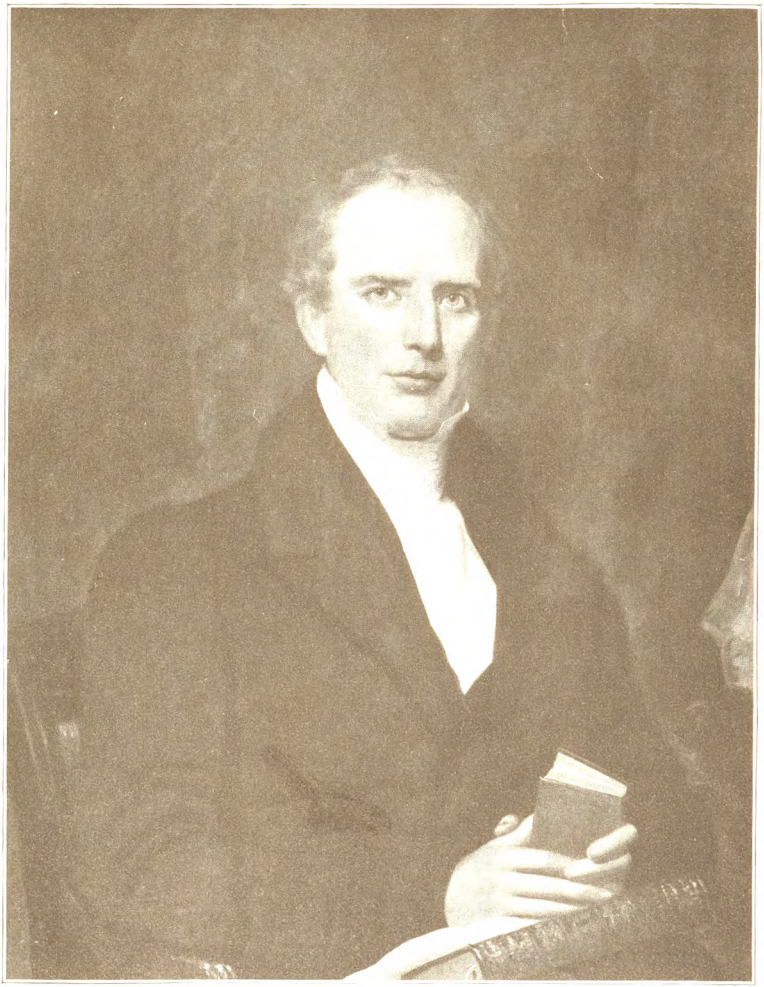

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY, *æt.* 40
From an Oil Portrait

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

Memorial Address

DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION
OF
THE FINNEY MEMORIAL CHAPEL
OBERLIN, JUNE 21, 1908

BY

WILLIAM C. COCHRAN

REVISED AND ANNOTATED BY THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE

The Finney Memorial Chapel was erected and given to Oberlin College by Frederic Norton Finney, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, second son of Rev. Charles G. Finney, as a monument to his father. It stands upon the site where Mr. Finney's residence stood for over seventy years. The Chapel will seat 2000 people and affords standing room for 1000 more on special occasions, and it is to be used for all purposes to which a public auditorium is adapted. The architect who designed the Chapel and supervised its construction was Mr. Cass Gilbert, of New York City. The builder was George Feick, of Sandusky, Ohio.

The Chapel was dedicated, with appropriate ceremonies, on Sunday, June 21, 1908. William C. Cochran, of Cincinnati, O., the oldest grandson of President Finney, was invited to deliver the Memorial Address. He was born in Mr. Finney's house, was a frequent visitor during his early youth, and was an inmate of

the family from the fall of 1866 to the fall of 1869, during which time Mr. Finney was engaged in the preparation of his "Memoirs." He was urged to do this by friends in the East who sent out a stenographer to assist him in the work. He was assured that it was of the utmost importance to preserve the record of the wonderful revivals which attended his labors, for the instruction of posterity and the stimulus to like self-sacrificing labor on the part of others. The work was really distasteful to him and he dismissed the stenographer after a few months and destroyed a large part of her work, as it seemed to him to be akin to self-laudation and an attempt to claim the glory which belonged to God alone. His friends persisted and, a year later, another stenographer was employed, with whose assistance the Memoirs were completed, practically as they now appear in print.

The effort to recall the past brought to mind many incidents of his early life, pleasant and otherwise, which he would tell the family and which they supposed would appear in his Memoirs. These were not published until after

his death in 1875, and then it was discovered that he had eliminated almost everything which was not directly connected with his conversion and the religious work to which he dedicated his life. He may have thought such incidents too trivial to record and his purely personal history as of no consequence, but in this we believe he was mistaken.

It is impossible, in a public address of an hour's duration, to treat in detail of a life that was so long and so full of incident. The speaker determined to present some facts regarding Mr. Finney's early life which are not commonly known, but which throw a strong light on his character and his unconscious preparation for a life-work which was far from his thoughts as a young man, and to call attention to some of the more striking passages in his later life which illustrate his character and power. The text, as printed, embraces many interesting details which were necessarily excluded from the address as delivered, and notes have been added which indicate the sources of information. Where no credit is given, the speaker relied on the "Me-

moirs," his own personal knowledge of the facts, or his recollection of things told him by Mr. Finney at the time he was preparing his Memoirs. Wherever it was possible the speaker verified his own recollection by consulting members of the family and early friends of Mr. Finney, public records and the published writings of contemporaries. It is a pleasure to rescue from oblivion such facts in regard to his early education and accomplishments as have been heretofore ignored, and to correct as far as possible the misunderstanding with regard to his culture and attainments which has arisen in some quarters. No narrow-minded, half-educated man could have accomplished what Mr. Finney did, under Providential guidance. The instrument chosen was well fitted for the work, both by nature and by training.

W. C. C.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, September 30, 1908.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

A recent author has announced, as the result of his investigations in the psychology of religion, that conversion is distinctly a phenomenon of adolescence; that the event occurs most often at the age of sixteen and immediately before and after that year; and that, if conversion has not occurred before twenty, the chances are small that it will ever be experienced.

His conclusions are based on reports from 1265 individuals, whose average age was 30, and the oldest of whom was but 40. A large majority of them were students and alumni of a single denominational school. His basis seems hardly broad enough for safe generalization. Even if it can be considered a representative body of men and women, it speaks only of conditions prevailing in the last quarter century.[1]

[1] Psychology of Religion, by Prof. E. D. Starbuck, Ph.D., pp. 28, 30, 38.

If it is a faithful picture of existing conditions, the church is in danger. If it be conceded that religion has no power to attract men of mature judgment, wide reading and experience, and cultivated habits of thought, the church will lose not only *them,* but many of the young converts, who will, sooner or later, come to believe that religion is a species of children's disease and that manhood requires them to *reject* what, they find, other men are not expected to *accept.* Even if they persist in their faith and do not allow the defection of others to disturb their serenity, they will lack power to win over others from the ranks of the unconverted. How can a person, who has never considered the manifold arguments against "revealed religion," persuade one who has been carried away by them? How can one, who has never had a doubt, understand and help one who has been perplexed with doubts all his life? Doubt must be dispelled by evidence and by argument that takes into account the many and real difficulties which beset candid minds. The untested "*credo*" of a child avails little.

FINNEY MEMORIAL CHAPEL
East Front

It is my privilege, to-night, to speak of a conspicuous exception to the rule, if there be any such rule.

The religion of Charles G. Finney had nothing to do with adolescence. He was not a product of the Sunday School. He never entered one until long after he was converted. He was not swept into the church on the tide of a great emotional revival.

At the age of twenty-nine, Charles G. Finney was a splendid pagan—a young man rejoicing in his strength, proudly conscious of his physical and intellectual superiority to all around him. He had a magnificent physique. Standing six feet two in his stocking feet, he looked much taller than that, for he was very erect, very alert, full of life and energy, and walked with a quick, elastic step that made people instinctively turn and look at him. Without an ounce of superfluous flesh he weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. He could not remember that he had ever been sick a day in his life. He had been trained in nature's gymnasium—the forest, the clearing, the field.

The young people had their athletic sports in those days, as well as now.[1] Every Fourth of July, Training Day and Thanksgiving Day was a "field day," in which old and young engaged in the various sports, and champions of different towns and "cross-roads" strove for the mastery.[2] Mr. Finney did his full share of the work and entered with zest into all such games and contests. Thousands of country boys did the same; there was nothing exceptional about his *opportunities*. What was exceptional was the *use* he made of them, his ambition to excel—even in the small affairs of life.

He brought to every task and every game—besides his athletic frame—keen intelligence, nervous energy and indomitable will. When he

[1] The chief sports were running, vaulting, high jump, standing jump, running jump, hop, skip and jump, boxing, wrestling, foot-ball (the kicking game), town-ball (from which our game of base-ball was evolved), pitching quoits, shooting at a mark, etc. Boxing was not bruising. It consisted in efforts to knock off the hat or cap of an opponent and parrying similar efforts on his part. Occasionally a boxer received a severe blow on the head, but that was incidental and not a matter of intention. Wrestling was regarded as the king of sports and the champion wrestler was held in high honor.

[2] Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., p. 36.

was twenty, he excelled every man and boy he met, in every species of toil, or sport. No man could throw him; no man could knock his hat off; no man could run faster, jump farther, leap higher, or throw a ball with greater force and precision. When his family moved to the shore of Henderson's Bay, near Sackett's Harbor, he added to his accomplishments rowing, swimming and sailing. He was a lover of nature and the "call of the wild" was strong in him. He hardly knew which he loved most—the depth of the forest, with its mysterious life and whisperings; or the solitude of the open lake with the great depths of sky above and water below and nothing between him and eternity, but the thin sides of a boat.

He had a large head, symmetrically developed and crowned with abundant light-brown hair, silky in texture and slightly curling.[1] His nose

[1] As will be seen from the profile view published herewith, his profile from the glabella to the occipital point formed an almost perfect semi-circle, the only variation being at the top, where the dome rose above the line of the circle. When Mr. Finney visited New York in 1830, the pseudo-science of Phrenology had a great vogue and his interest was aroused. He thought it might aid him in his study of human nature and he

was strongly aquiline. His eyes were large and blue, at times mild as an April sky, and at others, cold and penetrating as polished steel. At times they beamed with love and sympathy, at other times they became scrutinizing and inscrutable. One day, nothing escaped their attention; the next, they seemed to take note of nothing terrestrial. When in the full tide of his eloquence, they swept his audience like search lights, fascinating, compelling attention, yet producing strange, uneasy feelings. His complexion was fair, and readily flushed with every passing emotion.

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not only investigated the subject carefully, but submitted to having his own head "examined and charted." The result delighted the phrenologists, for everything that was known of his mental traits and character corresponded closely with their interpretation of his cranial development. The physical, mental and spiritual qualities were all highly developed and almost equally balanced. He had great ambition, firmness and self-esteem, but greater benevolence and spirituality. The logical faculty was highly developed; but so was sublimity and the imaginative. He had the "bumps" of time, tune, and language and great knowledge of human nature. The only thing which puzzled them was an apparently large development of humor, or mirthfulness, which seemed inconsistent with the severe gravity of his speech and manner; but all who remembered him in his youth, noted his natural love of fun, his sociable disposition and his keen sense of the ridiculous.

At Henderson, he taught school from his sixteenth to his twentieth year, two months in summer and three months in winter. It was like the ideal university—in one respect—anybody could study anything. There were no grades and no prescribed text-books. Each scholar brought such books as he possessed and the teacher did the rest. One who attended this school [1] said of him:

"There was nothing which anyone else knew, that Mr. Finney didn't know, and there was nothing which anyone else could do that Mr. Finney could not do—and do a great deal better. He was the idol of his pupils. He joined in their sports before and after school, and although at first there were older and larger boys than he in the school, he could beat them at everything. He would lie down on the ground and let as many as could pile on top of him and try to hold him down. He would say, 'Are you ready?' Then he would make a quick turn, rise up and shake them all off, just as a lion might shake off a lot of puppies. In school, all was different. He was very dignified and kept perfect order. Should any boy attempt to create a disturbance,

[1] Horatio N. Davis, father of Senator Cushman K. Davis, late of Minnesota.

one flash of Mr. Finney's eye would quell the sinner at once. Oh, I tell you, they all loved and worshiped him, and all felt that some day he would be a great man."

A young man, from sixteen to twenty, could hardly be employed better than in teaching a country school. It completes his own elementary education; gives him power to express clearly what he knows; awakens in him a consciousness of power over others and a knowledge of human nature. The effort to command the respect of others contributes to his own dignity and self-respect. He must be careful in his speech and manners, so as not to offend or corrupt any of the little ones committed to his charge. Thus Mr. Finney grew to manhood, strong, self-respecting, helpful to others, clean of speech and correct in habits.

Mr. Finney was fitted for this work of teaching, by two years' schooling in the Hamilton Oneida Institute, at Clinton, New York,[1] only a few miles from his father's farm in Oneida County. The principal of this school, at that

[1] Afterwards incorporated as Hamilton College.

time, was Seth Norton, a graduate of Yale College and a tutor there for two years before coming to Clinton. He was a fine classical scholar, an inspiring teacher and a lover of music. He composed hymns and anthems and was the village chorister.[1] He discovered great possibilities in this tall, blue-eyed child of the woods, and seems to have given him unusual attention. He inspired him with an ambition to secure a classical education and evoked an intense love of music. He taught him to sing, to read music at sight, and to play on the violin and bass viol, or what we would call the violoncello. That instrument appealed powerfully to Mr. Finney's passionate nature. When he began to earn money by teaching, the first use he made of it was to buy a 'cello. Then he gave up much of his leisure to singing, to the mastery of his 'cello, and to a thorough understanding of harmony and composition. It was the day of "buckwheat notes"[2] and "figured

[1] Statement of Dr. A. N. Brockway, of New York City.

[2] Among his early possessions was an old Psalm Book of the Dutch Reformed Church, with black, square, lozenge and other queer shaped notes, which soon disappeared from other hymn books and musical collections. The "figured bass" persisted in hymnals and music books down to 1860, or thereabouts.

bass'' and, without a master, he soon learned to invest an air with its appropriate chords and to write out the different parts for a chorus. He thus came into the very heart of music; to have a thorough appreciation of all that was good, and a proper contempt for all that was trivial. This deep understanding of, and loving interest in good music in after years secured for him the devoted attachment of such organists and composers as Lowell Mason, at Boston, and Thomas Hastings and William B. Bradbury at New York. They were glad to consult his wishes while conducting choirs in the places where he preached.[1] I may be pardoned for dwelling at such length on his musical tastes and accomplishments, for they played an important part in

[1] Mr. Finney's daughters were accomplished singers, and one of them became a fine performer on the lute, guitar, harp, and piano. He tried to teach his sons to play on the violin and 'cello, but their energies sought other channels and a critical taste for good music was all they acquired. In 1848, Gen. J. D. Cox, then a student at Oberlin College and a frequent visitor at the Finney house, wrote home: "He lives what he preaches and there is nothing like austerity about him. In his family he is all pleasantness—sings and plays with his children and is as one of them. * * * He is passionately fond of music and we can at any time make up a choir in the family."

shaping his subsequent career, and they contributed in no small degree to making Oberlin the musical centre that it is to-day.

He had a musical voice of phenomenal range, flexibility and power, and song was the natural expression of his healthy, joyous soul. But he was also intensely emotional and almost as sensitive to sympathetic appeals as his 'cello was to the vibrations of the strings. It was not an unusual thing for him, strong and vigorous as he was, to weep over his 'cello; and he resorted to it, in every hour of trouble, as to a bosom friend. To use his own expression, his "sensibility often overflowed." But this mood was exceptional. He was, normally, full of fun and endowed with a strong sense of humor. He loved to dance and was foremost in social meetings of every sort. He was saved from intemperance, profanity, and vileness—not by any *religious scruples,* for at this time he had none—but by his innate delicacy and refinement.

In the summer of 1812 war was declared against Great Britain. It was not generally expected; in the North it was not desired. Sack-

ett's Harbor, only a few miles from Mr. Finney's home, was made a naval base; a fort was erected and garrisoned by a few companies of soldiers; ships and naval stores were concentrated at that point and the construction of other ships of war was begun.[1] Rumors of an invasion from Canada filled the air and the militia was called out. A company was formed at Henderson, out of persons exempt from military service, with Mark Hopkins as Captain.[2] He tendered their services to the Governor of New York with the significant statement that they were *opposed to the war,* but would go to any place in the county for home defense.[3]

Notwithstanding this adverse sentiment of his neighbors, Mr. Finney went to Sackett's Harbor,

[1] Adams' History of the United States, Vol. vi, pp. 342 to 344; Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 587, 588.

[2] Public Papers of Daniel H. Tompkins, Vol. i, p. 376.

[3] Thurlow Weed says that a similar sentiment prevailed in Oneida County and generally throughout Northern New York. Autobiography, pp. 23, 26. The opposition of its leading citizens to the war prevented the selection of Henderson Harbor—a much better place than Sackett's Harbor—for the naval base and probably ruined its chances of becoming an important lake port and city. Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 167, 168.

among the first, to enlist in the Navy. There was fighting blood in his veins.[1] When he got there all was confusion. There seemed to be no order, no discipline, no understanding of what was to be done, or how to do it. He was amazed at the incompetence displayed. The militia, freed from home restraints and not yet subjected to military discipline, were becoming demoralized. The streets were full of drunken men, cursing, quarreling and refusing to take orders from anybody. He heard more profanity and obscenity in that one day, than he had heard in all his life before. To cap the climax, he was accosted by an abandoned woman—a follower of the camp,—young, pretty and saucy. He looked at her in wonder and, when he comprehended the nature of her request, he was so overcome with pity for her degradation and lack of shame that his cheeks burned and before he

[1] Finneys were among the Norsemen who swooped down upon the Channel Islands in the tenth century, and they settled in Guernsey. One of his ancestors was a captain of militia at Bristol, R. I., in the seventeenth century. Three cousins were officers in the New York State Militia at various times from 1811 to 1815. Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York, Vol. ii, 1808–1817.

could check it, he was shedding tears and sobbing violently. She, moved to shame by this extraordinary spectacle, wept too, and without another word they parted and Mr. Finney went back home to tell his 'cello of the awful things he had seen and heard that day.[1]

He was willing to fight for his country—in a just cause. He was not willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of incompetence—especially for a cause which his most respected neighbors considered unjust.

The threatened invasion was a fiasco; the scare was soon over; the militia returned to their homes and, in the fall of that year, he went to Warren, Connecticut, his native town, to prepare for Yale College in a high school which enjoyed a wide reputataion.[2] There, undisturbed by faint rumors of a war in which the people

[1] In narrating this incident, fifty-five years later, he was visibly affected and remarked: "Oh, if I had only been a Christian at that time! That young woman might have been saved! Perhaps God brought about this meeting on purpose to open her eyes, and she may have repented."

[2] The Hamilton Oneida Institute had become a college in 1812, and his former instructor, Seth Norton, had become Professor of Ancient Languages, and was no longer available, as he was fully occupied in college duties, having nine recitations daily.

of New England took no interest, he passed two years in study.[1] He supported himself by work on his uncle's farm, in summer, and teaching singing school, in winter. The young people came from miles around to attend this school, and the traditions of his fine singing are still well preserved in that vicinity. He developed a great reputation as a wit, an orator, and a poet. He was the editor of a school journal which was prepared in manuscript and passed from hand to hand. It abounded in local hits, and every foible of teacher, pastor, leading citizens, or pupils, was touched up in satirical vein.[2]

In 1814 Mr. Finney was prepared to enter Yale College and began to think of ways and means for going, but his teacher, himself a Yale

He died in 1818—probably worked to death. Statement of Dr. Asahel Norton Brockway, of New York City.

[1] The extent of this disaffection may be judged from the fact that the "peace party" carried Massachusetts in the fall of 1812 by a majority of 24,000, swept the congressional districts throughout New England and New York, and captured the electoral votes of all these states, except Vermont. Adams' History of the United States, Vol. vi, pp. 389, 413.

[2] Statement of Noble B. Strong, Cornwall Bridge, Conn., whose father attended the Warren High School, at the same time as Mr. Finney.

graduate, advised him not to go, saying that he had already learned to study and think and did not need the recitations, that it was a waste of time to attend them, and that he could easily take the whole four years' course in two. This was verified by the actual experience of Horace Bushnell, who afterwards attended this same high school and then graduated from Yale College in two years. Forty years later Andrew D. White went through Yale, and complains, in his autobiography, that he learned nothing there, except what was in his books, and that he could have learned a great deal more, if he had not been obliged to waste three of the best hours of each day in attending recitations. Mr. Finney followed the advice of his teacher, went to New Jersey to teach school, and at the same time carried on his college studies, going back to Warren, at intervals, to review them with his teacher and to receive further suggestions and assistance. Thus he had mastered the whole college curriculum at the age of twenty-six. His knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Mathematics was as good as that of any graduate who had not pur-

sued post-graduate courses; *but* one thing was lacking—he had not received a college diploma.

No one has ever questioned the scholarship of Father Keep, John P. Cowles, or Henry Cowles, because they secured Yale diplomas. President Mahan secured one at Hamilton College, Dr. Morgan secured one at Williams, President Fairchild secured one at Oberlin. All these were accounted "learned men." If they had not received degrees, they might have been called *ignorant* men. That is the fate which has overtaken their associate, Mr. Finney, in these latter days. Men who never knew him have spoken of him as though he were a fervid, but uneducated exhorter, and in a History of Presbyterianism in Central New York, I was startled to find him charged with "rashness" due to "imperfect education." It is news to the Alumni and ex-students of Oberlin College. It is *news* to the hundreds of thousands of men and women who heard him preach in this country and Great Britain. It affects us much as it would to hear Benjamin Franklin called an ignorant man, though his schooling ended at the

age of ten; or William Cullen Bryant, though he did not get beyond the freshman year; or Joseph Henry, who graduated at an academy, like the Warren high school, and never went to a college.

We should remember that while colleges and professional schools afford *facilities* for acquiring an education, they have no *monopoly.* There were great lawyers before any of the existing law schools were founded, and great preachers and theologians before any of the seminaries came into existence. Great scientists, linguists, statesmen, and economists have grown up entirely outside of the schools. If a man will read, investigate and think, wherever he is, he will become *educated.* No man ever talked with Mr. Finney half an hour without being impressed with the great scope and variety of his learning. It seemed almost presumption to attempt to enlighten him on any subject. Yet, if a man values his reputation, it is not enough to secure an *education;* he must secure a *diploma* and become one of a body of alumni who habitually speak of their college and their fellow alumni as *great.*

Mr. Finney has said, in his "Memoirs":

"I never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticising our English translation of the Bible."

It would be well, if some of our Bible critics were *educated enough* to say the same. Mr. Finney's knowledge of the Greek Testament and Hebrew Bible was much more intimate and profound than that of most seminary graduates.[1]

He had a peculiarly inquiring mind and everything in nature, books, or the affairs of men, interested him. He was not content with a mere smattering of information; it must be full and exact, or he professed ignorance. He was a master of the English language. His style was formed by general reading, but chiefly by studying Shakespeare, Blackstone, the decisions of

[1] One of his most cherished possessions was a handsome copy of Bagster's English Hexapla—which contained the Greek Text of the New Testament, after Scholz, at the head of the pages and, in parallel columns underneath, the six most important English translations (Wickliffe, 1380, Tyndale, 1534, Cranmer, 1539, Geneva, 1558, Anglo-Rhenish, 1582, and King James, 1611). The man who studies these devoutly has little need for self-dependent criticism.

such judges as Chancellors Kent and Livingston, and—after he had once made its acquaintance—the English Bible.

His large library at Oberlin was lined from floor to ceiling with the best English literature—Histories, Biographies, Essays, Commentaries, Scientific and Philosophical Works—everything in fact except Fiction, and the numerous marginal notes in his handwriting showed that they were carefully and thoughtfully read. He dared not indulge in the reading of novels after he entered the ministry, although he had read Richardson, Fielding and De Foe before, and seized with avidity on the Waverly Novels as fast as they appeared. Whenever, in later life, he allowed himself to listen to the reading of a novel, his attention became rapt and he was easily moved to laughter or tears by the wit or pathos of such masters as Charles Reade, Thackeray and Dickens. But he felt and said that it was dissipation—an unwholesome strain upon the emotions. No resulting good could be accomplished and all stirring of the emotions which could not be followed up by appropriate

action was as bad and weakening in its effects on the mind as alcoholic stimulants were on the will and body.

There are many solecisms in the published reports of his "Revival Lectures," but anyone who will turn to the prefaces will discover that Mr. Finney did not write these lectures. They were delivered *ex tempore*. Mr. Joshua Leavitt, publisher of *The Evangelist*, made notes in long hand and wrote them out hurriedly from these notes and sent them to *The Evangelist* for publication. Mr. Finney never saw them until after they were in print. They were reprinted in book form from *The Evangelist* in April, 1835. Mr. Finney was painfully conscious of their imperfections; but, at the time they were published, he had many serious matters to occupy his thoughts—one of them being the question whether or not he should go to Oberlin—and he had no time to revise them carefully. Thus we have, in "Revival Lectures," perhaps half of Mr. Finney's thoughts, clothed in the language of another, except where certain passages were so striking as to fasten themselves in the mind

of the reporter. I doubt if one ever heard an ungrammatical expression, or an imperfectly constructed sentence, come from Mr. Finney's lips. His "Memoirs" are a much more reliable exhibit of his English style, though these, too, were taken down from dictation, after he was 75 years old.

In 1818, Mr. Finney settled down to the study of law at Adams, a lively little town near his paternal home. He read law diligently, became the law clerk of Judge Benjamin Wright, the most prominent lawyer and politician in that region, was admitted to practice at the age of twenty-eight, and at once became active in the profession.

When he first went to Adams he was asked to lead the choir, on account of his musical accomplishments, and he accepted. He organized the young people of the village into a chorus, taught them singing, and led them with his 'cello. They became warmly attached to him, as did all who were brought into contact with him. A year after Mr. Finney went to Adams, Rev. George W. Gale, a graduate of Princeton College and

Seminary, was installed as pastor of the church. He was struck with the intelligence, high character, and remarkable influence of Mr. Finney, and made a confidant of him. On "blue Monday" he often sought him out and asked him what he thought of the sermon the day before. These sermons were always carefully written and left small excuse for criticism as English compositions, but Mr. Finney was painfully candid—he never did flatter anybody—and told him that he did not believe the people understood one-half of what was written and that many of his doctrines were *contrary to reason.* They had many arguments. Mr. Finney was fearless and unsparing in his criticism, and if Monday was "blue" before the interview, it must often have appeared *black* before they got through. Yet Mr. Finney was so manifestly serious and sincere, it was impossible to feel resentment. Mr. Gale did, however, feel deeply concerned at Mr. Finney's mental attitude, and he warned other young people not to talk with him, as he would surely lead them astray.

When the session proposed, in 1821, to try to get up a revival in the church, Mr. Gale said it was of no use; that Mr. Finney's influence with the young people was so great that nothing could be done with them while he remained in Adams. He said that he had labored with Mr. Finney for two years and came nearer to making shipwreck of his own faith than to converting him. He said he found him very intelligent and very hardened and not at all impressed with the importance of religion. Other men about town would say, when approached on the subject of religion, "Well, there's Finney, he attends church all the time—why don't you convert him? If *he* becomes a Christian, I'll think there's something in it." Mr. Gale found himself in a heart breaking position—as many another young minister has—trying, without meeting his arguments, to convert a man who *would reason* instead of accepting the doctrines of the church on authority. His health began to fail and he told them they had better call some one else, as he was not equal to the situation. Church people were filled with doubt and discouragement. The

irreligious laughed and said, "Mr. Finney is too much for them. He is altogether too smart to be caught by such chaff." Some of this talk reached Mr. Finney's ears and ministered to his pride. On Sunday, October 7, 1821, Mr. Gale—sick in body and ill at ease—preached in a half hearted way. There was not the slightest change apparent in the manner of that young man, whose blue eyes almost paralyzed him with their cold, critical searching.

Yet, on the following Thursday morning, excited people spread the news all over town, "Mr. Finney has been *converted.* Mr. *Finney* has been converted." The news seemed too good to be true. Mr. Gale said he did not believe it, and one of the local skeptics said, "It is one of Finney's practical jokes. He is trying to see just what he can make people believe."

That evening the church was crowded with people, without any appointment, eager to hear all about it, and Mr. Finney, himself, rose, without any preliminary exercises, or introduction, and related his experience, and the great revival in Adams began then and there.

There was absolutely nothing in the ministry at that time to attract an ambitious and self-seeking man. Religion was everywhere at a low ebb; the prominent professional and business men had little or nothing to do with it; clergymen were poorly paid and treated with scant respect; Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" and so-called "French Infidelity" had infected the masses; churches and church meetings seemed to be kept up for the exclusive benefit of a few superstitious women and goody-good children. Mr. Finney was proud, ambitious, accomplished and self-seeking, and on the high road to success in his chosen profession. The historian of Jefferson County, New York, speaking of the conversion of Mr. Finney, says:

"He had previously been a law student under Judge Benjamin Wright and evinced an ability and sagacity that would doubtless have made him eminent in that profession."[1]

One of the younger set, who were devoted admirers and followers of Mr. Finney, said:

[1] Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., 1854, p. 76.

"When he abandoned the profession and decided to study for the ministry, we all felt that he had made an awful mistake. That if he had continued in the practice he was destined, in a very short time, to attain the highest position at the bar and in politics." [1]

He was peculiarly fitted to succeed in the practice of law at a time when text-books were almost unknown, when the published reports could all be placed upon a single shelf; [2] and when success depended upon close, logical reasoning from general principles. He, himself, has recorded that he *loved his profession*

[1] Horatio N. Davis, father of Senator Cushman K. Davis.

[2] The text-books were Coke upon Littleton, Blackstone's Commentaries, Fearne on Remainders, Sugden's Law of Vendors, Sugden on Powers, and local Form Books and Treatises on Practice. Chancellor Kent and Joseph Story were still on the bench and had not begun to write the Commentaries and text-books which afterwards became so prominent in the education of lawyers and the opinions of courts. English reports were very expensive and, as a rule, inaccessible to the country lawyers. The New York reports then consisted of Coleman & Caines' Cases, 1 vol.; Caines' Cases, 2 vols.; Caines' Reports, 3 vols.; Johnson's Cases, 3 vols.; Johnson's Chancery Reports, 4 vols., and Johnson's Reports, 18 vols. Besides these a well stocked law library would contain the reports of Connecticut, 9 vols.; Massachusetts, 8 vols.; Vermont, 4 vols.; and the U. S. Supreme Court Reports, 18 vols.

and that the stumbling block in the way of his earlier conversion, was the feeling that if he submitted, he would have to give up his practice and go into the ministry.[1] Every judge and lawyer who heard Mr. Finney preach felt that a great lawyer was lost to the bar of New York, when Charles G. Finney united with the church at Adams. We have said that he was *ambitious.* The petty practice of a country town would not have contented him long. Either he would have moved to a larger city—Utica, Rochester, or Albany—and sought business of a higher type, or he would have gone into politics; and here, again, circumstances were such as to favor a successful career.

Political conditions were chaotic, old parties breaking up, new parties forming and elections turning on the popularity or unpopularity of a single man, or measure, or the eloquence of a particular speaker. The Federalist Party had lost its great leaders and its prestige. The real strife in New York politics was between factions

[1] Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, pp. 25, 36.

of the Republican (Democratic) Party, and Federalists could not hope to succeed, except as they coalesced with one or the other of the factions of the dominant party. It was one of those crises in American history when the management of affairs seems to pass from the old leaders of a dying party to the young men of the opposite party, leaping over an entire generation. The "Revolutionary Statesmen" were being relegated to the rear and young men of ability came rapidly to the front. For example, Silas Wright, three years younger than Mr. Finney, was admitted to the bar at Canton in the adjoining county of St. Lawrence, in 1819; was elected to the State Senate in 1823, to Congress in a district which embraced Jefferson County, in 1827; became Comptroller of State in 1829, United States Senator in 1833, and again in 1837, and Governor of the State in 1844. He became an influential member of the self-appointed clique, called the "Albany Regency," which, under the leadership of Van Buren, dominated the Republican (Democratic) Party and practically dictated all its nominations and appointments—one

of the earliest and most efficient "machines" in politics.[1]

Mr. Finney's opportunity lay in the opposition to this ruling "ring." The Federalists alone had no power to overthrow it; but a great many of the Democrats were dissatisfied and ready to unite with them, or other parties, to overthrow the "ring," whenever a promising issue could be raised, or a persuasive candidate could be found. Thurlow Weed, one of the ablest politicians the State has ever known, directed the opposition to the "Regency" and was on the lookout for strong men, or popular measures, about which to rally the scattered forces of the discontented. He scored his first great victory in 1824 when the "Regency," in mere wantonness of power, deposed De Witt Clinton from the Erie Canal Commission. The Erie Canal owed its inception and successful completion to De Witt Clinton, more than to any other man in the State, and the people of Central New York rose up in wrath, nominated him for Gov-

[1] Hough's History of St. Lawrence County, N. Y., pp. 613 to 615; Autobiography of Thurlow Weed, p. 103.

ernor in a convention of what was called "The People's Party," at Utica, and elected him by an overwhelming majority.[1] Judge Benjamin Wright, in whose office Mr. Finney studied law, was a shrewd politician and a warm personal friend of De Witt Clinton, who appointed him Canal Commissioner at one time and Surrogate of Jefferson County at a later time.[2] Mr. Finney's sympathies would all have been with Clinton, and his mistreatment would have excited his indignation, as injustice and oppression always did. Jefferson County was debatable ground and had been for thirty years, no party having a record of continued success and majorities being very small.[3] Mr. Finney would certainly have taken the stump for Clinton and shared in his triumph. Two results would inevitably have followed. He would have established a wide reputation as a powerful speaker, and that sleepless ambition, which drives the

[1] Autobiography of Thurlow Weed, pp. 74, 109–121, 204, 205; Bancroft's Life of Seward, pp. 15–20.

[2] Emerson's History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 188, 428; Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 76, 368.

[3] Houghes' History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 371, 372.

politician ever onward, would have taken full possession of him. He would have been "rewarded," as was the fashion in those days, by a political appointment, or, more likely, by a nomination and election to the State Senate. This was a position much sought after by young lawyers, for the Senate was then modeled somewhat after the English House of Lords and exercised judicial powers as a Court of Error and Appeal.[1] Here he would have attracted the attention of Thurlow Weed, who would have found in him just the man he needed to head the opposition. Weed, himself, was no speaker.[2] What would have followed may be judged from the career of William H. Seward, who first came into prominence in this campaign of 1824, and was, thereafter, zealously pushed forward by Weed. He was elected State Senator in 1830; nominated for Governor on the Anti-Masonic ticket in 1834; nominated and elected by the Whigs in 1838, and again in 1840; became United

[1] Lothrop's Life of Seward, pp. 19–21.

[2] Autobiography, pp. 106, 172; Bancroft's Life of Seward, pp. 25–31.

States Senator in 1849 and 1855, and a prominent candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1856 and 1860, and was appointed Secretary of State in 1861.

Mr. Finney, if in politics, would have had the advantage of Mr. Seward in every respect. He was nine years his senior in age, two years his senior at the bar, and his commanding figure and penetrating musical voice would have contrasted favorably with the diminutive stature and shrill voice of Seward. Seward says of himself:

"Earlier than I can remember I had a catarrhal affection, which had left my voice husky and incapable of free intonation. I had occasion throughout my college course to discover that I was unsuccessful in declamation." [1]

His biographer says of him:

"Seward had no special gift of voice, or presence. He was below the average height, with nothing commanding in his appearance, and his voice was harsh and shrill, but there was courage and earnestness about his campaign speeches . . . which made them most effective." [2]

[1] Lothrop's Life of Seward, p. 60.
[2] Bancroft's Life of Seward, p. 10.

As for courage and earnestness, Mr. Finney was more than a match for Seward and he would have been more consistent in his political action. His well-known convictions at each stage of political evolution, corresponded closely with Seward's, down to 1860, when the latter seemed disposed to surrender all the principles for which the Republicans had fought and won, in a vain effort to placate the South.

Loved, admired, respected, with a large and devoted following, if any man should have been satisfied with his prospects in life and could have got along without religion in this world, it was Charles G. Finney at the age of twenty-nine.

His conversion resulted from thoughtful reading of the Bible, a copy of which he had bought shortly after beginning the study of the law—the first he had ever owned. He had read many books before—everything, in fact, he could find within a day's walk of places where he chanced to live—but this book was *different*. It was the only book that described God as having any interest in, or direct influence over the affairs of men, as asserting Divine authority and promis-

ing to reward or punish men according to their deserts. It kindled new thoughts in his active mind and he began to see in dim outline the great scheme of the moral universe. In a few months' time, he became convinced that the Bible was indeed the word of God; that no men could have written such a book without being Divinely inspired. He then studied it with the diligence that he had before given to the New York Statutes and Reports and to his legal text-books.

He had developed a well-rounded creed of his own, before he was oppressed with the feeling that it was time to *act*. Religion was simply a life of obedience to God. Conversion was simply a determination to lead that life. It involved a complete surrender of one's own plans and wishes. Anything short of this was persistence in disobedience, and disobedience was sin. Mr. Finney's life had been correct, judged by human standards, and he could only accuse himself of pride, wilfulness, and an indifference to religion which amounted to contempt of God. But these were *real* offenses.

He began to feel the need of pardon and for-

giveness. Then arose the question of the *terms* of forgiveness. He indulged in secret prayer. And the more he read and prayed, the more convinced he became that he must get rid of his pride and ambition, must give up the profession which he loved, and the political prospects which glittered before him, and must atone for his previous indifference—by supreme devotion to the Master's service. Could he do it? What would people say? The very reiteration of these questions revealed to him the sinfulness of his heart, the proud and selfish spirit which had actuated him all along. Then followed that great emotional struggle, of which no man but himself was aware at the time, lasting three days and three nights, at the end of which he made a complete surrender, gave up everything for which he had planned and worked, and received the assurance that he was forgiven. The struggle was so severe and the joy of adoption so overwhelming, that he always remembered and often celebrated the day of this "new birth," October 10, 1821. The keynote of his whole subsequent career is found in his remark to a client, next morning:

"I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause, and you must go and get some one else to attend to *your* law suit. I cannot do it."

He refused all offers of business after that, because he did not dare trust himself in the excitement of a contested law suit. He began, at once, to work for the conversion of others. He called his choir together, confessed that he had been a stumbling block in the way of their conversion, asked for their forgiveness, related his experience, urged them to become Christians at once, and prayed with them; and all joined the church within a short time. One of these converts was a daughter of Judge Wright, who became the mother of Bishop Henry B. Whipple, of Minnesota.[1] Can anyone estimate the far-reaching consequences of a single conversion? In a few days he went to Henderson, spoke to his parents and appointed a prayer and conference meeting at the Baptist church—then without a pastor—and a revival began there. Wherever he was known, the most powerful argument that could

[1] Emerson's History of Jefferson County, N. Y., pp. 428, 429.

be used was the fact of his own conversion. If this intellectual skeptic, this promising lawyer and rising politician, this boon companion and social leader had become converted, there must be something in religion. Men's attention was arrested, their thoughts were engaged, and they yielded to his arguments and prayers almost instantly.[1] Long before Mr. Finney was licensed to preach, he had accomplished more in the way of converting souls than most ministers do in a life time.

When he announced his intention to study for the ministry, the local Presbytery committed him to the care of Mr. Gale, and he pursued his studies under Mr. Gale's direction and part of the time at his house. His theological education seems to have consisted largely in reading his Bible and *disputing* certain doctrines of the Old School Presbyterians. He accepted nothing on Mr. Gale's say-so, and the fact that such and such views were held *at Princeton* made no impression upon him. He continued to *reason,* and to

[1] Davenport's Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, pp. 190, 191.

accept nothing that his *reason* did not commend, and poor Mr. Gale said again and again:

"Mr. Finney, if you continue to argue and reason, you will land in infidelity, just as many of the students at Princeton have done. You must accept some things on the faith of the great fathers of the church, and not be so opinionated."

The fruit of this reliance on his own *reasoning* was seen in his absolute confidence in his *conclusions.* He not only rested on convictions so reached, but he believed that he could convince *any man,* who was honest and earnest, of the truth of his views. This was one secret of his tremendous power over adults.

After he was licensed to preach, wherever he went he sought out privately, or contrived to have brought before him, the men of character and intelligence who were indifferent, or openly opposed to religion, and *reasoned* with them. He would say:

"I have not come to find fault, I have been in the same position myself. I may be able to help

you solve some of your difficulties. I think I have found the truth. Let us talk it over and see if you are mistaken, or whether I am all wrong."

And he almost *never failed,* if the man was really a man of character, and had no secret vices. Among the first to be converted in Rome, Utica and Rochester were the Presidents of Infidel Clubs founded on Tom Paine's "Age of Reason." If Tom Paine had been living, Mr. Finney would undoubtedly have sought *him* out and *reasoned* with him.

In the midst of the revival at Adams, a leading preacher of the Universalist church appeared on the scene and, in rival meetings, deprecated the excitement among the young people, said that they were needlessly alarmed, God's mercy was not limited, they ought not to go about making themselves and everyone else unhappy. No man need be *scared* into the Kingdom of Heaven; they would all get there in good time, &c., &c. The effect on the progress of the revival was paralyzing and the elders of the church urged Mr. Gale to make direct reply, but Mr.

Gale was in ill health and really unfitted by his training to *reason* with an unbeliever. He asked Mr. Finney—who had just begun his "Study of Theology" to make some reply. Mr. Finney's action was characteristic. He got up before the people at prayer meeting and said: "I will hear this man. I will give due weight to his arguments. I will read my Bible. I will study and pray, and if you will come here one week from to-night, I will either convince you that he is wrong, or, *I will become a Universalist myself.*" This was not bravado, but the sincere declaration of a man, who was willing to put everything to the test and accept any conclusion to which his examination led him. Mr. Gale was shocked at his temerity and all were a little fearful about the outcome; but one week from that night they came, the house was crowded, and *he came* and—it is needless to say—*he did not become a Universalist.* Starting with their fundamental doctrine, he said that Christ died, indeed, for *all* men, but it did not follow that all would be saved. There was no such thing as *automatic salvation.* It was not only contrary

to Scripture, but was condemned *by reason* as absurd. A man must repent and do works meet for repentance, or he could never be classed with the righteous. The responsibility for success or failure was placed squarely on the individual, when once a way had been opened, &c. The decline of the Universalist church, which was strong at one time, was due, largely, to the undermining effect of its own commonly received doctrine. If all men are to be saved, anyhow, why go to the trouble and expense of keeping up churches?

When the Bench and Bar of Rochester, New York, united in a written request to Mr. Finney to deliver a series of lectures for their especial benefit, he was warned that they were mostly Deists, and not particularly concerned about their soul's salvation; that they had all read Tom Paine and did not believe in the Bible; and that many of them signed just out of curiosity to hear what kind of an argument a *lawyer* could put up for religion. Mr. Finney accepted the challenge, took the Bible from its place on the pulpit and said he would not replace it, until

they were convinced in their hearts that it ought to be there and that they needed it.

He took for the text of his first discourse, *"Do We Know Anything?"* and reasoned from the facts of common experience and the dictates of common sense for nine successive sessions, of two hours each. He awakened in every mind a conviction of sin; the certainty that an *omniscient* God must know and disapprove of it; the certainty that a *just* God would punish it, as an infraction of the moral law which was written in every heart; that we all saw sinners escaping just punishment in this world and, as lawyers, sometimes helped them to escape; that this brought contempt on the administration of justice here on earth, and that like contempt would be felt for God's government, unless we believed that somehow, somewhere, they would get their just deserts; that no one who believed in God at all could doubt his *power* to administer punishment and that it would be *right* to do so. The penalties for violating Nature's laws were inexorable and everlasting. They could derive no comfort from analogy, and common sense could

not show them how to escape like consequences for a violation of the Moral Law. The sinner's case was *hopeless* and deservedly so. He searched their consciences. With his knowledge of human nature, he lifted the veil from long hidden faults and exposed their failings and corruption to themselves. If you won't obey God or the dictates of your own consciences now, why should you ever do so? Even if you make up your minds to do so from now henceforth, how are you going to atone for the sins already committed? You can never make good even to your fellow-men, the losses you have inflicted upon them. *Damages,* as every lawyer knows, are poor reparation for sufferings inflicted by wilful misconduct. How, then, can you satisfy the demands of the moral Ruler of the Universe, to whom damages are as dust in the balance, an earthly expedient beneath contempt?

Then he took the Bible and they listened, with streaming eyes, as he read the tender passages of Scripture, revealing God's love and fatherly solicitude and the Gospel Plan of Salvation.

"And that is the book," he said, "which you have removed from your shelves to make room for Tom Paine's shallow 'Age of Reason'! How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" The effect was tremendous. Judge Gardiner, of the New York Court of Appeals, crept up the pulpit steps and said, "Mr. Finney I am convinced. Won't you pray for me by name and I will take the anxious seat." The lawyers rose *en masse* and crowded to the front and knelt down for prayers. Nearly every one was converted. Many of them gave up their profession and went into the ministry. The revival swept the whole community and spread from it as a centre in every direction. Oh, that we had that magnificent argument in permanent form! It could not be comprehended by children of sixteen, but it might continue to save *men,* as it did when originally delivered.

Mr. Finney never went into the pulpit without a determination to win his case. He wanted a verdict from every audience he faced, and if he did not get it, he felt that his sermon

was wasted. He aimed at producing conviction, confession, repentance, restitution, submission, prayer for forgiveness, and self dedication to God's service. Unless a man is convicted of sin, nothing can be done with him, because he feels no need of Salvation. Christ did not die for *him*. It was in his efforts to produce this necessary conviction that Mr. Finney displayed his wonderful knowledge of human nature and set up the most exalted standard of ethics.

"If you design to make an *impression* contrary to the naked truth—*you lie.*"

" If, in managing an estate, you gain for *yourself* some advantage which you might have gained for the estate—*you steal.*"

He said, in 1834, to an audience of New York business men:

" The reason there is not more pure piety in New York City is that almost every one is guilty of some form of dishonesty."

He struck at the present day evil of *"Rebates"* when, in 1834, he denounced at one and the same time the merchant who asked one price and would take another; and the customer who, when

told the price of an article, immediately tried to get it for less. Both were trying to deceive and each was seeking to get an undue advantage of the other. The customer, who supposed he was getting goods for less than their true value, must also have supposed that other customers would have to pay more in order to make up for the loss. He therefore was willing to rob others that he himself might become rich.

The Tappans, merchant princes, were so impressed with this argument that they adopted the one price plan and, strange to say, lost a large percentage of their customers, who insisted on buying their goods for less than they supposed any one else would have to pay.

He sounded the key note of *civic reform* when he preached to his congregation in the Broadway Tabernacle:

"Instead of voting for a man because he belongs to your party . . . you must find out whether he is honest and fit to be trusted. . . . If you will give your vote only for honest men, the country will be obliged to have honest rulers. All parties will be compelled to put up honest men as candidates."

He would not preach the doctrine of "Imputed Sin," because he believed every man had quite enough sins of his own to atone for. His favorite recipe for the "uncou gude" was to have him write down any doubtful act he had ever been guilty of, then go to his neighbor against whom the fault was committed and make confession and restitution, then try to think of another and set it down. "Once you have begun," he adds, cheerfully, "you will be surprised to see how easy it is to remember others, and how little conceit you will have left."

He insisted on confession and restitution and would promise relief on no other terms.

"If you have defrauded anybody, send the money—the full amount—*and the interest.*"

"If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him a letter and confess the injury, *pay the postage* and put it into the mail immediately."

He had to be particular about the postage, for, in his day, letters could be sent at the expense of the person addressed.

"A man does not forsake his sins until he has made all the reparation in his power."

"If you think you can practice a *little* dishonesty and yet continue to enjoy the presence of God, you deceive yourselves."

He spoke of sins prevalent in the communities he visited, in the most direct and scathing terms. He called a spade, "a spade" and not "an agricultural implement compounded of wood and iron." An unrepentant sinner was a *wretch,* to be *despised* and *condemned,* and not a mere *unfortunate,* to be pitied and coddled.

Men often resented what they regarded as personal allusions, and threatened to chastise and even kill him; but there was something so majestic in his bearing, so earnest and sincere in his words and manner, that no one ever got near to him without being overcome. He never had a personal encounter after he entered the ministry.[1] One man said:

[1] An amusing story used to go the rounds, periodically, that Mr. Finney, walking on the tow path of the Erie Canal near Rome, met a boatman who was cursing fearfully at his horses, who were tired and balky. Mr. Finney stopped him and said, "See here! Do you know where you are going?" The man said,

"When I heard about what Finney said, I wanted to thrash him; when I *saw* him, I had my doubts as to whether I *could;* and when I *heard* him, he could do what he pleased with me."

He was not content with mere "professions of faith." There must be newness of life. He cleaned up every community he visited—and so thoroughly, that they stayed clean for at least a generation afterwards.

What Dr. Bush says of the revival in Rochester might be said of every place in which he preached:

"Yes, d—n it! I am going to Rome, if I can ever get these—— —— horses to move along." "No you are not," said Mr. Finney, "you are going straight to hell." "Is that so?" said the boatman. "Well! do you know where *you* are going?" Mr. Finney expressed the hope that he would get to Heaven. "That shows how little you know," said the boatman. "You are going into the canal," and he seized him and threw him in. When pressed for an answer as to whether this story was true, Mr. Finney laughed. "Ask any man that ever wrestled with me. Ask the men who tried to initiate me in the Masonic Lodge at Adams, whether they believe that yarn is true. I never saw a boatman that *could* put me in the canal." It seems that during an initiation, when Mr. Finney was blindfolded and half dressed, some one took an indecent liberty with his person. He resented it hotly and laid about him with such vigor that all who could not get out of the room were badly bruised and disfigured and the furniture was smashed to pieces.

" . . . The courts and the prisons bore witness to its blessed effects. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterwards." [1]

When Mr. Finney was licensed to preach, he first went to small towns in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, under the auspices of a Women's Missionary Society. He preached in churches, school houses, barns—anywhere where he could gather an audience. As Dr. Bush said:

"The amount of hard work for brain and muscle performed by that man in those six months was something prodigious." [2]

He preached three times on Sundays and three or four times during the week, attended prayer and inquiry meetings, went from house to house talking and praying with the people, and was accessible to visitors at all hours of the day or night. His sermons averaged two hours in length and often extended to two and a half or three. Yet whether he preached in the back

[1] Reminiscences, p. 15. [2] Reminiscences, p. 11.

woods, or the cities of New York, or in the great city of London, his audience never seemed to weary, and it was a rare circumstance for any to go out. Such interest can only be awakened and kept up by an engaging personality, by the highest oratorical power, by ever varying the themes and illustrations, and by presenting new thoughts, or old thoughts clothed in new and striking phraseology. The first half hour was usually didactic and expository. He defined words largely by stating what they did *not* mean, thus getting rid of popular misconceptions; then he proceeded to make practical application of the doctrine embodied in the text to the affairs of life, and to point out what sort of people it was intended to fit, and there were just such persons in nearly every audience. On one occasion he was describing the petty advantages trustees may secure at the expense of the beneficiaries, exchanging their own doubtful or worthless securities for valuable assets belonging to the estate, &c., and said: "If I were omniscient, as God is, I could doubtless name persons in this very audience who are guilty of just such

practices." A respected citizen cried out: "Name me!" and sank down in an agony of shame and contrition. Mr. Finney said he knew of hundreds of just such cases, and thousands where the parties made no public confession, but made immediate restitution. In most of these cases, he had no actual knowledge of wrong-doing. He simply had—what he said all ministers should have to be effective—a thorough knowledge of human nature and the courage to denounce sin, though the sinner sat right before him. All this part of the sermon was clear, logical, and forcible, and delivered in the manner of the class-room, or court-room, rather than that of the pulpit or platform. Then he closed with "a few remarks" which might last half an hour, or an hour and a half—no one ever knew, or cared to know, for it was at this stage of the sermon that he summoned every power of imagination, feeling, gesture and facial expression to his aid, and his wonderful word-paintings thrilled his audience, and his appeals to the emotions were most effective.

And it was here, all reports of his sermons

completely fail. Mr. Finney never wrote but two sermons in his life and that was at the very outset of his career. He always preached *ex tempore,* because it was the most effective method and because he thought the time given to writing out and polishing up sermons might better be given to reading, prayer and meditation. He gave more thought to the substance of his discourse than would have been possible if he had attempted to reduce it to writing. "What would be thought of a lawyer," he used to say, "who should stand up before a jury and read an essay to them? He would lose his case!"

All that is left of his sermons—saving a few "skeletons" or outlines of his discourses prepared by himself—is what has filtered through the minds of non-professional reporters like Rev. Joshua R. Leavitt, Rev. Henry Cowles and Rev. Samuel D. Cochran. The style of each of these men impressed itself on Mr. Finney's thought, in transmission, and it was impossible for them to convey all of his thought, much less his imagery and pathos. A professional stenographer was employed at one time to re-

port his sermons in Niblo's Theatre, New York City. He succeeded very well for fifteen or twenty minutes, but when Mr. Finney began to warm up, and his words began to glow with feeling, he forgot entirely what he was there for and sat, with idle pencil, in open-mouthed astonishment. He could not be persuaded to try again.

Dr. Edwards Park said:

"Some of his rhetorical utterances were indescribable . . . but if every word of it were on the printed page, it would not be the identical sermon of the living preacher."[1]

We can only refer to the impression made upon the minds of his auditors, and judge of the effort by the tremendous results.

Dr. Theodore Cuyler says:

"Charles G. Finney was the acknowledged king of American evangelists. . . . His sermons were chain lightning, flashing conviction into the hearts of the stoutest skeptics and the links of his logic were so compact they defied

[1] Charles Grandison Finney, by G. Frederick Wright, pp. 72, 74.

resistance. Probably no minister in America ever numbered among his converts so many lawyers and men of culture."[1]

Prof. Davenport says:

"No explanation of Finney's career would be at all sufficient which did not take into account the almost preternatural influence of suggestion which he exercised over men's minds. His power to compel individuals and audiences to his will and purposes was, it seems to me, the most extraordinary that appears in any evangelist."

" . . . So no explanation would be at all adequate which did not recognize his higher ethical and spiritual qualities and especially the possession of a very clear and vigorous mind."[2]

Rev. Dr. Stanton, of Cincinnati, said:

"I have heard many of the great preachers of the day and I regard him as the greatest preacher I ever heard."[3]

William E. Dodge, a New York business man, said:

[1] Recollections of a Long Life, p. 215.
[2] Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, pp. 194, 195, 201.
[3] Reminiscences, p. 26.

"He was the most remarkable preacher that I have ever listened to. He would hold those audiences in Prince Street and the Tabernacle for an hour and a half or two hours and no one seemed to think that the time hung heavy." [1]

Dr. Joseph P. Thompson, one of his successors in the pulpit of the Broadway Tabernacle, gives a most interesting account of the way Mr. Finney prepared his sermons, and analyzes his power as follows:

"Mr. Finney's method of preaching was peculiar. Gifted with fine powers of analysis which were early disciplined in the study of law, he has also the constructive faculty in a high degree; so that he can at once dissect an error, or sophism, analyze a complex feeling, motive, or action, and build a logical argument with cumulative force. With these he combines a vivid imagination and the power of graphic description. Nor, with the seeming sharpness and severity of his logic and the terrors which his fancy portrays, is he wanting in tenderness of feeling. His experimental knowledge of Divine truth is deep and thorough; and his knowledge of

[1] Reminiscences, p. 33.

the workings of the human mind under that truth is extended and philosophical. Hence his preaching searches the conscience, convinces the judgment and stirs the will either to assent or to rebellion. His elocution, though unstudied and sometimes inelegant, is strangely effective; and, in the proper mood of an assembly, a pause, a gesture, an emphasis, an inflection, an exclamation, will produce the highest oratorical effects. The conviction of sincerity attends his words; the force of an earnest mind goes with his logic."[1]

He was unconsciously dramatic; never theatrical. One of the most impressive sermons I ever heard him deliver was on the text:

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."[2]

It was an exposition of merciless justice; of what guilty men had the right to expect; of the futility of the excuses men were prone to offer for evil courses; and of the terrors that would overtake them when judgment was at hand.

[1] Last Sabbath in the Broadway Tabernacle, pp. 14, 15.
[2] Isaiah xxviii, 17.

Then, right before our eyes, he conjured up such a fearful storm of wind, rain and hail that I grew chilled through and through. I shivered and buttoned my coat up tight and I saw uneasiness and apprehension depicted on the faces of all around me.

I was never more astonished in my life than when I went outside and saw the world bathed in sunlight, the birds twittering, and all as calm and serene as a June day could ever be.

And yet I have been told that I never heard Mr. Finney preach; that his powers were on the decline before I had come to years of understanding!

How he did it I cannot tell. No one can tell. He probably could not tell, himself. He just imagined the coming of an awful storm and then described what he imagined, and we saw and felt all that he imagined.

You can read Prof. Cowles' report of this very sermon;[1] but you will not find in it a word that even *suggests* this part of the sermon. The

[1] Gospel Themes, p. 119.

sermon itself was an hour and a half long; you can read Prof. Cowles' report in fifteen minutes.

If you were to ask any man, who had heard Mr. Finney preach between the years 1824 and 1860, "What was the most impressive sermon you ever heard?" the chances are one hundred to one, he would name some one of Mr. Finney's.

Dr. Edward Beecher says a sermon Mr. Finney preached in the Park Street Church, Boston, in 1831, was

"the most impressive and powerful sermon I ever heard. No one can form any conception of the power of his appeal." [1]

Dr. Edwards Park says the greatest sermon *he* ever heard was one preached by Mr. Finney in Andover, on the text, "The Wages of Sin is Death." Romans vi, 23.

"Every one of the men [sitting with him] was trembling with excitement."

General J. D. Cox has told me of the tremendous effect of a sermon preached from the same

[1] Wright's Charles Grandison Finney, p. 105.

text in Niblo's Theatre in New York. But the greatest sermon *he* ever heard was one from the text, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews ii, 3. General Cox was a cool man, a brave man, not given to hysterics, and, like Mr. Finney, he *would reason.* Yet, at the close of that sermon, when sinners were invited to come forward and accept the proffered salvation, and the aisles were crowded, he went leaping down to the front, using the backs of the seats as stepping stones. He believed then that if he remained in his seat *one minute* his soul would be lost. Various efforts have been made to define this power. Some writers call it "psychic influence"; some, the "power of suggestion." Some say he had "personal magnetism"; others, a "high hypnotic potential." I call it a transcendent power of *communicating* thought, imagination and feeling. But none of these definitions help us to understand it, or acquire it.

His success among the rude frontier settlers might be attributed to the reawakening of a sense of decency in the hearts of men conscious of their

coarseness and degradation. The people knew they were leading immoral lives and didn't need any argument to convince them of sin. All they needed was a cogent appeal to abandon it. But when Mr. Finney began preaching in the cities—Rome, Utica, Auburn, Troy, Rochester—he had an altogether different class to deal with, and his success was even more phenomenal. The revival in these places began at the top and worked downwards. The first to be converted were the educated men, leading citizens, respected judges, lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants, manufacturers—and they constituted the prominent portion of his audiences to the end. The whole community was involved in serious thought and conversation, and the very atmosphere seemed charged with emotion.[1] During twenty days spent in Rome there were five hundred conversions. "Nearly all the adult population of the town were brought into the church." In Utica and vicinity some fifteen hundred were added to the churches in a six weeks' campaign. In the

[1] Davenport, Primitive Traits, p. 192.

Oneida Presbytery, alone, over three thousand conversions were reported as the result of his labors in the year 1826.

Then a strange thing happened. Christ said to His apostles: "They shall put you out of the synagogues." John xvi, 2. This was spoken of the Jews; but the Presbyterians took it upon themselves to fulfil the prophecy in the nineteenth century. As the news of these revivals spread, a powerful opposition was awakened. It seemed as though the thing most to be dreaded by all orthodox Presbyterians, was a sudden increase in church membership. Dr. Morgan has recorded that even *he* "was *shocked* with the rapidity with which converts were admitted to the churches." [1] Dr. Lyman Beecher of Boston, Dr. N. W. Taylor of New Haven, and Dr. Asahel Nettleton, having no personal knowledge of the facts and misled by some very sensational reports of the meetings, began writing letters to the brethren, in New York State and elsewhere, warning them against Mr. Finney and his "new

[1] Reminiscences, p. 57.

measures," advising them not to invite him to their pulpits, or to countenance his revivals. These letters were received, among others, by pastors with whom he had been working at Rome, Utica, Clinton, Auburn, and Troy, and were shown to him. The objectors were shining lights in the church, all of them successful revivalists of high repute. To a man of Mr. Finney's sensitiveness, this concerted movement to suppress him was a profound shock. For a time all seemed dark before him, and it seemed certain that he must give up preaching and go back to the practice of the law. He tried to think of all occasions for offense he had given, he wept and prayed, and the 'cello, long neglected, was again brought into requisition. At last he received the assurance that he need not give up, that if he would persevere, the way would be made plain before him, and opposition would cease. Mr. Finney's friends and coadjutors set to work in earnest and under the leadership of Dr. Beman, of Troy, secured a conference at New Lebanon, in July, 1827, to which Dr. Beecher, Dr. Nettleton, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Hawes of Hartford,

President Humphreys of Amherst College, Justin Edwards of Andover, and other New England clergymen came, to talk matters over with the clergy of Auburn, Rome, Utica, Clinton, and Troy. The conference lasted nine days. When the facts were presented, their minds were disabused, their prejudices largely dissipated, and all but Dr. Nettleton professed to be satisfied with the explanations made. On his way home from this conference, Dr. Beecher is reported to have said,

"We crossed the mountains expecting to meet a company of *boys,* but we found them to be *full grown men.*" [1]

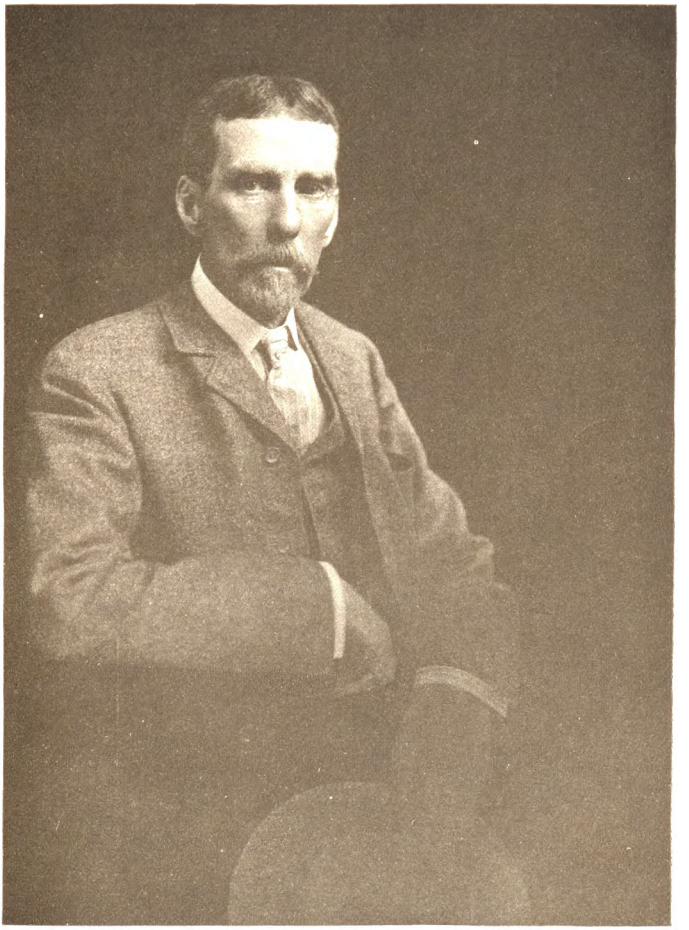
Mr. Finney, himself, had very little to say, but the depth of his feeling, and the warmth of his gratitude to the men who stood by him in this extremity, may be judged from the fact that his oldest son, born three years later, was named Charles *Beman* after Dr. Beman of Troy, and his second son, the donor of this Chapel—born

[1] Wright's Charles Grandison Finney, p. 94.

five years later—was named Frederic *Norton* after Dr. Norton of Clinton.[1]

Although the New Lebanon Conference had tended thus to clear the atmosphere, the New York City pastors were still so prejudiced that none of them would invite Mr. Finney to his pulpit. Many of the laymen were anxious to hear him, and Anson G. Phelps determined that he should be heard in New York City. He hired a vacant church that could be had for three months, and sent for him, agreeing to pay all the expenses of carrying on the meetings. When the three months were out, Mr. Phelps purchased a Universalist Church in Prince Street near Broadway, and services were carried on there for several months. As there was no organized church, converts were instructed to unite with the church they had been accustomed to attend,

[1] The *middle* name in each case was given in honor of one of his friends, *Beman* and *Norton*. The first name of one, Charles, was after himself, and the first name of the other, Frederic, bestowed in 1832, was given in honor of Jean *Frederic* Oberlin, whose life he had just been reading with sympathetic interest. It was a singular coincidence that, at the same time, John J. Shipherd was reading this life of Oberlin out in Elyria, Ohio, and gave that name to the institution which he was about to found.



FREDERIC NORTON FINNEY

or the one nearest to where they lived, and thus, as a result of his preaching, every Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Baptist Church in New York City reported accessions of from fifty to two hundred in 1830. They were received into churches which were opposed to revivals, and constituted a helpless minority, and Mr. Phelps, the Tappans and others, who were by this time interested, decided that they ought to be gathered into churches of their own, where their new zeal could have a chance to show itself and induce further growth. So the first Free Presbyterian Church was organized and put under the charge of Rev. Joel Parker, of Rochester, New York, and it prospered so greatly that a Second Free Presbyterian Church was organized and, in 1832, the Chatham Street Theatre was purchased and converted into a chapel on condition that Mr. Finney would become its pastor. In the meantime he had been having powerful revival meetings at Rochester, Auburn, Buffalo, Providence, and Boston. He commenced in April, 1832, and worked right through the summer, although New York City had a terrible visitation of the cholera

and he could count five hearses at a time drawn up at doors on the street where he lived. Finally, in the fall, he was stricken with the disease and could not preach again until the following spring. Then, although still weak, he began his labors with such power that five hundred members were added in a few weeks, and another and another colony was sent off to form new churches. In February, 1835, Lewis Tappan wrote to the English Commissioners who came to study the State of Religion in America, that as a result of this movement four churches had been organized in as many years, with a total membership of fifteen hundred and eighty-seven; that steps were being taken to organize two more, and that fifty-one young men belonging to these churches were studying for the ministry,[1] and, he added:

"More than half the persons who are hopefully converted in these congregations unite with other churches, owing to various circumstances."

[1] Letter of Lewis Tappan, Feb. 1, 1835, published as Appendix VIII to Reed & Matheson's Visit to American Churches, pp. 345, 346.

"Could suitable ministers be procured it would be no difficult thing for the membership of the Free Churches to *organize many new churches every year.*" [1]

In the fall of 1833 Mr. Finney's friends decided to build for him a large church with a seating capacity of twenty-five hundred and a total capacity of four thousand. He designed the structure himself. It was exactly one hundred feet square, with plain brick walls, located fifty feet from Broadway in the centre of a built-up block, so that not a dollar should be wasted on external ornament. He cared more for acoustics than æsthetics. It had a deep gallery all around and a spacious platform about one-third of the way from the back to the front. Every listener was within eighty feet of the speaker. It was, when finished, the most perfect auditorium in New York City. As one of his successors said, "it was one in which the speaker could speak and the hearers hear, *without effort.*" It cost $66,500. Under the rear gallery were

[1] *Ibid.*, 351. See also Thompson's Last Sabbath in the Broadway Tabernacle, p. 12.

arranged rooms for the pastor's study, and a large class-room where it was expected that he would give instruction to the young men who were preparing for the ministry.[1] Services were held in it for the first time in April, 1835. Mr. Finney now had just what he wanted, a πού στῶ from which to lift the whole new world. It was not merely that New York was the largest city on the Continent and capable in itself of furnishing large and ever changing audiences—but it was the landing place of nearly all European emigrants—English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, German, Scandinavian; it was the place to which merchants, planters, and manufacturers went from all parts of the country, to trade and lay in their stocks of goods and supplies. They had to go to this great mart of commerce several times a year, because "commercial travellers" were then unknown. Where on earth could a man hope to exercise a greater influence? If

[1] Memoir of David Hale, by Rev. Jos. P. Thompson, p. 62; Thompson's Last Sabbath in The Broadway Tabernacle, pp. 13–16; Sermon of Rev. Charles E. Jefferson at 60th Anniversary of The Broadway Tabernacle, pp. 9–11. These gentlemen are not always accurate as to dates, which are as stated in the text.

he regarded *fame*—where could he find a better opportunity to achieve it? If he wished to prepare young men for the ministry, the class-room was ready, and fifty-one of his own converts were eager to begin their studies.

Now occurred what I must regard as the most extraordinary incident in this extraordinary life. Father Shipherd, having secured about the most undesirable tract of land to be found in Northern Ohio and founded a school in which labor and learning were to go hand in hand, having cleared about twenty acres, erected Oberlin Hall (a two-story frame building about thirty-five by forty feet), a saw mill and a few shanties, and having gotten together about a hundred students—only four of whom were far enough advanced to be called freshmen—went to New York City and asked Mr. Finney to leave his church and the great field opening before him and come out to *Oberlin* to be a Professor of Theology. Was there ever a more absurd proposition?

About the same time, a country clergyman in New England was invited to come out and become one of the professors. He declined the

appointment, saying that a friend whose judgment he was bound to respect, had urged the greatest caution, since Oberlin was *only an experiment,* and further, "it was the offspring of a projector, who is a son of a projector whose projects have always failed."[1] That was what might be called "the *common sense* answer" to such a proposition. But Mr. Shipherd had one of the elements of a successful projector, the *nerve to ask* for what he wanted. The New England clergyman had comparatively little to lose. Mr. Finney was asked to throw away the finest opportunity that any preacher of his day and generation ever had—not merely an opportunity to preach to large crowds and become famous—but an opportunity to do untold good. What other clergymen would have done, under like circumstances, may be judged from Dr. Cuyler's attitude—after the future of Oberlin was secure beyond a reasonable doubt. Mr. Finney, being eighty years old and unable longer to preach regularly, was trying to find a man to

[1] Leonard's Story of Oberlin, p. 105.

fill the First Church pulpit. He wrote to Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, pleading with him to come.

"I think there is no more important field of ministerial labor in the world. I know that you have a great congregation in Brooklyn and are mightily prospered in your labors, but your flock does not contain a *thousand students* pursuing the higher branches of education from year to year. Surely your field in Brooklyn is not more important than mine was at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, nor can your people be more attached to you than mine were to me."[1]

Dr. Cuyler writes, "the kind overture was promptly declined," and does not seem to think his decision requires any explanation, or apology. There were favorable considerations presented to *him,* that could not be presented to Mr. Finney. And yet, Mr. Finney left the Broadway Tabernacle, just one month after it was completed, and came to Oberlin. Dr. Charles E. Jefferson said, on the sixtieth Anniversary of the Broadway Tabernacle:

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[1] Recollections of a Long Life, Theodore L. Cuyler, p. 219.

"What might have been the future under Mr. Finney's continued leadership we shall never know, for at the end of the first year, two visitors arrived from the West who carried him to Ohio, to become the head of *a little school just organized at Oberlin.*"

The last seven words of Dr. Jefferson express his opinion of the move. He was not even to be the *head* of the "little school!"

In 1851 Dr. John Campbell of London, in bidding farewell to Mr. Finney, after nine months of continuous revival preaching, said:

"We cannot say that we are much gratified at the thought of Mr. Finney's returning to College duties and the general ministry of a rural charge. We do not consider that such is the place for the man; and we must be allowed to think that fifteen years ago a mistake was committed when he became located in the midst of academic bowers. . . . He is made for the millions—his place is in the pulpit, rather than the professor's chair. He is a Heaven-born sovereign of the people. The people he loves; and the mass of the people all but idolize him."

These men probably voiced the sentiment of thousands of Mr. Finney's friends and admirers.

Why did he go? I think the best answer which can be given to that question is, *because he did not want to.* That was the answer he gave to a friend who asked him why he went to *Boston* to preach, when he had remarked that the conditions were more discouraging there than in any large city which he visited.[1] Whenever he did what he did not want to do his labors were especially blessed. It was so when he went to Rochester, after he and all the friends he consulted had concluded that he ought *not* to go there, because the outlook was so unfavorable.

In the summer of 1834, Arthur Tappan had asked him to go out to Cincinnati and prepare a class of forty young men for the ministry, and offered to pay all the expenses. These young men had left Lane Seminary in a body, when the Trustees passed a resolution suppressing the discussion of Slavery, and were still holding together at Cumminsville, a suburb of Cincinnati. It was a splendid class, their average age was twenty-six, they were men of mature judgment,

[1] Deacon Lamson, Reminiscences, p. 41.

well grounded in classical studies and practiced in debate. Two-thirds of them were from New York State and New England, and a majority of them were Mr. Finney's own converts. Of course, he was interested in them and anxious to accommodate Mr. Tappan; but he said he could not leave his church, and made the sensible suggestion that as soon as his class-room in the Broadway Tabernacle was ready for use they should be brought on to New York and receive instruction there. He considered the matter as settled and went on to prepare and deliver that course of "Lectures on Revivals," which had such a wide circulation and influence. Then came Father Shipherd and Rev. Asa Mahan, who put themselves into communication with the Tappans and reopened the whole question. Mr. Finney did not want to leave his church and, with remarkable foresight, stated the hazards of the new enterprise and the objections to leaving his work in the city, to embark on what Dr. Leonard rightly calls a "tremendous venture." [1]

[1] Leonard's Story of Oberlin, p. 278.

But all his demands were met and at last the question presented itself in this form: Dr. Mahan and Professor Morgan and at least forty students of Theology will go to Oberlin if you go. The Tappans and their friends will provide salaries for eight professors and will pay $10,000 down for necessary buildings, and, in time, $80,000 more for endowment. You need not give up your church, you can spend your summers in Oberlin and your winters in New York, and the church will pay your expenses both going and coming. It is the one chance to establish a school in the West, where young men may be properly trained for the ministry and where all men may gain correct views of the great evil of slavery. Still more, Arthur Tappan privately pledged to Mr. Finney his entire income, then amounting to $100,000 a year—less what was necessary for his family—in support of the enterprise. If he *refused* to go, Oberlin would get *nothing,* the Lane Seminary students would scatter, and a great opportunity for doing good would be lost.

When so presented, Mr. Finney feared that

further opposition to the Oberlin plan might be due to a selfish regard for his own comfort, or advancement, and so—he went. If he had come to a different decision, you and I would not be here to-day. Our fellow alumni, occupying stations of usefulness all over the world, would not be where they are. President Fairchild, who never used extravagant language, wrote:

"If Charles G. Finney had not lived and labored Oberlin could not have existed." [1]

"Without them" (the anti-slavery impulse and Charles G. Finney) "Oberlin could never have done the work which has fallen to it and probably could not have existed beyond a single decade." [2]

Mr. Finney's coming secured for Oberlin not merely the things promised, but the attention of the whole religious world. His reputation and wide acquaintance attracted hundreds—I may say thousands—of students from New York, Pennsylvania, and New England long before the local field yielded its full crops. His converts

[1] Reminiscences, p. 77.
[2] Introduction to Leonard's History of Oberlin, p. 15.

and children of his converts flocked to Oberlin, and others, who knew him only by reputation, desired to have their children educated under his influence. For similar reasons England, Scotland, Wales and the West Indies contributed large numbers of students.[1]

Mr. Finney insisted that one of the first eight professors should be a "Professor of Sacred Music," and that the best man who could be found should be appointed to carry it to its highest perfection. He tried to get Mason, Hast-

[1] Out of the 132 graduates of the Theological Seminary in the first twelve years only 11—just one-twelfth—were from Ohio and the West. Out of the 373 graduates of the College Department in the first seventeen years after his coming only 60—less than one-sixth—were from Ohio and the West. The great majority of the students, in both College and Seminary, were from New York State and the others were mostly from the New England States. While the percentage of Ohio students increased rapidly after 1853, the class of 1861 was the first in which they constituted an actual majority of the graduates. The Ohio students were induced to come chiefly by the strong body of students present from other States, who preached, lectured and taught school in Ohio during the long winter vacations. The value of Mr. Finney's name became apparent again when he was elected President, in 1851, to succeed President Mahan. An endowment fund of $100,000 was raised almost immediately; the total attendance increased from 571, in 1851–2, to 1020, in 1852–3, and 1305, in 1853–4. The graduating class of '51 numbered but 15. The graduating class of '61 numbered 61.

ings, or Bradbury, but they were not altruistic enough to give up lucrative church and chorus appointments in the East; although, at his request, both Mason and Hastings came out at various times to give the Oberlin chorus special instruction and lead the Commencement music. And it was under George N. Allen, a pupil of Lowell Mason, that classical music and the great chorus became established features of Oberlin life and student culture. There is not to-day in all this broad land, one college which can boast of such a choir and furnish such music as the Musical Union of Oberlin. It is perhaps the greatest—certainly the most quickly appreciated—of the *outward* signs which distinguish Oberlin from other schools.

But Mr. Finney had still to make a harder decision. In the summer of 1837 he was satisfied that he could not continue to be pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle and Professor of Theology at Oberlin. The work in New York suffered during his absence and he could not find an assistant pastor capable of keeping the church alive and active while he was away.

The attempt to fill Mr. Finney's shoes, six months in the year, might well appall any man. It was next to impossible for a man to develop an independent line of thought and action, while holding over, and hence his responsibility as an individual was weakened and the loyalty of his congregation was always a matter of doubt.

He must give up one or the other. Which should it be? While he was debating this question at Oberlin, the terrible panic of 1837 struck the country, and nearly every merchant in New York City was forced into bankruptcy, including the Tappans and all of the subscribers to the $80,000 professorship fund. Oberlin was cut off from its source of supply and was in debt nearly $30,000 for new buildings and expenses incurred on the faith of the promised endowment. The Lane Seminary students had mostly graduated. He had done his full duty by *them*. Father Shipherd had gone off to found other institutions. The College enterprise was, to all appearance, a failure, and he was under no legal or moral obligation to stay. Of course, the *sensible* thing to do was to go back to New York and devote himself exclu-

sively to the interests of his church. He could find a ready support anywhere in the East. Let the College take care of itself! But he looked at the hard lot of Oberlin College and all the good people, old and young, who had come there, largely on his account, and again he chose the rough and thorny path and sent his resignation—to the *Broadway Tabernacle*. His cow died, and to buy another he sold his travelling trunk. He had come *to stay*. On Thanksgiving Day, 1837, he was at the end of his resources. He did not know where he could get funds to pay for another meal. He went to church and conducted Thanksgiving services for a congregation as hard pressed as himself; and all were lifted above the cares of this world. He says, naïvely, he enjoyed his own preaching that day as much as ever he did in his life, and then went home, to be met at the gate by a letter, wholly unexpected, from Josiah Chapin, of Providence, Rhode Island, enclosing a draft for $200 and a promise to pay his salary as professor as long as it might be needed.[1]

[1] Memoirs, p. 338.

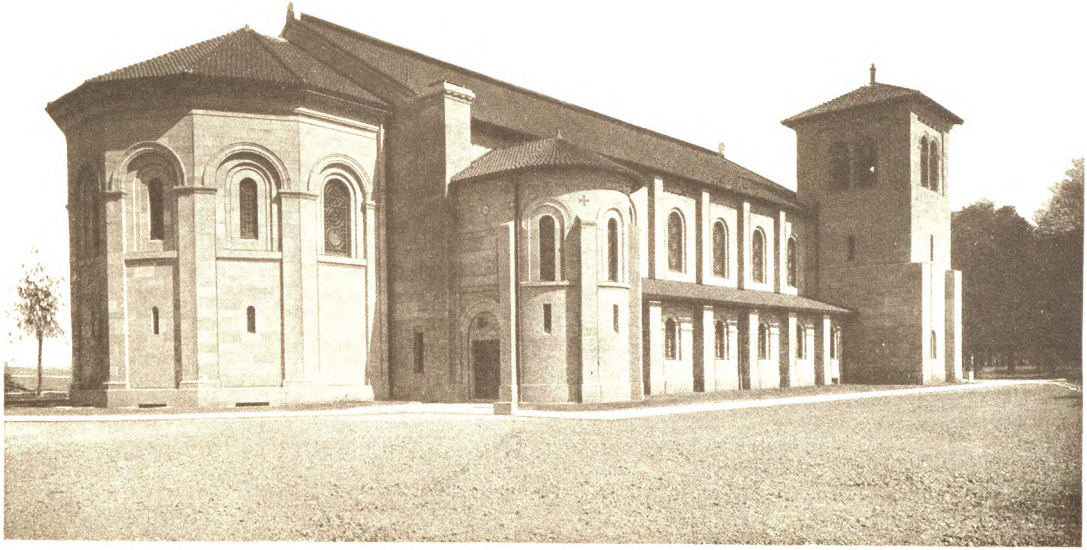
The prejudice against Oberlin was so great, on account of its anti-slavery principles, coeducation and reception of colored students, and the effect of the panic so universal and prostrating that relief could not be expected in this country. After much prayer and consideration, Father Keep and William Dawes were sent to England to try and raise funds to tide the College over its difficulties. Had they friends or personal acquaintances in England? Not one! What interest had England in Oberlin? At that time, absolutely none! *Ohio* was but a spot on their maps. No Englishman had ever heard of Oberlin. How, then, could these men expect to get a dollar for the College? They had two words to conjure with — Anti-Slavery and Charles G. Finney. England had just emancipated her slaves. The moral force which brought this about had not spent itself. Mr. Finney's reputation preceded Keep and Dawes across the ocean. The "Revival Lectures," which he preached in 1834, had been reprinted in Great Britain and had an enormous circulation. One publisher alone reported a sale of eighty

thousand copies. They were almost sure to find a copy of this book in the house of every minister and intelligent layman they called upon. They could say the author of this popular work, this great revivalist, was a professor and pastor at Oberlin; that he was influencing hundreds of young people every year, each of whom would in turn influence hundreds of others in all parts of the country, and that this whole cumulative influence was directed against slavery. And they could add that all this was in danger, unless they could get a little timely assistance—and they got $30,000 over and above all expenses.

Friends:—time will not permit me to speak further of this man. You are probably as well informed about his work here as Professor, President, Pastor and Guide, as I am, myself.

It is fitting that this Memorial should stand in Oberlin, on the site where he lived for forty years. It is fitting that it should take the form of a chapel, in which large numbers can be stirred to newness of life by good preaching and good music.

And as long as this Chapel stands, let men re-



FINNEY MEMORIAL CHAPEL
From the Southwest

member that this servant of God based his faith on *reason,* addressed himself to *adults,* expected *adults* to be converted, and was not disappointed. And as long as Oberlin stands, let her sons and daughters remember that he who was greatest among her founders accomplished *most* through THE SACRIFICE OF SELF.