said a few words about the place which Jesus holds, and what is the real situation of things, in regard to the salvation of those who thus deserved to be damned.

Her countenance waned pale, in a moment after she threw up her hands and shrieked, and then fell forward upon the arm of the sofa, and let her heart break. I think she had not wept at all before. Her eyes were dry, her countenance haggard and pale, her sensibility all locked up; but now the flood gates were opened, she let her whole gushing heart out before God. I had no occasion to say any more to her. She soon arose and went to her own lodgings. She almost immediately gave up her school, offered herself as a foreign missionary, was married to a Mr. Gulick, and went out to the Sandwich Islands, I think, at the same time that Dr. Judd went out. Her history, as a missionary, is well known. She has been a very efficient missionary, and has raised several sons, who also are missionaries.

While making my home in Utica, I preached frequently in New Hartford, a village four miles south of Utica. There was a precious and powerful work of grace, a Mr. Coe being at the time pastor of the Presbyterian church. I preached also at Whitesboro', another beautiful village, four miles west of Utica; where also was a powerful revival. The pastor, Mr. John Frost, was a most efficient laborer in the work.

A circumstance occurred in this neighborhood, which I must not fail to notice. There was a cotton manufactory on the Oriskany creek, a little above Whitesboro', a place now called New York Mills. It was owned by a Mr. W____, an unconverted man, but a gentleman of high standing and good morals. My brother-in-law, Mr. G____ A____, was at that time superintendent of the factory. I was invited to go and preach at that place, and went up one evening, and preached in the village school house, which was large, and was crowded with hearers. The word, I could see, took powerful effect among the people, especially among the young people who were at work in the factory.

The next morning, after breakfast, I went into the factory, to look through it. As I went through, I observed there was a good deal of agitation among those who were busy at their looms, and their mules, and other implements of work. On passing through one of the apartments, where a great number of young women were attending to their weaving, I observed a couple of them eyeing me, and speaking very earnestly to each other; and I could see that they were a good deal agitated, although they both laughed. I went slowly toward them. They saw me coming, and were evidently much excited. One of them was trying to mend a broken thread, and I observed that her hands trembled so that she could not mend it. I approached slowly, looking on each side at the machinery, as I passed; but observed that this girl grew more and more agitated, and could not proceed with her work. When I came within eight or ten feet of her, I looked solemnly at her. She observed it, and was quite overcome, and sank down, and burst into tears. The impression caught almost like powder, and in a few moments nearly all in the room were in tears. This feeling spread through the factory. Mr. W____, the owner of the establishment, was present, and seeing the state of things, he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill, and let the people attend to religion; for it is more important that our souls should be saved than that

this factory run." The gate was immediately shut down, and the factory stopped; but where should we assemble? The superintendent suggested that the mule room was large; and, the mules being run up, we could assemble there. We did so, and a more powerful meeting I scarcely ever attended. It went on with great power. The building was large, and had many people in it, from the garret to the cellar. The revival went through the mill with astonishing power, and in the course of a few days nearly all in the mill were hopefully converted.

As much has been said about the hopeful conversion of Theodore D. Weld, at Utica, it may be well for me to give a correct report of the facts. He had an aunt, Mrs. C___, living in Utica, who was a very praying, godly woman. He was the son of an eminent clergyman in New England, and his aunt thought he was a Christian. He used to lead her family in its worship. Before the commencement of the revival, he had become a member of Hamilton College, at Clinton. The work at Utica had attracted so much attention, that many persons from Clinton, and among the rest some of the professors of the college, had been down to Utica, and had reported what was doing there, and a good deal of excitement had resulted. Weld held a very prominent place among the students of Hamilton College, and had a very great influence. Hearing what was going on at Utica, he became very much excited, and his opposition was greatly aroused. He became quite outrageous in his expressions of opposition to the work, as I understood.

This fact became known in Utica ; and his aunt, with whom he had boarded, became very anxious about him. To me he was an entire stranger. His aunt wrote him, and asked him to come home and spend a Sabbath, hear the preaching, and become interested in the work. He at first declined, but finally got some of the students together, and told them that he had made up his mind to go down to Utica; that he knew it must be fanaticism or enthusiasm; that he knew it would not move him, they would see that it would not. He came full of opposition, and his aunt soon learned that he did not intend to hear me preach. Mr. Aiken had usually occupied the pulpit in the morning, and I, in the afternoon and evening. His aunt learned that he intended to go to Mr. Aiken's church in the morning, when he expected Mr. Aiken to preach; but that he would not go in the afternoon or evening, because he was determined not to hear me.

In view of this, Mr. Aiken suggested that I should preach in the morning. I consented, and we went to meeting. Mr. Aiken took the introductory exercises, as usual. Mrs. C___ came to meeting with her family, and among them Mr. Weld. She took pains to have him so seated in the slip that he could not well get out, without herself, and one or two other members of the family, stepping out before him; for she feared, as she said, that he would go out when he saw that I was going to preach. I knew that his influence among the young men of Utica was very great, and that his coming there would have a powerful influence to make them band together in opposition to the work. Mr. Aiken pointed him out to me, as he came in and took his seat.

After the introductory exercises, I arose and named this text: "One sinner destroyeth much good." I had never preached from it, or heard it preached from; but it came home with great power to my mind, and this fact decided the selection of the text. I began to preach, and to show in a great many instances, how one sinner might destroy much good, and how the influence of one man might destroy a great many souls. I suppose that I drew a pretty vivid picture of Weld, and of what his influence was, and what mischief he might do. Once or twice he made an effort to get out; but his aunt perceiving it, would throw herself forward, and lean on the slip in front, and engage in silent prayer, and he could not get out without arousing and annoying her; and therefore he remained in his seat till meeting was out.

The next day I called at a store in Genesee street, to converse with some people there, as it was my custom to go from place to place for conversation; and whom should I find there but Weld? He fell upon me very unceremoniously, and I should think, for nearly or quite an hour, talked to me in a most abusive manner. I had never heard anything like it. I got an opportunity to say but very little to him myself, for his tongue ran incessantly. He was very gifted in language. It soon attracted the attention of all that were in the store, and the news ran along the streets, and the clerks gathered in from the neighboring stores, and stood to hear what he had to say. All business ceased in the store, and all gave themselves up to listening to his vituperation. But finally I appealed to him and said, "Mr. Weld, are you the son of a minister of Christ, and is this the way for you to behave?" I said a few words in that direction, and I saw that it stung him; and throwing out something very severe, he immediately left the store.

I went out also, and returned to Mr. Aiken's, where for the time I was lodging. I had been there but a few moments when somebody called at the door, and as no servant was at hand I went to the door myself.

And who should come in but Mr. Weld? He looked as if he would sink. He began immediately to make the most humble confession and apology for the manner in which he had treated me; and expressed himself in the strongest terms of self-condemnation. I took him kindly by the hand and had a little conversation with him, assured him that I had laid up nothing against him, and exhorted him earnestly, to give his heart to God. I believe I prayed with him before he went. He left, and I heard no more of him that day.

That evening I preached, I think, at New Hartford, and returned late in the evening. The next morning I heard that he went to his aunt's, greatly impressed and subdued. She asked him to pray in the family. He said that he was at first shocked at the idea. But his enmity arose so much, that he thought that that was one way in which he had not yet expressed his opposition, and therefore he would comply with her request. He knelt down, and began and went on with what his aunt intended should be a prayer; but from his own account of it, it was the most blasphemous strain of vituperation that could well be uttered. He kept on in a most terrible way, until they all became convulsed with feeling and astonishment; and he kept on so long, that the light went out before he closed. His aunt attempted to converse with him, and to pray with him; but the opposition of his heart was terrible. She became frightened at the state of mind which he manifested. After praying with him, and entreating him to give his heart to God, she retired.

He went to his room; and walked his room by turns, and by turns he lay upon the floor. He continued the whole night in that terrible state of mind, angry, rebellious, and yet so convicted that he could scarcely live. Just at daylight, while walking back and forth in his room, **he said, a pressure came upon him that crushed him down to the floor; and with it came a voice that seemed to command him to repent**, to repent now. He said it broke him down to the floor, and there he lay, until, late in the morning, his aunt coming up, found him upon the floor calling himself a thousand fools; and to all human appearance, with his heart all broken to pieces.

The next night he rose in meeting, and asked if he might make confession. I answered, yes; and he made public confession before the whole congregation. He said it became him to remove the stumbling block which he had cast before the whole people; and he wanted opportunity to make the most public confession he could. He did make a very humble, earnest, broken hearted confession.

From that time he became a very efficient helper in the work. He labored diligently; and being a powerful speaker, and much gifted in prayer and labor, he was instrumental, for several years, in doing a great deal of good, and in the hopeful conversion of a great many souls. At length his health became enfeebled by his great labor. He was obliged to leave college, and he went on a fishing excursion to the coast of Labrador. He returned, the same earnest laborer as before he went away, with health renewed. I found him, for a considerable time, an efficient helper, where I was attempting to labor.

I have said that no public replies were made to the things that found their way into print, in opposition to these revivals; that is, to nothing that was written by Dr. Beecher or Mr. Nettleton. I have also said, that a pamphlet was published by the ministers that composed the Oneida Association, in opposition to the work. To this, I believe, no public answer was given. I recollect that a Unitarian minister, residing at Trenton, in that county, published an abusive pamphlet, in which he greatly misrepresented the work, and made a personal attack upon myself. To this the Rev. Mr. Wetmore, one of the members of the Oneida Presbytery, published a reply.

This revival occurred in the winter and spring of 1826. When the converts had been received into the churches throughout the county, Rev. John Frost, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Whitesboro', published a pamphlet giving some account of the revival, and stated, if I remember right, that within the bounds of that presbytery, the converts numbered three thousand. I have no copy of any of these pamphlets. I have said that the work spread from Rome and Utica, as from a centre, in every direction. Ministers came from a considerable distance, and spent more or less time in attending the meetings, and in various ways helping forward the work. I spread my own labors over as large a field as I could, and labored more or less throughout the bounds of the presbytery. I cannot now remember all the places where I spent more or less time. The pastors of all those churches sympathized deeply with the work; and like good and true men, laid themselves upon the altar, and did all they could to forward the great and glorious movement; and God gave them a rich reward.

The doctrines preached in these revivals were the same that have been already presented. Instead of telling sinners to use the means of grace and pray for a new heart, we called on them to make them

selves a new heart and a new spirit, and pressed the duty of instant surrender to God. We told them the Spirit was striving with them to induce them now to give him their hearts, now to believe, and to enter at once upon a life of devotion to Christ, of faith, and love, and Christian obedience. We taught them that while they were praying for the Holy Spirit, they were constantly resisting him; and that if they would at once yield to their own convictions of duty, they would be Christians. We tried to show them that everything they did or said before they had submitted, believed, given their hearts to God, was all sin, was not that which God required them to do, but was simply deferring repentance and resisting the Holy Ghost.

Such preaching as this was of course opposed by many; nevertheless it was greatly blessed by the Spirit of God. Formerly it had been supposed necessary that a sinner should remain under conviction a long time; and it was not uncommon to hear old professors of religion, say that they were under conviction many months, or years, before they found relief; and they evidently had the impression that the longer they were under conviction, the greater was the evidence that they were truly converted. We taught the opposite of this. I insisted that if they remained long under conviction, they were in danger of becoming self-righteous, in the sense that they would think that they had prayed a great deal, and done a great deal to persuade God to save them; and that finally they would settle down with a false hope. We told them that under this protracted conviction, they were in danger of grieving the Spirit of God away, and when their distress of mind ceased, a reaction would naturally take place; they would feel less distress, and perhaps obtain a degree of comfort, from which they were in danger of inferring that they were converted; that the bare thought that they were possibly converted, might create a degree of joy, which they might mistake for Christian joy and peace; and that this state of mind might still farther delude them, by being taken as evidence that they were converted.

We tried thoroughly to dispose of this false teaching. We insisted then, as I have ever done since, on immediate submission, as the only thing that God could accept at their hands; and that all delay, under any pretext whatever, was rebellion against God. It became very common under this teaching, for persons to be convicted and converted, in the course of a few hours, and sometimes in the course of a few minutes. Such sudden conversions were alarming to many good people; and of course they predicted that the converts would fall away, and prove not to be soundly converted. But the event proved, that among those sudden conversions, were some of the most influential Christians that ever have been known in that region of country; and this has been in accordance with my own experience, through all my ministry.

I have said that Mr. Aiken privately replied to some of Mr. Nettleton's and Dr. Beecher's letters. Some of Dr. Beecher's letters at the time, found their way into print; but no public notice was taken of them. Mr. Aiken's replies, which he sent through the mail, seemed to make no difference with the opposition of either Mr. Nettleton or Dr. Beecher. From a letter which Dr. Beecher wrote, about this time, to Dr. Taylor of New Haven, it appeared that some one had made the impression upon him, that the brethren engaged in promoting those revivals were untruthful. In that letter, he asserted that the spirit of lying was so predominant in those revivals, that the brethren engaged in promoting them, could not be at all believed. This letter of Dr. Beecher to Dr. Taylor, found its way into print. If it should be republished at this day, the people of the region where those revivals prevailed, would think it very strange that Dr. Beecher should, even in a private letter, ever have written such things, of the ministers and Christians engaged in promoting those great and wonderful revivals.

CHAPTER 15

REVIVAL AT AUBURN IN 1826

Dr. Lansing, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Auburn, came to Utica, to witness the revival there, and urged me to go out and labor for a time with him. In the summer of 1826, I complied with his request, and went there and labored with him for a season. Soon after I went to Auburn, I found that some of the professors in the theological seminary in that place, were taking an attitude hostile to the revival. I had before known that ministers east of Utica were, a considerable number of them, holding correspondence with reference to these revivals, and taking an attitude of hostility to them.

However, until I arrived at Auburn, I was not fully aware of the amount of opposition I was destined to meet, from the ministry; not the ministry in the region where I had labored; but from ministers where I had not labored, and who knew personally nothing of me, but were influenced by the false reports which they heard. But soon after I arrived at Auburn, I learned from various sources that a system of espionage was being carried on, that was destined to result, and intended to result, in an extensive union of ministers and churches to hedge me in, and prevent the spread of the revivals in connection with my labors.

About this time I was informed that Mr. Nettleton had said that I could go no farther East; that all the New England churches especially were closed against me. Mr. Nettleton came and made a stand at Albany; and a letter from Dr. Beecher fell into my possession, in which he exhorted Mr. Nettleton to make a manful stand against me and the revivals in central New York; promising that when the judicatures, as he called them, of New England met, they would all speak out, and sustain him in his opposition.

But for the present I must return to what passed at Auburn. My mind became, soon after I went there, very much impressed with the extensive working of that system of espionage of which I have spoken. Mr. Frost, of Whitesboro, had come to a knowledge of the facts to a considerable extent, and communicated them to me. I said nothing publicly, or as I recollect privately, to anybody on the subject; but gave myself to prayer. I looked to God with great earnestness day after day, to be directed; asking him to show me the path of duty, and give me grace to ride out the storm.

I shall never forget what a scene I passed through one day in my room at Dr. Lansing's. **The Lord showed me as in a vision what was before me. He drew so near to me, while I was engaged in prayer, that my flesh literally trembled on my bones**. I shook from head to foot, under a full sense of the presence of God. At first, and for some time, it seemed more like being on the top of Sinai, amidst its full thunderings, than in the presence of the cross of Christ.

Never in my life, that I recollect, was I so awed and humbled before God as then. Nevertheless, instead of feeling like fleeing, I seemed drawn nearer and nearer to God—seemed to draw nearer and nearer to that Presence that filled me with such unutterable awe and trembling. After a season of great humiliation before Him, there came a great lifting up. **God assured me that He would be with me and uphold me; that no opposition should prevail against me**; that I had nothing to do, in regard to all this matter, but to keep about my work, and wait for the salvation of God.

The sense of God's presence, and all that passed between God and my soul at that time, I can never describe. It led me to be perfectly trustful, perfectly calm, and to have nothing but the most perfectly kind feelings toward all the brethren that were misled, and were arraying themselves against me. I felt assured that all would come out right; that my true course was to leave everything to God, and to keep about my work; and as the storm gathered and the opposition increased, I never for one moment doubted how it would result. I was never disturbed by it, I never spent a waking hour in thinking of it; when to all outward appearance, it seemed as if all the churches of the land, except where I had labored, would unite to shut me out of their pulpits. This was indeed the avowed determination, as I understood, of the men that led in the opposition. They were so deceived that they thought there was no effectual way but to unite, and, as they expressed it, "put him down." But God assured me that they could not put me down.

A passage in the twentieth chapter of Jeremiah was repeatedly set home upon me with great power. It reads thus: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me and I was deceived." In the margin it reads, enticed. "Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, and fear was on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible one; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail. They shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. But O Lord of hosts that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I opened my cause." Jer. 20:7-12.

I do not mean that this passage literally described my case, or expressed my feelings; but there was so much similarity in the case, that this passage was often a support to my soul. The Lord did not allow me to lay the opposition to heart; and I can truly say, so far as I can recollect, I never had an unkind feeling toward Mr. Nettleton or Dr. Beecher, or any leading opposer of the work, during the whole of their opposition.

I recollect having had a peculiar feeling of, horror in respect to the pamphlet published, and the course taken by William R. Weeks, to whom I have made allusion. Those who are acquainted with the history of Mr. Weeks, recollect that soon after this, he began to write a book which he called "The pilgrim's progress in the nineteenth century." This was published in numbers, and finally bound up in a volume, with which many of the readers of this narrative may be familiar. He was a man of considerable talent, and I must hope a good man; but as I think much deluded in his philosophy, and exceedingly out of the way in his theology. I do not mention him because I wish to say any evil of him, or of his book; but merely to say that he never ceased, so far as I can learn, to offer more or less opposition, direct and indirect, to revivals that did not favor his peculiar views. He took much pains, without naming him, to defend the course which Mr. Nettleton took, in putting himself at the head of the opposition to those revivals. But God has disposed of all that influence. I have heard nothing of it now for many years.

Notwithstanding the attitude that some of the professors at Auburn were taking, in connection with so many ministers abroad, the Lord soon revived his work in Auburn. Mr. Lansing had a large congregation, and a very intelligent one. The revival soon took effect among the people, and became powerful.

It was at that time that Dr. S___ of Auburn, who still resides there, was so greatly blessed in his soul, as to become quite another man. Dr. S___ was an elder in the Presbyterian church when I arrived there. He was a very timid and doubting kind of Christian; and had but little Christian efficiency, because he had but little faith. He soon, however, became deeply convicted of sin; and descended into the depths of humiliation and distress, almost to despair. He continued in this state for weeks, until one night, in a prayer meeting, he was quite overcome with his feelings, and sunk down helpless on the floor. Then God opened his eyes to the reality of his salvation in Christ. This occurred just after I had left Auburn; and gone to Troy, New York, to labor. Dr. S___ soon followed me to Troy, and the first time I saw him there, he exclaimed with an emphasis peculiarly his own, "Brother Finney, they have buried the Savior, but Christ is risen." He received such a wonderful baptism of the Holy Ghost, that he has been ever since the rejoicing and the wonder of God's people.

Partly in consequence of the known disapproval of my labors on the part of many ministers, a good deal of opposition sprung up in Auburn; and a number of the leading men, in that large village, took strong ground against the work. But the Spirit of the Lord was among the people with great power.

I recollect that one Sabbath morning, while I was preaching, I was describing the manner in which some men would oppose their families, and if possible, prevent their being converted. I gave so vivid a description of a case of this kind, that I said, "Probably if I were acquainted with you, I could call some of you by name, who treat your families in this manner." At this instant a man cried out in the congregation, "Name me!" and then threw his head forward on the seat before him; and it was plain that he trembled with great emotion. It turned out that he was treating his family in this manner; and that morning had done the same things that I had named. He said, his crying out, "Name me!" was so spontaneous and irresistible that he could not help it. But I fear he was never converted to Christ.

There was a hatter, by the name of H___, residing at this time in Auburn. His wife was a Christian woman; but he was a Universalist, and an opposer of the revival. He carried his opposition so far, as to forbid his wife attending our meetings; and, for several successive evenings, she remained at home. One night, as the warning bell rang for meeting, half an hour before the assembly met, Mrs. H___ was so much exercised in mind about her husband, that she retired for prayer, and spent the half hour in pouring out her soul to God. She told him how her husband behaved, and that he would not let her attend meeting; and she drew very near to God.

As the bell was tolling for the people to assemble, she came out of her closet, as I learned, and found that her husband had come in from the shop; and, as she entered the sitting room, he asked her if she would not go to meeting; and said that if she would go, he would accompany her. He afterwards informed me that he had made up his mind to attend meeting that night, to see if he could not get something to justify his opposition to his wife; or at least, something to laugh about, and sustain him in

ridiculing the whole work. When he proposed to accompany his wife, she was very much surprised, but prepared herself, and they came to meeting.

Of all this, I knew nothing at the time, of course I had been visiting and laboring with inquirers the whole day, and had had no time whatever, to arrange my thoughts, or even settle upon a text. During the introductory services, a text occurred to my mind. It was the words of the man with the unclean spirit, who cried out, "Let us alone." I took those words and went on to preach, and endeavored to show up the conduct of those sinners that wanted to let be alone, that did not want to have anything to do with Christ.

The Lord gave me power to give a very vivid description of the course that class of men were pursuing. In the midst of my discourse, I observed a person fall from his seat near the broad aisle, who cried out in a most terrific manner. The congregation were very much shocked; and the outcry of the man was so great, that I stopped preaching and stood still. After a few moments, I requested the congregation to sit still, while I should go down and speak with the man. I found him to be this Mr. H___, of whom I have been speaking. The Spirit of the Lord had so powerfully convicted him, that he was unable to sit on his seat. When I reached him, he had so far recovered his strength as to be on his knees, with his head on his wife's lap. He was weeping aloud like a child, confessing his sins, and accusing himself in a terrible manner. I said a few words to him, to which he seemed to pay but little attention. The Spirit of God had his attention so thoroughly, that I soon desisted from all efforts to make him attend to what I said. When I told the congregation who it was, they all knew him and his character; and it produced tears and sobs in every part of the house. I stood for some little time, to see if he would be quiet enough for me to go on with my sermon; but his loud weeping rendered it impossible. I can never forget the appearance of his wife, as she sat and held his face in her hands upon her lap. There appeared in her face a holy joy and triumph that words cannot express.

We had several prayers, and then I dismissed the meeting, and some persons helped Mr. H___ to his house. He immediately wished them to send for certain of his companions, with whom he had been in the habit of ridiculing the work of the Lord in that place. He could not rest until he had sent for a great number of them, and had made confession to them; which he did with a very broken heart.

He was so overcome that for two or three days he could not get about town, and continued to send for such men as he wished to see, that he might confess to them, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come. As soon as he was able to get about, he took hold of the work with the utmost humility and simplicity of character, but with great earnestness. Soon after, he was made an elder, or deacon, and he has ever since been a very exemplary and useful Christian. His conversion was so marked and so powerful, and the results were so manifest, that it did very much to silence opposition.

There were several wealthy men in the town who took offence at Dr. Lansing and myself, and the laborers in that revival; and after I left, they got together and formed a new Congregation. Most of these were, at the time, unconverted men. Let the reader bear this in mind; for in its proper place, I shall have occasion to notice the results of this opposition and the formation of a new congregation, and the subsequent conversion of nearly every one of those opposers.

While at Auburn, I preached more or less in the neighboring churches round about; and the revival spread in various directions, to Cayuga, and to Skeneateles. This was in the summer and autumn of 1826.

Soon after my arrival at Auburn, a circumstance occurred, of so striking a character, that I must give a brief relation of it. My wife and myself were guests of Dr. Lansing, the pastor of the church. The church were much conformed to the world, and were accused by the unconverted of being leaders in dress, and fashion, and worldliness. As usual I directed my preaching to secure the reformation of the church, and to get them into a revival state. One Sabbath I had preached, as searchingly as I was able, to the church, in regard to their attitude before the world. The word took deep hold of the people.

At the close of my address, I called, as usual, upon the pastor to pray. He was much impressed with the sermon, and instead of immediately engaging in prayer, he made a short but very earnest address to the church, confirming what I had said to them. At this moment a man arose in the gallery, and said in a very deliberate and distinct manner, "Mr. Lansing, I do not believe that such remarks from you can do any good, while you wear a ruffled shirt and a gold ring, and while your wife and the ladies of your family sit, as they do, before the congregation, dressed as leaders in the fashions of the day." It seemed

as if this would kill Dr. Lansing outright. He made no reply, but cast himself across the side of the pulpit, and wept like a child. The congregation was almost as much shocked and affected as himself. They almost universally dropped their heads upon the seat in front of them, and many of them wept on every side. With the exception of the sobs and sighs, the house was profoundly silent. I waited a few moments, and as Dr. Lansing did not move, I arose and offered a short prayer and dismissed the congregation.

I went home with the dear, wounded pastor, and when all the family were returned from church, he took the ring from his finger-it was a slender gold ring that could hardly attract notice-and said, his first wife, when upon her dying bed, took it from her finger, and placed it upon his, with a request that he should wear it for her sake. He had done so, without a thought of its being a stumbling block. Of his ruffles he said, he had worn them from his childhood, and did not think of them as anything improper. Indeed he could not remember when he began to wear them, and of course thought nothing about them. "But," said he "if these things are an occasion of offense to any, I will not wear them." He was a precious Christian man, and an excellent pastor.

Almost immediately after this, the church were disposed to make to the world a public confession of their backsliding, and want of a Christian spirit. Accordingly a confession was drawn up, covering the whole ground. It was submitted to the church for their approval, and then read before the congregation. The church arose and stood, many of them weeping while the confession was read. From this point the work went forward, with greatly increased power.

The confession was evidently a heart work and no sham; and God most graciously and manifestly accepted it, and the mouths of gainsayers were shut. The fact is that, to a great extent, the churches and ministers were in a low state of grace, and those powerful revivals took them by surprise. I did not much wonder then, nor have I since, that those wonderful works of God were not well understood and received by those who were not in a revival state.

There were a great many interesting conversions in Auburn and its vicinity, and also in all the neighboring towns, throughout that part of the state, as the work spread in every direction. In the Spring of 1831, I was again in Auburn and saw another powerful revival there. The circumstances were peculiar, and deeply interesting, and will be related in their appropriate place in this narrative.

[Chapter 16, 17 omitted - aal].

CHAPTER 18

REVIVALS AT WILMINGTON AND AT PHILADELPHIA

While I was laboring at New Lebanon, the preceding summer, Rev. Mr. Gilbert of Wilmington, Delaware, whose father resided in New Lebanon, came there on a visit. Mr. Gilbert was very old school in his theological views, but a good and earnest man. His love of souls overruled all difficulty on nice questions of theological difference, between him and myself. He heard me preach in New Lebanon, and saw the results; and he was very earnest that I should come, and aid him in Wilmington.

As soon as I could see my way clear to leave Stephentown, therefore, I went to Wilmington, and engaged in labors with Mr. Gilbert. I soon found that his teaching had placed, the church in a position that rendered it, impossible to promote a revival among them, till their views could be corrected. They seemed to be afraid to make any effort, lest they should take the work out of the hands of God. They had the oldest of the old school views of doctrine; and consequently their theory was that God would convert sinners in his own time; and that therefore to urge them to immediate repentance, and in short to attempt to promote a revival, was to attempt to make men Christians by human agency, and human strength, and thus to dishonor God by taking the work out of his hands. I observed also, that in their prayers there was no urgency for an immediate outpouring of the Spirit, and that this was all in accordance with the views in which they had been educated.

It was plain that nothing could be done, unless Mr. Gilbert's views could be changed upon this subject. I therefore spent hours each day in conversing with him on his peculiar views. We talked the subject all over in a brotherly manner; and after laboring with him in this way for two or three weeks, I saw that his

mind was prepared to have my own views brought before his people. The next Sabbath, I took for my text: "Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" I went thoroughly into the subject of the sinner's responsibility; and showed what a new heart is not, and what it is. I preached about two hours; and did not sit down till I had gone as thoroughly over the whole subject, as very rapid speaking would enable me to do, in that length of time.

The congregation became intensely interested, and great numbers rose and stood on their feet, in every part of the house. The house was completely filled, and there were strange looks in the assembly. Some looked distressed and offended, others intensely interested. Not unfrequently, when I brought out strongly the contrast between my own views, and the views in which they had been instructed, some laughed, some wept, some were manifestly angry; but I do not recollect that any one left the house. It was a strange excitement.

In the meantime, Mr. Gilbert moved himself from one end of the sofa to the other, in the pulpit behind me. I could hear him breathe and sigh, and could not help observing that he was himself in the greatest anxiety. However, I knew I had him, in his convictions, fast; but whether he would make up his mind to withstand what would be said by his people, I did not know. But I was preaching to please the Lord, and not man. I thought that it might be the last time I should ever preach there; but purposed, at all events, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, on that subject, whatever the result might be.

I endeavored to show that if man were as helpless as their views represented him to be, he was not to blame for his sins. If he had lost in Adam all power of obedience, so that obedience had become impossible to him, and that not by his own act or consent, but by the act of Adam, it was mere nonsense to say that he could be blamed for what he could not help. I had endeavored also to show that, IN THAT CASE, THE ATONEMENT WAS NO GRACE, BUT REALLY A DEBT DUE TO MANKIND, ON THE PART OF GOD, FOR HAVING PLACED THEM IN A CONDITION SO DEPLORABLE AND SO UNFORTUNATE.

Indeed, the Lord helped me to show up, I think, with irresistible clearness the peculiar dogmas of old-schoolism and their inevitable results.

When I was through, I did not call upon Mr. Gilbert to pray, for I dared not; but prayed myself that the Lord would set home the word, make it understood, and give a candid mind to weigh what had been said, and to receive the truth, and to reject what might be erroneous. I then dismissed the assembly, and went down the pulpit stairs, Mr. Gilbert following me. The congregation withdrew very slowly, and many seemed to be standing and waiting for something, in almost every part of the house. The aisles were cleared pretty nearly; and the rest of the congregation seemed to remain in a waiting position, as if they supposed they should hear from Mr. Gilbert, upon what had been said. Mrs. Gilbert, however, went immediately out.

As I came down the pulpit stairs, I observed two ladies sitting on the left hand of the aisle through which we must pass, to whom I had been introduced, and who, I knew, were particular friends and supporters of Mr. Gilbert. I saw that they looked partly grieved, and partly offended, and greatly astonished. The first we reached, who was near the pulpit stairs, took hold of Mr. Gilbert as he was following behind me, and said to him, "Mr. Gilbert, what do you think of that?" She spoke in a loud whisper. He replied in the same manner, "It is worth five hundred dollars." That greatly gratified me, and affected me very much. She replied, "Then you have never preached the Gospel." "Well," said he, "I am sorry to say I never have." We passed along, and then the other lady said to him about the same things, and received a similar reply. That was enough for me; I made my way to the door and went out. Those that had gone out were standing, many of them, in front of the house, discussing vehemently the things that had been said. As I passed along the streets going to Mr. Gilbert's, where I lodged, I found the streets full of excitement and discussion. The people were comparing views; and from the few words that escaped

from those that did not observe me as I passed along, I saw that the impression was decidedly in favor of what had been said.

When I arrived at Mr. Gilbert's, his wife accosted me as soon as I entered, by saying, "Mr. Finney, how dared you preach any such thing in our pulpit?" I replied, "Mrs. Gilbert, I did not dare to preach anything else; it is the truth of God." She replied, "Well, it is true that God was in justice bound to make an atonement for mankind. I have always felt it, though I never dared say it. I believed that if the doctrine preached by Mr. Gilbert was true, God was under obligation, as a matter of justice, to make an atonement, and to save me from those circumstances in which it was impossible for me to help myself, and from a condemnation which I did not deserve."

Just at this moment Mr. Gilbert entered. "There," said I, "Brother Gilbert, you see the results of your preaching, here in your own family;" and then repeated to him what his wife had just said. He replied, "I have sometimes thought that my wife was one of the most pious women that I ever knew; and at other times I have thought that she had no religion at all." "Why!" I exclaimed, **"she has always thought that God owed her, as a matter of justice, the salvation provided in Christ"**; how can she be a Christian?" This was all said, by each of us, with the greatest solemnity and earnestness. Upon my making the last remark, she got up and left the room. The house was very solemn; and for two days, I believe, I did not see her. She then came out clear, not only in the truth, but in the state of her own mind; having passed through a complete revolution of views and experience.

From this point the work went forward. The truth was worked out admirably by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Gilbert's views became greatly challenged; and also his style of preaching, and manner of presenting the Gospel. So far as I know, until the day of his death, his views remained corrected, new school as opposed to the old school views which he had before maintained.

The effect of this sermon upon many of Mr. Gilbert's church members was very peculiar. I have spoken of the lady who asked him what he thought of it. She afterwards told me that she was so offended, to think that all her views of religion were so overthrown, that she promised herself she never would pray again. She had been in the habit of so far justifying herself because of her sinful nature, and had taken, in her own mind, such a position as Mrs. Gilbert had held, that my preaching on that subject had completely subverted her views, her religion, and all. She remained in this state of rebellion, if I recollect right, for some six weeks, before she would pray again. She then broke down, and became thoroughly changed in her views and religious experience. And this, I believe, was the case with a large number of that church.

In the meantime I had been induced to go up and preach for Mr. Patterson, at Philadelphia, twice each week. I went up on the steamboat and preached in the evening, and returned the next day and preached at Wilmington; thus alternating my evening services between Wilmington and Philadelphia. The distance was about forty miles. The work took so much effect in Philadelphia as to convince me that it was my duty to leave Mr. Gilbert to carry on the work in Wilmington, while I gave my whole time to labor in Philadelphia.

Rev. James Patterson, with whom I first labored in Philadelphia, held the views of theology then held at Princeton, since known as the theology of the old school Presbyterians. But he was a godly man, and cared a great deal more for the salvation of souls, than for nice questions about ability and inability, or any of those points of doctrine upon which the old and new school Presbyterians differ. His wife held the New England views of theology; that is, she believed in a general, as opposed to a restricted atonement, and agreed with what was called New England orthodoxy, as distinguished from Princeton orthodoxy.

It will be remembered that at this time I belonged to the Presbyterian church myself. I had been licensed and ordained by a presbytery, composed mostly of men educated at Princeton. I have also said that when I was licensed to preach the gospel, I was asked whether I received the Presbyterian confession of faith, as containing the substance of Christian doctrine. I replied that I did, so far as I

understood it. But not expecting to be asked any such question, I never examined it with any attention, and I think I had never read it through. But when I came to read the confession of faith and ponder it, I saw that although I could receive it, as I now know multitudes of Presbyterians do, as containing the substance of Christian doctrine, yet there were several points upon which I could not put the same construction that was put on them at Princeton; and I accordingly, everywhere, gave the people to understand that I did not accept that construction; or if that was the true construction, then I entirely differed from the confession of faith. I suppose that Mr. Patterson understood this before I went to labor with him; as when I took that course in his pulpit he expressed no surprise. Indeed, he did not at all object to it.

The revival took such hold in his congregation as greatly to interest him; and as he saw that God was blessing the word as I presented it, he stood firmly by me, and never, in any case, objected to anything that I advanced. Sometimes when we returned from meeting, Mrs. Patterson would smilingly remark, "Now you see Mr. Patterson, that Mr. Finney does not agree with you on those points upon which we have so often conversed." He would always, in the greatness of his Christian faith and love, reply, **"Well, the Lord blesses it"** .

The interest became so great that our congregations were packed at every meeting. One day Mr. Patterson said to me, "Brother Finney, if the Presbyterian ministers in this city find out your views, and what you are preaching to the people, they will hunt you out of the city as they would a wolf." I replied, "I cannot help it. I can preach no other doctrine; and if they must drive me out of the city, let them do it, and take the responsibility. But I do not believe that they can get me out."

However, the ministers did not take the course that he predicted, by any means but nearly all received me to their pulpits. When they learned what was going on at Mr. Patterson's church and that many of their own church members were greatly interested, they invited me to preach for them; and if I recollect right, I preached in all of the Presbyterian churches, except that of Arch street.

Philadelphia was at that time a unit, almost, in regard to the views of theology held at Princeton. Dr. Skinner held, to some extent, what have since been known as new school views; and differed enough from the tone of theology round about him, to be suspected as not altogether solid, according to the prevailing orthodoxy. I have ever regarded it as a most remarkable thing, that, so far as I know, my doctrinal views did not prove a stumbling block in that city; nor was my orthodoxy openly called in question, by any of the ministers or churches. I preached in the Dutch church to Dr. Livingston's congregation; and I found that he sympathized with my views, and encouraged me, with all his influence, to go on and preach the preaching that the Lord had bidden me. I did not hesitate everywhere, and on all occasions, to present my own views of theology, and those which I had everywhere presented to the churches.

Mr. Patterson was himself, I believe, greatly surprised that I met no open opposition from the ministers or churches, on account of my theological views. Indeed, I did not present them at all in a controversial way; but simply employed them in my instructions to saints and sinners, in a way so natural as not, perhaps, to excite very much attention, except with discriminating theologians. But many things that I said were new to the people. For example, one night I preached on this text: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This was a sermon on the atonement, in which I took the view that I have always held, of its nature and of its universality; and stated, as strongly as I could, those points of difference between my own views and those that were held by limited atonement theologians. This sermon attracted so much attention, and excited so much interest, that I was urged to preach on the same subject in other churches. The more I preached upon it, the more desirous people were to hear; and the excitement became so general, that I preached on that subject seven different evenings in succession, in as many different churches.

It would seem that the people had heard much said against what was called Hopkinsianism; the two great points of which were understood to be, that man ought to be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and that God was the author of sin. In preaching, I sometimes noticed these points, and took occasion to denounce Hopkinsianism; and said that they appeared to have too much of it in Philadelphia; that their great neglect in attending to the salvation of their souls looked very much as if they were willing to be damned; and that they must hold that God was the author of sin, for they maintained that their nature was sinful. This I turned over and over, and these two points I dwelt upon. I heard again and again that the people said, "Well, he is no Hopkinsian." Indeed, I felt it my duty to expose all the hiding places of sinners, and to hunt them out from under those peculiar views of orthodoxy, in which I found them entrenched.

The revival spread, and took a powerful hold. All our meetings for preaching, for prayer, and for inquiry, were crowded. There were a great many more inquirers than we could well attend to. It was late in the fall when I took my lodgings in Philadelphia, and I continued to labor there without any intermission until the following August, 1828.

As in other places, there were some cases of very bitter opposition on the part of individuals. In one case, a man whose wife was very deeply convicted, was so enraged that he came in, and took his wife out of meeting by force. Another case I recollect as a very striking one, of a German whose name I cannot now recall. He was a tobacconist. He had a very amiable and intelligent wife; and was himself, as I afterwards found, when I became acquainted with him, an intelligent man. He was, however, a sceptic, and had no confidence in religion at all. His wife, however, came to our meetings, and became very much concerned about her soul; and after a severe struggle of many days, she was thoroughly converted. As she attended meetings frequently, and became very much interested, it soon attracted the attention of her husband, and he began to oppose her being a Christian. He had, as I learned, a hasty temper, and was a man of athletic frame, and of great resolution and fixedness of purpose. As his wife became more and more interested, his opposition increased, till finally he forbade her attending meetings any more.

She then called to see me, and asked my advice with regard to what course she should take. I told her that her first obligation was to God; that she was undoubtedly under obligation to obey his commands, even if they conflicted with the commands of her husband and that, while I advised her to avoid giving him offence if she could, and do her duty to God, still in no case to omit, what she regarded as her duty to God, for the sake of complying with his wishes. I told her that, as he was an infidel, his opinions on religious subjects were not to be respected, and that she could not safely follow his advice. She was well aware of this. He was a man that paid no attention to religion at all, except to oppose it.

In accordance with my advice, she attended the meetings as she had opportunity, and received instructions; and she soon came into the liberty of the Gospel, had great faith and peace of mind, and enjoyed much of the presence of God. This highly displeased her husband; and he finally went so far as to threaten her life, if she went to meeting again. She had so frequently seen him angry, that she had no confidence that he would fulfil his threat. She told him calmly that whatever it cost her, her mind was made up to do her duty to God; that she felt it her duty to avail herself of the opportunity to get the instruction she needed; and that she must attend those meetings, whenever she could do it without neglecting her duty to her family.

One Sabbath evening, when he found she was going to meeting, he renewed his threat that if she went he would take her life. She told me afterward that she had no thought that it was anything but a vain threat. She calmly replied to him that her duty was plain; that there was no reason why she should remain at home at that time, but simply to comply with his unreasonable wishes; and that to stay at home, under such circumstances, would be entirely inconsistent with her duty to God and to herself. She therefore went to meeting. When she returned from meeting, she found him in a great rage. As soon as she entered the door he locked it after her, and took out the key, and then drew a dagger and swore he would take her life. She ran up stairs. He caught a light to follow her. The servant girl blew out the light as he passed by her. This left them both in the dark. She ran up and through the rooms in the second story, found her way down into the kitchen, and then to the cellar. He could not follow her in the dark; and she got out of the cellar window, and went to a friend's house and spent the night.

Taking it for granted that he would be ashamed of his rage before morning, she went home early, and entered the house, and found things in the greatest disorder. He had broken some of the furniture, and acted like a man distracted. He again locked the door, as soon as she was fairly in the house; and drawing a dagger, he threw himself upon his knees and held up his hands, and took the most horrible

oath that he would there take her life. She looked at him with astonishment and fled. She ran up stairs, but it was light, and he followed her. She ran from room to room, till finally, she entered the last, from which there was no escape. She turned around and faced him. She threw herself upon her knees, as he was about to strike her with his dagger, and lifted up her hands to heaven, and cried for mercy upon herself and upon him. At this point God arrested him. She said he looked at her for a moment, dropped his dagger, and fell upon the floor and cried for mercy himself. He then and there broke down, confessed his sins to God and to her; and begged God, and begged her, to forgive him.

From that moment he was a wonderfully changed man. He became one of the most earnest Christian converts. He was greatly attached to myself; and some year or two after this, as he heard that I was to come to Philadelphia, in a certain steamboat, he was the first man in Philadelphia that met and greeted me. I received him and his wife into the church, before I left Philadelphia, and baptized their children. I have not seen or heard from them for many years.

But while there were individual cases of singular bitterness and opposition to religion, still I was not annoyed or hindered by anything like public opposition. The ministers received me kindly; and in no instance that I recollect, did they speak; publicly, if indeed they did privately, against the work that was going on.

After preaching in Mr. Patterson's church for several months, and, more or less, in nearly all the Presbyterian churches in the city, it was thought best that I should take up a central position, and preach steadily in one place. In Race street there was a large German church, the pastor of which was a Mr. Helfenstein. The elders of the congregation, together with their pastor, requested me to occupy their pulpit. Their house was then, I think, the largest house of worship in the city. It was always crowded; and it was said, it seated three thousand people, when the house was packed and the aisles were filled. There I preached stately for many months. I had an opportunity to preach to a great many Sabbath school teachers. Indeed it was said that the Sabbath school teachers throughout the city generally attended my ministry.

About midsummer of 1829, I left for a short time, and visited my wife's parents in Oneida county, and then returned to Philadelphia, and labored there until about midwinter. I do not recollect exact dates, but think that in all, I labored in Philadelphia about a year and a half. In all this time there was no abatement of the revival, that I could see. The converts became numerous in every part of the city; but I never had any knowledge, nor could I form any estimate of their exact number. I never had labored anywhere where I was received more cordially; and where Christians, and especially converts, appeared better than they did there. There was no jar or schism among them, that I ever knew of; and I never heard of any disastrous influence resulting from that revival.

There were a great many interesting facts connected with this revival. I recollect that a young woman who was the daughter of a minister of the old school stamp, attended my ministry at Mr. Patterson's church, and became awfully convicted. Her convictions were so deep, that she finally fell into a most distressing despair. She told me she had been taught from her childhood by her father, that if she was one of the elect, she would be converted in due time; and that until she was converted, and her nature changed by the Spirit of God, she could do nothing for herself, but to read her Bible, and pray for a new heart.

When she was quite young she had been greatly convicted of sin, but had followed her father's instruction, had read her Bible, and prayed for a new heart, and thought that was all that was required of her. She waited to be converted, and thus for evidence that she was one of the elect. In the midst of her great struggle of soul on the subject of her salvation, something had come up relative to the question of marriage; and she promised God that she never would give her hand to any man till she was a Christian. When she made the promise, she said that she expected God would very soon convert her. But her convictions passed away. She was not converted; and still that promise to God was upon her soul, and she dared not break it.

When she was about eighteen years of age, a young man proposed to make her his wife. She approved, but as that vow was upon her, she could not consent to be married until she was a Christian. She said they greatly loved each other, and he urged her to be married without delay. But without telling him her real reason, she kept deferring it from time to time, for some five years, if I recollect right, waiting for God to convert her. Finally in riding one day, the young man was thrown from the carriage, and instantly killed. This aroused the enmity of her heart against God. She accused God of dealing hardly with her. She said that she had been waiting for him to convert her, and had been faithful to her

promise, not to get married until she was converted; that she had kept her lover for years waiting for her to get ready; and now, behold! God had cut him off, and she was still unconverted.

She had learned that the young man was a Universalist; and now she was greatly interested to believe that Universalism was true, and would not believe that God had sent him to hell; and if he had sent him to hell, she could not be reconciled to it at all. Thus she had been warring with God, for a considerable time, before she came to our meetings, supposing that the blame of her not being converted, was chargeable upon God, and not upon herself.

When she heard my preaching, and found that all her refuges of lies were torn away, and saw that she should have given her heart to God long before, and all would have been well; she saw that she herself had been entirely to blame, and that the instructions of her father on all those points had been entirely wrong; and remembering, as she did, how she had blamed God, and what a blasphemous attitude she had maintained before him, she very naturally despaired of mercy. I reasoned with her, and tried to show her the long suffering of God, and encouraged her to hope, to believe, and to lay hold upon eternal life. But her sense of sin was so great, that she seemed unable to grasp the promise, and sunk down deeper and deeper into despair, from day to day.

After laboring with her a great deal, I became greatly distressed about her case. At the close of every meeting she would follow me home, with her despairing complaints, and would exhaust me by appeals to my sympathy and Christian compassion for her soul. After this state of things had continued for many weeks, one morning she called upon me in company with an aunt of hers, who had become greatly concerned about her, and who thought her on the very verge of a desperate insanity. I was myself of the opinion that it would result in that, if she would not believe. Catharine—for that was her name—came into my room in her usually despairing way; but with a look of wildness in her face that indicated a state of mind that was unendurable; and at the moment, I think it was the Spirit of God that suggested to my mind, to take an entirely different course with her from what I had ever taken.

I said to her, "Catharine, you profess to believe that God is good." "O yes!" she said, "I believe that." "Well, you have often told me that his goodness forbids him to have mercy on you—that your sins have been so great that it would be a dishonor to him to forgive you and save you. You have often confessed to me that you believed that God would forgive you if he wisely could; but that your forgiveness would be an injury to him, to his government, and to his universe, and therefore he cannot forgive you." "Yes," she said, "I believe that." I replied, "Then your difficulty is that you want God to sin, to act unwisely and injure himself and the universe for the sake of saving you." She opened and set her large blue eyes upon me, and looked partly surprised and partly indignant. But I proceeded: "Yes! you are in great trouble and anguish of mind, because God will not do wrong, because he will persist in being good, whatever may become of you. You go about in the greatest distress of mind because God will not be persuaded to violate his own sense of propriety and duty, and save you to his own injury, and that of the entire universe. You think yourself of more consequence than God and all the universe; and cannot be happy unless God makes himself and everybody else unhappy, in making you happy.

I pressed this upon her. She looked with the utmost astonishment at me, and after a few moments she submitted. She seemed to be almost instantly subdued, like a little child. She said, "I accept it. Let God send me to hell, if he thinks that is the best thing to be done. I do not want him to save me at his own expense, and at the expense of the universe. Let him do what seemeth him good." I got up instantly and left the room; and to get entirely away from her, I went out and got into a carriage and rode away. When I returned she had gone of course; but in the afternoon she and her aunt returned, to declare what God had done for her soul. She was filled with joy and peace, and became one of the most submissive, humble, beautiful converts that I have known.

Another young woman, I recollect, a very beautiful girl, perhaps twenty years old, called to see me under great conviction of sin. I asked her, among other things, if she was convinced that she had been so wicked, that God might in justice send her to hell. She replied in the strongest language, "Yes! I deserve a thousand hells." She was gayly, and I think, richly dressed. I had a very thorough conversation with her, and she broke down in heart, and gave herself to Christ. She was a very humble, broken hearted convert. I learned that she went home and gathered up a great many of her artificial flowers and ornaments, with which she had decked herself, and of which she was very vain, and passed through the room with them in her hands. They asked her what she was going to do with them. She said she was going to burn them up. Said she, "I will never wear them again." "Well," they said to her, "if you will not wear them, you can sell them; don't burn them." But she said, "If I sell them,

somebody else will be as vain of them, as I have been myself; I will burn them up." And she actually put them into the fire.

A few days after this she called on me, and said that she had, in passing through the market, I think that morning, observed a very richly dressed lady, in the market. Her compassions were so stirred, that she went up to her and asked if she might speak to her. The lady replied that she might. She said to her, "My dear madam, are you not proud of your dress, and are you not vain, and neglecting the salvation of your soul?" She said that she herself burst into tears as she said it, and told the lady a little of her own experience, how she had been attached to dress, and how it had well nigh ruined her soul. "Now," said she, "you are a beautiful lady, and are finely dressed; are you not in the same state of mind that I was in myself?" She said the lady wept, and confessed that that had been her snare; and she was afraid that her love of dress and society would ruin her soul. She confessed that she had been neglecting the salvation of her soul, because she did not know how to break away from the circle in which she moved. The young lady wanted to know if I thought she had done wrong, in what she said to the lady. I told her, no! that I wished all Christians were as faithful as she; and that I hoped she would never cease to warn her own sex, against that which had so nearly ruined her own soul.

In the spring of 1829, when the Delaware was high, the lumbermen came down with their rafts from the region of the high land, where they had been getting the lumber out, during the winter. At that time there was a large tract of country, along the northern region of Pennsylvania, called by many "the lumber region," that extended up toward the head waters of the Delaware river. Many persons were engaged in getting out lumber there, summer and winter. Much of this lumber was floated down in the spring of the year, when the water was high, to Philadelphia. They would get out their lumber when the river was low; and when the snow went off, and the spring rains came on, they would throw it into the river and float it down to where they could build rafts, or otherwise embark it for the Philadelphia market.

Many of the lumbermen were raising families in that region, and there was a large tract of country there unsettled and unoccupied, except by these lumbermen. They had no schools, and at that time, had no churches or religious privileges at all. I knew a minister who told me he was born in that lumber region; and that when he was twenty years old, he had never attended a religious meeting, and did not know his alphabet.

These men that came down with lumber, attended our meetings, and quite a number of them were hopefully converted. They went back into the wilderness, and began to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and to tell the people around them what they had seen in Philadelphia, and to exhort them to attend to their salvation. Their efforts were immediately blessed, and the revival began to take hold, and to spread among those lumbermen. It went on in a most powerful and remarkable manner. It spread to such an extent that in many cases persons would be convicted and converted, who had not attended any meetings, and who were almost as ignorant as heathen. Men who were getting out lumber, and were living in little shanties alone, or where two or three or more were together, would be seized with such conviction that it would lead them to wander off and inquire what they should do; and they would be converted, and thus the revival spread. There was the greatest simplicity manifested by the converts.

An aged minister who had been somewhat acquainted with the state of things, related to me as an instance of what was going on there, the following fact. He said one man in a certain place, had a little shanty by himself where he slept nights, and was getting out his shingles during the day. He began to feel that he was a sinner, and his convictions increased upon him until he broke down, confessed his sins, and repented; and the Spirit of God revealed to him so much of the way of salvation, that he evidently knew the Savior. But he had never attended a prayer meeting, or heard a prayer, that he recollected, in his life. His feelings became such, that he finally felt constrained to go and tell some of his acquaintances, that were getting out lumber in another place, how he felt. But when he arrived, he found that they felt, a good many of them, just as he did; and that they were holding prayer meetings. He attended their prayer meetings, and heard them pray, and finally prayed himself; and this was the form of his prayer: "Lord you have got me down and I hope you will keep me down. And since you have had so good luck with me, I hope you will try other sinners."

I have said that this work began in the spring of 1829. In the spring of 1831, I was at Auburn again. Two or three men from this lumber region, came there to see me and to inquire how they could get some ministers to go in there. They said that not less than five thousand people had been converted in that

lumber region; that the revival had extended itself along for eighty miles, and there was not a single minister of the gospel there.

I have never been in that region; but from all I have ever heard about it, I have regarded that as one of the most remarkable revivals that have occurred in this country. It was carried on almost independently of the ministry, among a class of people very ignorant, in regard to all ordinary instruction; and, yet so clear and wonderful were the teachings of God, that I have always understood the revival was remarkably free from fanaticism, or wildness, or anything that was objectionable. I may have been misinformed in some respects, but report the matter as I have understood it. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" The spark that was struck into the hearts of those few lumbermen that came to Philadelphia, spread over that forest, and resulted in the salvation of a multitude of souls.

I found Mr. Patterson to be one of the truest and holiest men that I have ever labored with. His preaching was quite remarkable. He preached with great earnestness; but there was often no connection in what he said, and very little relation to his text. He has often said to me, "When I preach, I preach from Genesis to Revelation." He would take a text, and after making a few remarks upon it, or perhaps none at all, some other text would be suggested to him, upon which he would make some very pertinent and striking remarks, and then another text; and thus his sermons were made up of pithy and striking remarks upon a great number of texts, as they arose in his mind.

He was a tall man, of striking figure and powerful voice. He would preach with the tears rolling down his cheeks, and with an earnestness and pathos that were very striking. It was impossible to hear him preach without being impressed with a sense of his intense earnestness and his great honesty. I only heard him preach occasionally; and when I first did so, was pained, thinking that such was the rambling nature of his preaching that it could not take effect. However, I found myself mistaken. I found that notwithstanding the rambling nature of his preaching, his great earnestness and unction fastened the truth on the hearts of his hearers; and I think I never heard him preach without finding that some persons were deeply convicted by what he said.

He always used to have a revival of religion every winter; and at the time when I labored with him, I think he told me he had had a revival for fourteen winters in succession. He had a praying people. When I was laboring with him I recollect that for two or three days, at one time, there seemed to be something in the way. The work seemed to be in a measure suspended; and I began to feel alarmed lest something had grieved the Holy Spirit. One evening at prayer meeting, while this state of things was becoming manifest, one of his elders arose and made a confession. He said, "Brethren, the Spirit of God has been grieved, and I have grieved him. I have been in the habit," said he, "of praying for brother Patterson, and for the preaching, on Saturday night, until midnight. This has been my habit for many years, to spend Saturday night, till midnight, in imploring the blessing of God upon the labors of the Sabbath. Last Saturday night," he continued, "I was fatigued, and omitted it. I thought the work was going on so pleasantly and so powerfully, that I might indulge myself, and go to bed without looking to God for a blessing on the labors of the Sabbath. On the Sabbath," said he, "I was impressed with the conviction that I had grieved the Spirit; and I saw that there was not the usual manifestation of the influence of the Spirit upon the congregation I have felt convicted ever since; and have felt that it was my duty to make this public confession. I do not know," said he, "who beside myself has grieved the Spirit of God; but I am sure that I have done so."

I have spoken of Mr. Patterson's orthodoxy. When I first began to labor with him, I felt considerably tried, in some instances, with what he would say to convicted sinners. For example: the first meeting for inquirers that we had, the number in attendance was very large. We spent some time in conversing with different persons, and moving around from place to place, giving instructions. The first I knew Mr. Patterson arose, and in a very excited manner, said, "My friends, you have turned your faces Zionward, and now I exhort you to press forward." He went on in an exhortation of a few moments, in which he made, distinctly, the impression that they were now in the right way; and that they had only to press forward as they were doing then and they would be saved. His remarks pained me exceedingly; for they seemed to me to tend to self-righteousness, to make the impression that they were doing very well, and that if they continued to do their duty, as they were then doing it, they would be saved.

This was not my view of their condition at all, and I felt pained to hear such instructions given, and perplexed with the question how I should counteract it. However, at the close of the meeting, when, according to my custom, I summed up the results of our conversation, and made an address to them, I alluded to what Mr. Patterson had said, and remarked that they must not misunderstand what he had

said; that what he had said was true of those that had really turned to God, and set their faces Zionward, by giving their hearts to God. But they must not think of applying this to those of them who were convicted, but had not yet repented, believed, and given their hearts to God; that instead of their faces being turned Zionward, they were really turning their backs upon Christ; that they were still resisting, the Holy Spirit; that they were still in the way to hell; that every moment they resisted they were waxing worse; and that every moment they remained impenitent, without submission, repentance, and faith, they were increasing their condemnation. The Lord gave me a very clear view of the subject. Mr. Patterson listened with the greatest possible attention. I never shall forget with what earnestness he looked at me, and with what interest he saw the discriminations that I made.

I kept on in my address until I could see, and until I felt, that the impression made by what had been said, had not only been corrected, but that a great pressure was bearing upon them to submit immediately. I then called upon them to kneel down, and then and there commit themselves forever to the Lord, renouncing all their sins, and giving themselves up to the disposal of sovereign goodness, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I explained to them, as plainly as I could, the nature of the atonement, and the salvation presented in the Gospel. I then prayed with them, and have reason to believe that a great number of them were converted on the spot.

After this I never heard anything from Mr. Patterson that was at all objectionable, in giving instruction to inquiring sinners. Indeed, I found him remarkably teachable, and his mind open to just discriminations. He seemed particularly quick to get hold of those truths that needed to be presented to inquiring sinners; and I presume to the day of his death, he never again presented such a view of the subject as the one to which I have alluded. I respect and reverence his very name. He was a lovely Christian man, and a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

[Chapter 19 - 23 omitted - aal].

CHAPTER 24

EARLY LABORS IN OBERLIN

The students from Lane Seminary came to Oberlin, and the trustees put up "barracks," in which they were lodged, and other students thronged to us from every direction. After I was engaged to come, the brethren at Oberlin wrote, requesting me to bring a large tent, to hold meetings in; as there was no room in the place, large enough to accommodate the people. I made this request known to some of my brethren, who told me to go and get a tent made, and they would furnish the money. I went and engaged the tent, and they handed me the money to pay for it. It was a circular tent, a hundred feet in diameter, furnished with all the equipments for putting it up. At the top of the centre pole which supported the tent, was a streamer, upon which was written in very large characters, "Holiness to the Lord." This tent was of great service to us. When the weather would permit, we spread it upon the square every Sabbath, and held public services in it; and several of our earliest commencements were held in it. It was used, to some extent also, for holding protracted meetings in the region round about, where there were no churches large enough to meet the necessities.

I have spoken of the promise of Arthur Tappan to supply us with funds, to the extent of his whole income, till we were beyond pecuniary want. Upon this understanding with him, I entered upon the work. But it was farther understood between us, that his pledge should not be known to the trustees, lest they should fail to make due efforts, as he desired, not merely to collect funds, but to make the wants and objects of the institution known throughout the land. In accordance with this understanding, the work here was pushed as fast as it could well be, considering that we were in the heart of a great forest, and in a location, at that time in many respects undesirable.

We had only fairly entered upon the work of putting up our buildings, and had arranged to need a large amount of money, when the great commercial crash prostrated Mr. Tappan, and nearly all the men who had subscribed for the fund for the support of the faculty. The commercial crash went over the country, and prostrated the great mass of wealthy men. It left us, not only without funds for the support of the faculty, but thirty thousand dollars in debt; without any prospect, that we could see, of obtaining funds from the friends of the college in this country. Mr. Tappan wrote me at this time, acknowledging expressly the promise he had made me, and expressing the deepest regret that he was prostrated, and wholly unable to fulfil his pledge. Our necessities were then great, and to human view it would seem that the college must be a failure.

The great mass of the people of Ohio were utterly opposed to our enterprise, because of its abolition character. The towns around us were hostile to our movement, and in some places threats were made to come and tear down our buildings. A democratic legislature was, in the meantime, endeavoring to get some hold of us, that would enable them to abrogate our charter. In this state of things there was, of course, a great crying to God among the people here.

In the meantime, my revival lectures had been very extensively circulated in England; and we were aware that the British public would strongly sympathize with us, if they knew our objects, our prospects, and our condition. We therefore sent an agency to England, composed of Rev. John Keep and Mr. William Dawes, having obtained for them letters of recommendation, and expressions of confidence in our enterprise, from some of the leading anti-slavery men of the country. They went to England, and laid our objects and our wants before the British public. They generously responded, and gave us six thousand pounds sterling. This very nearly cancelled our indebtedness.

Our friends, scattered throughout the northern states, who were abolitionists and friends of revivals, generously aided us to the extent of their ability. But we had to struggle with poverty and many trials, for a course of years. Sometimes we did not know, from day to day, how we were to be provided for. But with the blessing of God we helped ourselves, as best we could.

At one time, I saw no means of providing for my family through the winter. Thanksgiving day came, and found us so poor that I had been obliged to sell my travelling trunk, which I had used in my evangelistic labors, to supply the place of a cow which I had lost. I rose on the morning of Thanksgiving, and spread our necessities before the Lord. I finally concluded by saying that, if help did not come, I should assume that it was best that it should not; and would be entirely satisfied with any course that the Lord would see it wise to take. I went and preached, and enjoyed my own preaching as well, I think, as I ever did. I had a blessed day to my own soul; and I could see that the people enjoyed it exceedingly.

After the meeting, I was detained a little while in conversation with some brethren, and my wife returned home. When I reached the gate, she was standing in the open door, with a letter in her hand. As I approached she smilingly said, "The answer has come, my dear;" and handed me the letter containing a check from Mr. Josiah Chapin of Providence, for two hundred dollars. He had been here the previous summer, with his wife. I had said nothing about my wants at all, as I never was in the habit of mentioning them to anybody. But in the letter containing the check, he said he had learned that the endowment fund had failed, and that I was in want of help. He intimated that I might expect more, from time to time. He continued to send me six hundred dollars a year, for several years; and on this I managed to live.

I should have said that, agreeably to my arrangement in New York, I spent my summers at Oberlin, and my winters at New York, for two or three years. We had a blessed reviving, whenever I returned to preach there. We also had a revival here continually. Very few students came here then without being converted. But my health soon became such that I found, I must relinquish one of these fields of labor. But the interests connected with the college, seemed to forbid utterly that I should leave it. I therefore took a dismission from my church in New York, and the winter months which I was to have spent in New York, I spent in laboring, in various places, to promote revivals of religion.

The lectures on revivals of religion were preached while I was still pastor of the Presbyterian church in Chatham street chapel. The two following winters, I gave lectures to Christians in the Broadway Tabernacle which were also reported by Mr. Leavitt, and published in the *New York Evangelist*. These also have been printed in a volume in this country and in Europe. Those sermons to Christians were very much the result of a searching that was going on in my own mind. I mean that the Spirit of God was showing me many things, in regard to **the question of sanctification**, that led me to preach those sermons to Christians.

Many Christians regarded those lectures as rather an exhibition of the Law, than of the Gospel. But I did not, and do not, so regard them. For me the Law and Gospel have but one rule of life; and every violation of the spirit of the Law, is also a violation of the spirit of the Gospel. But I have long been satisfied that the higher forms of Christian experience are attained only as a result of a terribly searching application of God's Law to the human conscience and heart. The result of my labors up to that time had shown me more clearly than I had known before, the great weakness of Christians, and that the older members of the church, as a general thing, were making very little progress in grace. I

found that they would fall back from a revival state, even sooner than young converts. It had been so in the revival in which I myself was converted. I saw clearly that this was owing to their early teaching; that is, to the views which they had been led to entertain, when they were young converts.

I was also led into a state of great dissatisfaction with my own want of stability in faith and love. To be candid, and tell the truth, I must say, to the praise of God's grace, he did not suffer me to backslide, to anything like the same extent, to which manifestly many Christians did backslide. But I often felt myself weak in the presence of temptation; and needed frequently to hold days of fasting and prayer, and to spend much time in overhauling my own religious life, in order to retain that communion with God, and that hold upon the divine strength, that would enable me efficiently to labor for the promotion of revivals of religion.

In looking at the state of the Christian church, as it had been revealed to me in my revival labors, I was led earnestly to inquire whether there was not something higher and more enduring than the Christian church was aware of; whether there were not promises, and means provided in the Gospel, for the establishment of Christians in altogether a higher form of Christian life. I had known somewhat of the view of sanctification entertained by our Methodist brethren. But as their idea of sanctification seemed to me to relate almost altogether to states of the sensibility, I could not receive their teaching. However, I gave myself earnestly to search the Scriptures, and to read whatever came to hand upon the subject, until my mind was satisfied that an altogether higher and more stable form of Christian life was attainable, and was the privilege of all Christians.

This led me to preach in the Broadway Tabernacle, two sermons on Christian perfection. Those sermons are now included in the volume of lectures preached to Christians. In those sermons I defined what Christian perfection is, and endeavored to show that it is attainable in this life, and the sense in which it is attainable. But about this time, the question of Christian perfection, in the antinomian sense of the term, came to be agitated a good deal at New Haven, at Albany, and somewhat in New York city. I examined these views, as published in the periodical entitled "The Perfectionist." But I could not accept them. Yet I was satisfied that the doctrine of sanctification in this life and entire sanctification, in the sense that it was the privilege of Christians to live without known sin, was a doctrine taught in the Bible, and that abundant means were provided for the securing of that attainment.

The last winter that I spent in New York, the Lord was pleased to visit my soul with a great refreshing. After a season of great searching of heart, he brought me, as he has often done, into a large place, and gave me much of that divine sweetness in my soul, of which President Edwards speaks as attained in his own experience. That winter I had a thorough breaking up; so much so that sometimes, for a considerable period, I could not refrain from loud weeping in view of my own sins, and of the love of God in Christ. Such seasons were frequent that winter, and resulted in the great renewal of my spiritual strength, and enlargement of my views in regard to the privileges of Christians, and the abundance of the grace of God.

It is well known that my views on the question of sanctification have been the subject of a good deal of criticism. To be faithful to history, I must say some things that I would otherwise pass by in silence. Oberlin College was established by Mr. Shipherd, very much against the feelings and wishes of the men most concerned in building up Western Reserve College, at Hudson. Mr. Shipherd once informed me that the principal financial agent of that college, asserted to him that he would do all he could to put this college down. As soon as they heard, at Hudson, that I had received a call to Oberlin, as professor of theology, the trustees elected me as professor of "pastoral theology and sacred eloquence," at Western Reserve college; so that I held the two invitations at the same time. I did not, in writing, commit myself to either, but came on to survey the ground, and then decide upon the path of duty.

That spring, the general assembly of the Presbyterian church held their meeting at Pittsburgh. When I arrived at Cleveland, I was informed that two of the professors from Hudson, had been waiting at Cleveland for my arrival, designing to have me go first, at any rate, to Hudson. But I had been delayed on Lake Erie by adverse winds; and the brethren who had been waiting for me at Cleveland, had gone to be at the opening of the general assembly; and had left word with a brother, to see me immediately on my arrival, and by all means to get me to go to Hudson. But in Cleveland I found a letter awaiting me, from Arthur Tappan, of New York. He had in some way become acquainted with the fact, that strong efforts were making to induce me to go to Hudson, rather than to Oberlin.

The college at Hudson, at that time, had its buildings and apparatus, reputation and influence, and was already an established college. Oberlin had nothing. It had no permanent buildings, and was composed of a little colony settled in the woods; and just beginning to put up their own houses, and clear away the immense forest, and make a place for a college. It had, to be sure, its charter, and perhaps a hundred students on the ground; but everything was still to be done. This letter of brother Tappan was written to put me on my guard against supposing that I could be instrumental in securing, at Hudson, what we desired to secure at Oberlin.

I left my family at Cleveland, hired a horse and buggy, and came out to Oberlin, without going to Hudson. I thought at least that I would see Oberlin first. When I arrived at Elyria, I found some old acquaintances there, whom I had known in central New York. They informed me that the trustees of Western Reserve College thought that, if they could secure my presence at Hudson, it would, at least in a great measure, defeat Oberlin; and that at Hudson there was an old school influence, of sufficient power to compel me to fall in with their views and course of action. This was in precise accordance with the information which I had received from Mr. Tappan.

I came to Oberlin, and saw that there was nothing to prevent the building up of a college, on the principles that seemed to me, not only to lie at the foundation of all success in establishing a college here at the West; but on principles of reform, such as I knew were dear to the hearts of those who had undertaken the support and building up of Oberlin College. The brethren that were here on the ground, were heartily in favor of building up a school on radical principles of reform. I therefore wrote to the trustees of Hudson, declining to accept their invitation, and took up my abode at Oberlin. I had nothing ill to say of Hudson, and I knew no ill of it.

After a year or two, the cry of antinomian perfectionism was heard, and this charge brought against us. Letters were written, and ecclesiastical bodies were visited, and much pains taken to represent our views here, as entirely heretical. Such representations were made to ecclesiastical bodies, throughout the length and breadth of the land, as to lead many of them to pass resolutions, warning the churches against the influence of Oberlin theology. There seemed to be a general union of ministerial influence against us. We understood very well here, what had set this on foot, and by what means all this excitement was raised. But we said nothing. We had no controversy with those brethren that, we were aware, were taking pains to raise such a powerful public sentiment against us. I may not enter into particulars; but suffice it to say, that the weapons that were thus formed against us, reacted most disastrously upon those who used them, until at length there was a change of nearly all the members of the board of trustees and the faculty, at Hudson, and the general management of the college fell into other hands.

I scarcely ever heard anything said at Oberlin, at that time, against Hudson, or at any time. We kept about our own business, and felt that in respect to opposition from that quarter, our strength was to sit still; and we were not mistaken. We felt confident that it was not God's plan to suffer such opposition to prevail. I wish to be distinctly understood, that I am not at all aware that any of the present leaders and managers of that college, have sympathized with what was at that time done, or that they so much as know the course that was then taken.

The ministers, far and near, carried their opposition to a great extreme. At that time a convention was called to meet at Cleveland, to consider the subject of Western education, and the support of Western colleges. The call had been so worded that we went out from Oberlin, expecting to take part in the proceedings of the convention. When we arrived there, we found Dr. Beecher on the ground; and soon saw that a course of proceedings was on foot, to shut out Oberlin brethren, and those that sympathized with Oberlin, from the convention. I was therefore not allowed a seat in the convention as a member; yet I attended several of its sessions. I recollect hearing it distinctly said, by one of the ministers from the neighborhood, who was there, that he regarded Oberlin doctrines and influence as worse than those of Roman Catholicism.

That speech was a representative one, and seemed to be about the view that was entertained by that body. I do not mean by all of them, by any means. Some who had been educated in theology at Oberlin, were so related to the churches and the convention, that they were admitted to seats, having come there from different parts of the country. These were very outspoken upon the principles and practices of Oberlin, so far as they were called in question. The object of the convention evidently was, to hedge in Oberlin on every side, and crush us, by a public sentiment that would refuse us all support. But let me be distinctly understood to say, that I do not in the least degree blame the members of that

convention, or but very few of them; for I knew that they had been misled, and were acting under an entire misapprehension of the facts. Dr Lyman Beecher was the leading spirit in that convention.

The policy that we pursued was to let opposition alone. We kept about our own business, and always had as many students as we knew what to do with. Our hands were always full of labor, and we were always greatly encouraged in our efforts.

A few years after the meeting of this convention, one of the leading ministers who was there, came and spent a day or two at our house. He said to me among other things "Brother Finney, Oberlin is to us a great wonder." Said he, "I have, for many years been connected with a college as one of its professors. College life and principles, and the conditions upon which colleges are built up, are very familiar to me. We have always thought," said he, "that colleges could not exist unless they were patronized by the ministry. We knew that young men who were about to go to college, would generally consult their pastors, in regard to what colleges they should select, and be guided by their judgment. Now," said he, "the ministers almost universally arrayed themselves against Oberlin. They were deceived by the cry of antinomian perfectionism, and in respect to your views of reform; and ecclesiastical bodies united, far and near, Congregational, and Presbyterian, and of all denominations. They warned their churches against you, they discouraged young men universally from coming to Oberlin, and still the Lord has built you up. You have been supported with funds, better than almost any college in the West; you have had by far more students, and the blessing of God has been upon you, so that your success has been wonderful. Now," said he, "this is a perfect anomaly in the history of colleges. The opposers of Oberlin have been confounded, and God has stood by you, and sustained you, through all this opposition, so that you have hardly felt it."

It is difficult now for people to realize the opposition that we met with, when we first established this college. As an illustration of it, and as a representative case, I will relate a laughable fact that occurred about the time of which I am speaking. I had occasion to go to Akron, to preach on the Sabbath. I went with a horse and buggy. On my way, beyond the village of Medina, I observed, in the road before me, a woman walking with a little bundle in her hand. As I drew near her, I observed she was an elderly woman, nicely dressed, but walking, as I thought, with some difficulty, on account of her age. As I came up to her I reined up my horse, and asked her, how far she was going on that road. She told me ; and I then asked if she would accept a seat in my buggy, and ride. "O," she replied, "I should be very thankful for a ride, for I find I have undertaken too long a walk." I helped her into my buggy, and drove on. I found her a very intelligent lady, and very free and homelike in her conversation.

After riding for some distance, she said, "May I ask to whom I am indebted for this ride?" I told her who I was. She then inquired from whence I came. I told her I was from Oberlin. This announcement startled her. She made a motion as if she would sit as far from me as she could; and turning and looking earnestly at me, she said, "From Oberlin! why," said she, "our minister said he would just as soon send a son to state prison as to Oberlin!" Of course I smiled and soothed the old lady's fears, if she had any; and made her understand she was in no danger from me. I relate this simply as an illustration of the spirit that prevailed very extensively when this college was first established. Misrepresentations and misapprehensions abounded on every side; and these misapprehensions extended into almost every corner of the United States.

However there was a great number of laymen, and no inconsiderable number of ministers, on the whole, in different parts of the country, who had no confidence in this opposition; who sympathized with our aims, our views, our efforts, and who stood firmly by us through thick and thin; and knowing, as they did, the straitness to which, for the time, we were reduced because of this opposition, they gave their money and their influence freely to help us forward.

I have spoken of Mr. Chapin, of Providence, as having for several years, sent me six hundred dollars a year, on which to support my family. When he had done it as long as he thought it his duty, which he did, indeed, until financial difficulties rendered it inconvenient for him longer to do so; Mr. Willard Sears of Boston took his place, and for several years suffered me to draw on him for the same amount, annually, that Mr. Chapin had paid. In the meantime, efforts were constantly made to sustain the other members of the faculty; and by the grace of God we rode out the gale. After a few years the panic, in a measure, subsided.

President Mahan, Professor Cowles, Professor Morgan, and myself, published on the subject of sanctification. We established a periodical, "The Oberlin Evangelist," and afterwards, "The Oberlin

Quarterly," in which we disabused the public, in a great measure, in regard to what our real views were. In 1846, I published two volumes on systematic theology; and in this work I discussed the subject of entire sanctification, more at large. After this work was published, it was reviewed by a committee of the Presbytery of Troy, New York. Then Dr. Hodge of Princeton, published, in the *Biblical Repertory*, a lengthy criticism upon my theology. This was from the old school stand-point. Then Dr. Duffield, of the New School Presbyterian church, living at Detroit, reviewed me, professedly from the new school stand-point, though his review was far enough from consistent new-schoolism. To these different reviews, as they appeared, I published replies; and for many years past, so far as I am aware, no disposition has been shown to impugn our orthodoxy.

I have thus far narrated the principal facts connected with the establishment and struggles of the school at Oberlin, so far as I have been concerned with them. And being the professor of theology, the theological opposition was directed, of course, principally toward myself; which has led me, of necessity, to speak more freely of my relations to it all, than I otherwise should have done. But let me not be misunderstood. I am not contending that the brethren who thus opposed, were wicked in their opposition. No doubt the great mass of them were really misled, and acted according to their views of right, as they then understood it.

I must say, for the honor of the grace of God, that none of the opposition that we met with, ruffled our spirits here, or disturbed us, in such a sense as to provoke us into a spirit of controversy or ill feeling. We were well aware of the pains that had been taken to lead to these misapprehensions, and could easily understand how it was, that we were opposed in the spirit and manner in which we were assailed.

During these years of smoke and dust, of misapprehension and opposition from without, the Lord was blessing us richly within. We not only prospered in our own souls here, as a church, but we had a continuous revival, or were, in what might properly be regarded as a revival state. Our students were converted by scores; and the Lord overshadowed us continually with the cloud of his mercy. Gales of divine influence swept over us from year to year, producing abundantly the fruits of the Spirit "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

I have always attributed our success in this good work entirely to the grace of God. It was no wisdom or goodness of our own that has achieved this success. Nothing but continued divine influence, pervading the community, sustained us under our trials, and kept us in an attitude of mind in which we could be efficient in the work we had undertaken. We have always felt that if the Lord withheld his Spirit, no outward circumstances could make us truly prosperous.

We have had trials among ourselves. Frequent subjects of public discussion have come up; and we have sometimes spent days, and even weeks, in discussing great questions of duty and expediency, on which we have not thought alike. But these questions have none of them permanently divided us. Our principle has been to accord to each other the right of private judgment. We have generally come to a substantial agreement on subjects upon which we had differed; and when we have found ourselves unable to see alike, the minority have submitted themselves to the judgment of the majority, and the idea of rending, the church to pieces, because in some things we could not see alike, has never been entertained by us. We have to a very great extent preserved "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" and perhaps no community has existed for such a length of time, and passed through such trials and changes as we have, that has on the whole maintained a greater spirit of harmony, Christian forbearance, and brotherly love.

When the question of entire sanctification first came up here for public discussion, and when the subject first attracted the general attention of the church, we were in the midst of a powerful revival. When the revival was going on hopefully, one day President Mahan had been preaching a searching discourse. I observed in the course of his preaching that he had left one point untouched, that appeared to me of great importance in that connection. He would often ask me, when he closed his sermon, if I had any remarks to make, and thus he did on this occasion. I arose and pressed the point that he had omitted. It was the distinction between desire and will. From the course of thought he had presented, and from the attitude in which I saw that the congregation was at the time, I saw, or thought I saw, that the pressing of that distinction, just at that point, upon the people, would throw much light upon the question whether they were really Christians or not, whether they were really consecrated persons, or whether they merely had desires without being in fact willing to obey God.

When this distinction was made clear, just in that connection, I recollect the Holy Spirit fell upon the congregation in a most remarkable manner. A large number of persons dropped down their heads, and some groaned so that they could be heard throughout the house. It cut up the false hopes of deceived professors on every side. Several arose on the spot, and said that they had been deceived, and that they could see wherein; and this was carried to such an extent as greatly astonished me, and indeed produced a general feeling of astonishment, I think, in the congregation.

The work went on with power; and old professors obtained new hopes, or were converted, in such numbers, that a very great and important change came over the whole community. President Mahan had been greatly blessed, among others, with some of our professors. He came manifestly into an entirely new form of Christian experience, at that time.

In a meeting a few days after this, **ONE OF OUR THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS AROSE, AND PUT THE INQUIRY, WHETHER THE GOSPEL DID NOT PROVIDE FOR CHRISTIANS, ALL THE CONDITIONS OF AN ESTABLISHED FAITH, AND HOPE, AND LOVE; WHETHER THERE WAS NOT SOMETHING BETTER AND HIGHER THAN CHRISTIANS HAD GENERALLY EXPERIENCED; IN SHORT, WHETHER SANCTIFICATION WAS NOT ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE, THAT IS, SANCTIFICATION IN SUCH A SENSE THAT CHRISTIANS COULD HAVE UNBROKEN PEACE, AND NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION, OR HAVE THE FEELING OF CONDEMNATION OR A CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN. BROTHER MAHAN IMMEDIATELY ANSWERED, "YES"** .

What occurred at this meeting, brought the question of sanctification prominently before us, as a practical question. We had no theories on the subject, no philosophy to maintain, but simply took it up as a Bible question.

In this form it existed among us, as an experimental truth, which we did not attempt to reduce to a theological formula; nor did we attempt to explain its philosophy, until years afterwards. But the discussion of this question was a great blessing to us, and to a great number of our students, who are now scattered in various parts of the country, or have gone abroad as missionaries to different parts of the world.

[Chapter 25 to the end omitted - aal].

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We highly recommend that our readers, read carefully, Warfield's volume VIII, Perfectionism, part two, pages 3-215 on the Oberlin teachings.

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