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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TYPICAL  
REVIVALS IN AMERICA  
DURING THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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A THESIS

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Scarcely can a more memorable exhibition  
of God be found than that presented by a  
revival of religion.

- Austin Phelps

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THE INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

- A. THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED
- B. THE SUBJECT STATED AND DELIMITED
- C. THE METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TYPICAL  
REVIVALS IN AMERICA  
DURING THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

A. THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED

One of the distinct characteristics of American Protestantism is its periodic revivals. A prominent historian writes, "America is the land of revivals. Nowhere else have these been so frequent as in the United States; nowhere else have the churches owed so much of their increase and prosperity; and nowhere else have they been subjected to so much philosophical and theological discussion. It is to the atmosphere of revivals in which they live and move that American thinkers owe the position of preeminence in religious psychology conceded to them even by the Germans!"<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of the revivalistic spirit in general, one historian writing as early as 1874, makes a similar observation. "America, however was most favored in this gracious visitation." He then quotes from a religious Journal of March, 1858, which illustrates his point. "The large cities and towns generally from Maine to California are sharing this great and glorious work."<sup>2</sup> Professor Mode also confirms this point of view in his book entitled, "The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity", by saying, "Revivalism

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1. Stalker: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 755  
2. Fish: Handbook of Revivals, P. 77



has been one of the outstanding features of American Protestantism. Through it probably more than any other channel, our evangelical Christianity has brought the impact of the Gospel to bear upon the problem of American society." He further emphasizes this trend of Christianity as being unique to America, when he writes, "For almost two hundred years it is revivalism more than any other phenomenon that has supplied the landmarks in our religious history - the undulations, upheavals, points of departure, and lines of continuity. It would not be difficult and by no means unsatisfactory to write the history of American Protestantism from the standpoint of its periodic awakenings."<sup>3</sup>

Jonathan Edwards, as early as the Great Awakening, gives credit to this movement for its direct contribution in the changing of theology. "The idea of revivals is the gift of American to foreign Calvinism."<sup>4</sup> We can further add that the one thing that has kept the central doctrines of Christianity before the American people has been the periodic<sup>5</sup> revivals. This statement is supported by Henry Clay Fish, who says, "The important advantage from revivals was, that the preaching became more evangelical."<sup>5</sup>

#### B. THE SUBJECT STATED AND DELIMITED

A subject that deals <sup>with</sup> a field so unique to our own country cannot help but stir interest and raise questions of further value which may be derived from a comparative study of positive revivals,

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3. Moe: The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity, p. 41

4. Allen: Jonathan Edwards, p. 136

5. Fish: Handbook of Revivals, P. 89

endeavoring to determine the biblical doctrines, homiletical methods and educational emphasis, which brought about so many conversions, leading thousands into fellowship with the Christ.

It will not be possible, within the scope of this thesis to give a detailed report of the numerous revivals that occurred during the century under study. So we shall therefore limit the discussion to what are perhaps the two greatest revivals of this particular period, the Finney revivals beginning about 1830 and the Moody revivals are dated approximately 1876. It is universally agreed among historians that Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight Lyman Moody are typical and outstanding representatives of the entire revivalistic movement of the nineteenth century.

#### C. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The procedure of this study, in the first place, will be to make a brief historical resume of the revivalistic spirit emphasized by the prominent awakenings during the past century, 1800 A.D. to 1900 A.D. We shall then make a special study of the Finney and Moody revivals respectively, making our approach through the leaders, dealing with the age and times in which these men lived and labored. We shall enter upon a consideration of their lives and experiences not as biographies, but only in as much as it will lead to a clearer understanding of the basic principles manifested in their specific fields of work.

It is not a part of our plan to seek the answer to any definite problem, but simply to draw conclusions from the comparative study, showing similarities and differences, offering whatever suggestions may come from this comparison, that may help us in the preaching of the Gospel in our age.

PART I

A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY  
OF THE FINNEY AND MOODY REVIVALS

CHAPTER II

A CHARACTERIZATION OF REVIVALS

## CHAPTER II

### A CHARACTERIZATION OF REVIVALS

#### A. DEFINITIONS OF REVIVALS

1. General Definitions
2. Finney's Definition

#### B. CAUSES OF REVIVALS

1. Personality of Religious Genius
2. Periodicity of Religious Life
3. Prayer
4. Psychology

#### C. REVIVALISTIC SPIRIT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

1. Pentecost and its Influence
2. The Reformation Period

## PART I

A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY  
OF THE FINNEY AND MOODY REVIVALS

## CHAPTER II

## A CHARACTERIZATION OF REVIVALS

## A. DEFINITIONS OF REVIVALS.

## 1. General Definitions.

When speaking of revivals in general, we presuppose a state of depression. But in our use of the term, applying it to the church, we mean a religious awakening; a re-animation of the spiritual life of the people in a certain community. In this popular use, the word has a two-fold meaning. It may be the converting of unregenerate lives or the awakening of the Christian people as to their task and responsibilities. If you take the case of a single rebirth, as taught by Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus, and extend it to a community to many individuals experiencing a like change, you have the general theory of a revival in religion.

Revivals, then, are seasons when Christians are awakened to a more spiritual frame, to fervent prayer, and to more earnest endeavors to promote the cause of Christ and redemption; and consequent upon this, seasons when the impenitent are aroused to the concerns of the soul and the work of personal religion. They are times when the Spirit of God again moves on the face of the waters, and the freshness and beauty of the new creature comes forth. Nature itself seems more full of God; the very words of the Scriptures seem thereby invested and stand aglow with a new light and glory, with

greater fulness and meaning. 1

## 2. Finney's Definition.

Charles G. Finney defined revivals as definite awakenings and special quickening in the hearts of men. He said it is a renewal of the first love of Christians.

"It is the renewal of the first love of Christians, resulting in the awakening and conversion of sinners to God. In the popular sense, a revival of religion in a community is the arousing, quickening, and reclaiming of the more or less backslidden church and the more or less general awakening of all classes, and insuring attention to the claims of God." 2

In a rather long treatise, Finney further explains his definition under four points. In the first place, a revival means that there is a conviction of sin on the part of the church. Secondly, a revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God, that backslidden Christians will be brought to repentance. Thirdly, it means a renewing of faith among all Christians.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it means a reformation and salvation of sinners.

## B. CAUSES OF REVIVALS

### 1. Personality of Religious Genius.

To select and name certain causative factors which have produced the numerous revivals that have swept our country from the Great Awakening, under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards, down to the "Tabernacle Meetings" of the "Baseball Evangelist", William A. Sunday, is almost an impossibility. Yet there are certain conclusions which obviously stand out, and numerous writers have

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1. Cf. Fish; Handbook of Revivals, p. 13.  
 2. Finney; Revivals of Religion, p. 14.  
 3. Ibid., p.15, 16.

felt justified in stating them as possible causes. So it is that James Stalker, writing for the "New Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics", suggests two main causes, the first being the personality of original religious genius.

"One cause of revival is to be found in personalities of original genius. Such were, in the Old Testament, Moses, Samuel, Hezekiah, Ezra and the like, with each of whom a rise in the tide is connected. But there were provisions made in the economy of that period for bringing crowds together, with their minds bent on religious exercises, at the annual feasts. The Feast of Tabernacles especially with its booths of green branches, must have resembled a camp-meeting. In the New Testament, the public ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus and St. Paul exhibited many features always associated with revivals. The book of the Acts can hardly be understood by a reader who has never lived in a revival, but every chapter contains notices and expressions which appeal to the experience of one who has." 4

This same cause can be seen in the more modern revivals.

Take, for instance, Methodism under John Wesley, his brother Charles, and his friend George Whitefield. These were men who felt themselves to be the depositors of a truth so divine and blessed that they could not keep it to themselves nor confine it to the preaching within their parish. In the spirit of Him Who said that "they that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick", they flung themselves on the most wicked and degraded portions of the population. When churches were refused for their preaching or proved too small to hold the crowds, they went to the places where they could find room and where they could gather a hearing. <sup>5</sup> Nor can we pass by the "lay evangelist", Dwight L. Moody, in this classification, for was he not an "original Genius"? He, along with

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4. Stalker: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 753.

5. Cf. Stalker: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 754.

his faithful co-worker, Ira D. Sankey, made a tremendous impression upon this country and the people of the British Isles. Moody won his crowds through no display of novelties but through his personality plus the Word of God. He was nothing less than a genius in the art of evangelism.

## 2. Periodicity of Religious Life.

As to the second cause, which has been termed "Periodicity of Religious Life", Stalker, along with other church historians, has observed a rhythm in the successive periods of Christianity. He mentions five periods which mark obvious fluctuations in the progress of Christianity: the Puritan Awakening; the Evangelical revival; the Moody Revival; the Welsh revival of 1904-06; and the American revivals.<sup>6</sup> These main divisions can easily be divided into smaller periods of unique manifestation of the quickening of spiritual life. The progress of Christianity in the world has rarely, for any length of time, been uniform. The cause of these fluctuations or periodic changes is in itself a problem, but is out of the scope of the problem in this thesis. We are simply facing the facts as history presents them.

## 3. Prayer.

There is much of truth to support the view that prayer is one of the chief factors in bringing about a revival. In fact the great revival of 1858 can be traced directly to a season of noon prayer meetings by New York business men. One minister, writing on the preparation for revivals, says:

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6. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 754.



"We started by having union prayer-meetings every Sabbath afternoon in one of the churches, and a neighborhood meeting in each district every Friday evening. The supervisors arranged for the places and leaders and the visitors invited the families under their care. These prayer-meetings struck at once the foundation of all our preparation, deep, earnest, honest praying. The result was the beginning of the revival. Families that never spoke to each other met in each other's houses to talk of their mutual interests. Church members who never dared to speak in public, sang and spoke freely in their own homes. Our prayer meetings began to fill up and to speak with new tongues. Our Sabbath schools began to show new life. Our Sabbath congregations became recruiting stations, rallying points for active service. Conversions followed as a matter of course, and before we expected it, we were realizing what we believed, that God waits to save." 7

Charles G. Finney gives a prominent place to prayer among the causes of revivals. We can certainly take him as an authority, for everywhere he went a great revival broke out and he, of all men, knew how to bring them about. He states very frankly his idea of the influence of prayer:

"Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival; as much so as truth is. Some have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached and talked and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered that they had so little success. And the reason was that they forgot to use the other branch of the means, effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth by itself will never produce the effect, without the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit is given in answer to earnest prayer." 8

#### 4. Psychology.

There are those who, like Davenport, place great emphasis on psychology as a vital cause in bringing about religious revivals. He affirms that much that leads to a spiritual awakening, is due to a fear complex and crowd psychology. He writes:

"Instinctive fear, when a population is under the spell of it, arouses great volumes of imagination and emotion, and powerfully

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7. Chapman: Revivals and Missions, p. 87.

8. Finney: Lectures on Revivals, p. 48.

induces sympathetic movements. We shall find, for example, that certain distinctive features of the Edwards revival in the first half of the eighteenth century in New England, and the Kentucky revival of 1800, are explained by the environment of fear, fear of starvation, of wild animals and savages in which the colonists had lived, in New England for a century, in Kentucky for a shorter period. Difficulty of communication and a great amount of ignorance in a population predisposed to emotional movements." 9

Stalker will admit that to a certain extent psychology makes its contribution, but he feels that it is far from the motivating influence in bringing about a genuine revival.

"The Psychology of the human spirit may have its own reckoning to render for such phenomena; but in the last resort they are to be traced to the Spirit of God, blowing where it listeth." 10

It is along this same line that Fish reasons. He heartily agrees with the idea that the cause is divine.

"The effective cause in all true revivals is the life-giving, light-imparting, quickening, regenerating and sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit, converting the hardened sinner and reclaiming the backslider and dormant believer." 11

### C. THE REVIVALISTIC SPIRIT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

#### 1. Pentecost and its Influence.

By using the term revival in its broadest sense, as defined earlier in this thesis, we can look upon Pentecost as the first great Christian revival. In fact the inauguration of Christianity was the greatest quickening of spiritual energy the world has ever known.

"By this great and notable event the Apostolic Age was ushered in as a great missionary and evangelistic era." 12

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9. Davenport: Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 8.  
 10. Stalker: Op. Cit., p. 753.  
 11. Fish: Op. Cit., p. 14.  
 12. Beardsley: History of American Revivals, p. 3.

In reading the book of the Acts we feel that same impulse that comes from reading of the revivals in the early nineteenth century. Kirk, in speaking of the influence of Pentecost, says:

"The impulse of this revival continued to be felt through four centuries, swelling like a wave of the sea, steadily onward, until the battle of the Milvian Bridge put the scepter in the hands of Constantine, and destroyed thus the power of Pagan persecution; and then the decree of Milan pronounced the religion of the Cross the religion of the Empire." 13

From this we see that Christianity in the very early days was prone to be evangelistic; in fact it was the exhortation of the Master when He promised His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit and commanded them to go forth.

Not only at Jerusalem, were witnessed such scenes as appear in revivals, but in all the region round about where the Apostles and apostolic men preached in those days, and far away among the Gentiles, at Samaria, Caesarea, the Antiochs, at Lystra and Derby, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus and at Rome. So many and so mighty were those special manifestations of divine power and grace in the gospel, by reason of such effusion of the Holy Spirit, that Tertullian could say at the beginning of the third century, in his appeal to the civil authorities,

"We have filled all places of your dominions, cities, islands, corporations, councils, armies, tribes, the senate, the palace, the court of Judicature." 14

So mightily grew the Word of God and with great influence prevailed.

## 2. The Reformation Period.

In following the pages of Church history, we come to the

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13. Kirk: Revival Lectures, p. 115

14. Philip Schaff's Religious Encyclopedia, p. 2039 (Article on Revivals by Hatfield)

Crusades. Certainly it is not wrong to class them among the great periods of Church expansion and spiritual regeneration. The revivalistic spirit made rapid progress during the preaching of Wycliff, Huss and Savonarola. They were unconsciously laying the foundation for Luther and the Reformation.

Martin Luther nailing his theses to the portal of the Church at Wittenburg, altered the progress of church history. His work along with the labors of Zwingli, Calvin and Knox, resulted in the greatest spiritual quickening that has appeared since the Holy Spirit descended upon the hundred and twenty in the Upper Room where Peter burst forth with the first great revivalistic sermon of the new era. Hatfield in his account on revivals of religion in Schaff's Encyclopedia, calls the Reformation period, "The Great Protestant Revival." He affirms:

"It was a special dispensation of the Spirit, whereby the minds of men everywhere in Christian lands were turned towards the utterances of the Divine Word, the errors of the Papacy were discovered and renounced, the truth as it is in Jesus apprehended and embraced by multitudes, and the churches built up in faith of the gospel. It was a great and general revival of religion, whereby converts in tens of thousands were born of the Spirit of God." 16

With this upheaval in Christendom, Protestantism swung into power, making its impression upon political as well as religious conditions. We quote Beardsley, as one who holds this historical

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15. Walker in the History of the Christian Church, p. 336, writes, "Martin Luther launched the most gigantic revolution in the Christian Church....He is one of the few men of whom it may be said that the history of the world was profoundly altered by his work."
16. Philip Schaff's Religious Encyclopedia, p. 2040. (Article on Revivals by Hatfield.)

point of view:

"In England the cleavage with Rome was chiefly along political and ecclesiastical lines, Henry VIII through whom it was effected had been an ardent Romanist, but when the Pope refused to grant him a divorce from Catherine of Arragon, he took the matter into his own hands and proclaimed himself the head of the English Church. This never could have been done, had there not have been a strong undercurrent of Protestantism in the popular sentiment of the day....These reforms were not violent. A change in the leadership of the church was all that was at first contemplated. Other changes were inevitable, but the Protestantism of England partook more of the character of an evolutionary process rather than the more violent form of revolution.

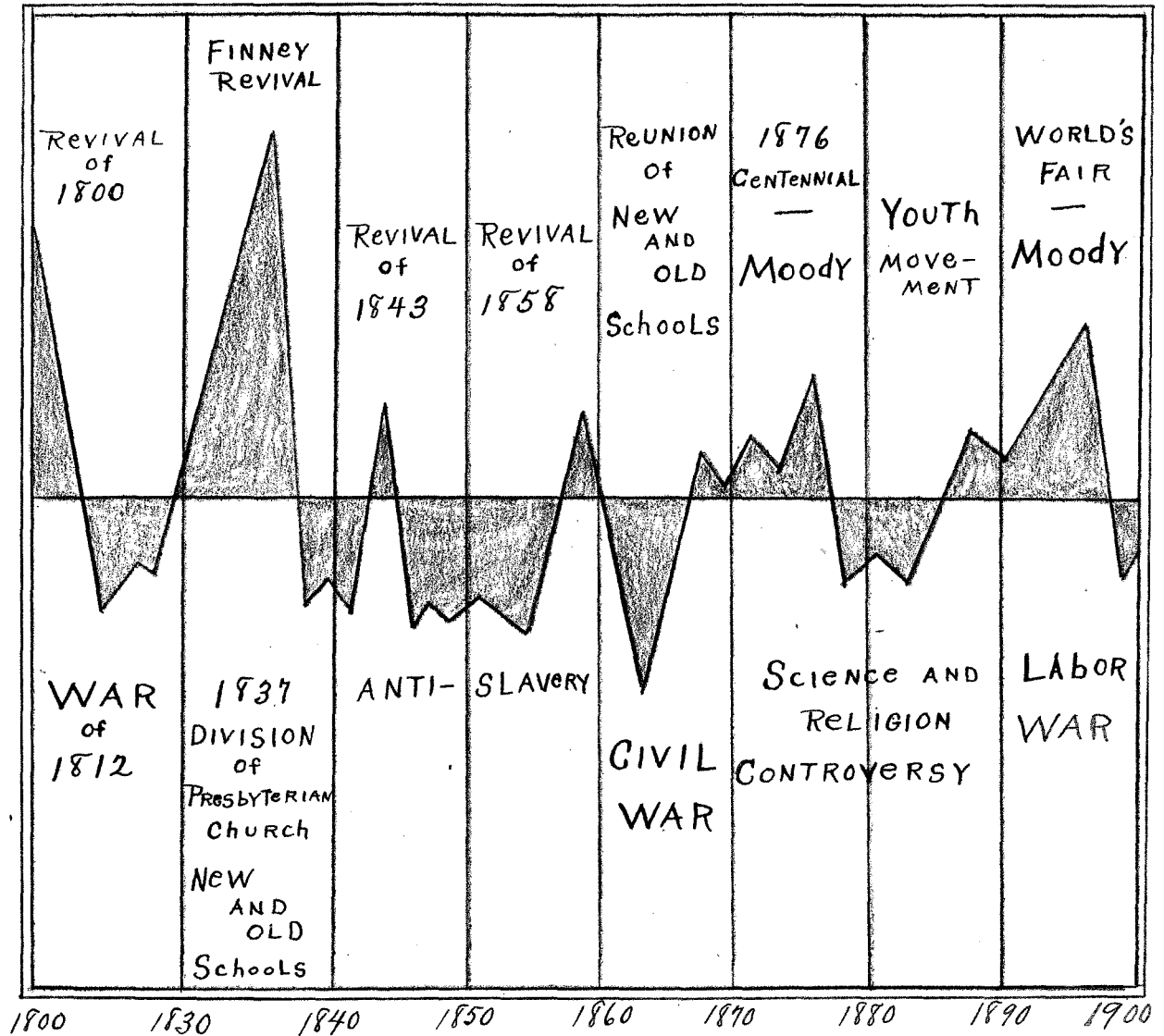
In consequence of the persecution of Mary, many of the clergy fled to the continent, where they came into contact with a type of Protestantism much more radical than that of England. Especially was this true at Geneva where the stern genius of Calvin presided in ascetic simplicity. On their return to England after the accession of Elizabeth, they carried with them a desire for further reform. As a consequence the Puritan revival was inaugurated, which subsequently peopled New England with colonists and thus prepared the way for the introduction of that more vital form of religion which has characterized the history of American Christianity." 17

In view of this universality of Protestantism, we can agree with the above history, that it was the outgrowth of a terrific spiritual awakening. Tracing the revivalistic emphasis from early Christianity, in this brief way, we have brought it down to its entrance into America. We shall now take a summary view of the revivalistic emphasis in American Christianity, for the light it may throw on our more concentrated study in later chapters.

CHAPTER III

RESUME OF AMERICAN REVIVALS  
DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A chart showing the fluctuation of church membership during the nineteenth century. Based on the membership percentages of the leading denominations, taken from H.C. Weber's book entitled Evangelism.



## CHAPTER III

### RESUME OF AMERICAN REVIVALS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### A. THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

1. The Kentucky and other Revivals: Adjacent
  - a. Characteristics
  - b. Psychological Effects
  - c. Conditions of the Country
  - d. Theological Doctrine
2. Colleges Awakened

#### B. THE FINNEY REVIVAL INTRODUCED

1. From New York to Ohio
  - a. To Broadway Tabernacle
  - b. To Oberlin College
2. A New Emphasis
  - a. Sentiment against Hyper-Calvinism
  - b. A Reaction to Dead Orthodoxy

#### C. THE REVIVAL OF 1858

1. Introduction
2. Business Men's Prayer Meetings

#### D. THE MOODY REVIVAL INTRODUCED

1. National and International Influence
2. Educational Emphasis



## CHAPTER III

A RESUME OF AMERICAN REVIVALS  
DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

## A. THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

## 1. The Kentucky and Other Revivals Adjacent.

The coming of civilization to American shores was a continuation of the spreading of the gospel, finding perhaps its greatest triumph in the days of Jonathan Edwards and the "Great Awakening". But after this there was a gradual subsidence of the revival influence until the national revival which was going on at the opening of the nineteenth century, commonly called the Second Great Awakening.

At this critical moment when immigration into the Middle West was beginning to assume large proportions, this revival served as a timely preventive to the laxity of morals naturally associated with the shifting of population from one area to another, while it also quickened a sense of responsibility of the old and strong communities to the new and weak.

In the older settlements of Kentucky, the revival made its first appearance among the Presbyterians. The whole of that country, about a year before, was remarkable for vice and dissipation, and a decided majority of the people were professed infidels. During that winter the Baptists were awakened and great numbers were added to their churches. The character of the people in Kentucky changed entirely and in less than twelve months a state that was noted for its intemperance and licentiousness,

became one of temperance and its moral standards a model for all states around it. One historian writes:

"A profane expression was hardly ever heard, a religious awe seemed to pervade the country, and some Deistical characters had confessed that from whatever cause the revival might originate, it certainly made the people better." 1

One minister stood up and shouted,

"Now, sir, let modern philosophers talk of reforming the world by banishing Christianity, and introducing their licentious systems; the blessed Gospel of our Lord is showing what it can do!" 2

#### a. Characteristics.

One is startled when figures show the largeness of these assemblies. It is generally supposed that at many places there were not fewer than eight to twelve thousand people. At a place called Cane Ridge, the number estimated was at least twenty thousand.<sup>3</sup> The length of time people continued at the places of worship is another important circumstance of the Kentucky revival. At Cane Ridge, they met on Friday and continued till Wednesday evening, night and day, without intermissions, and with such earnestness that heavy showers of rain were not sufficient to disperse them. Had not the preachers been exhausted and obliged to retire, or had they chosen to prolong the worship, they might have kept the people any length of time. And this was in a country, where less than twelve months before, the clergy found it difficult to detain the people during the usual exercises of a Sunday worship service.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Halliday: The Church in America, p. 84.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

3. Cf. Beardsley: History of American Revivals, p. 93.

4. Cf. Ibid., p. 93.

b. Psychological Effects.

These prolonged meetings had a psychological and mental, as well as religious effect on the part of the people. Sudden outcries, hysteric weeping, laughter and fainting, were customary scenes in these open air, religious gatherings. Multitudes fell prostrate on the ground, "spiritually slain", as it was said. Lest the helpless bodies should be trampled by the surging crowd, they were taken up and laid in rows on the floor of the neighboring meeting-house. Some lay quietly, unable to move or speak. Some talked but could not move. Some beat the floor with their heels. Some shrieked in agony, bounding like fish out of water. Others rushed wildly over stumps of trees and plunged into the forest shouting, "Lost! Lost!"<sup>5</sup>

Rev. Barton W. Stone, who afterwards became one of the leading lights in the brotherhood known as the Disciples of Christ, at that time was a Presbyterian minister in Bourbon County, Kentucky. Having heard of this wonderful work of grace, he went across the state in the spring of 1801 to attend a camp-meeting in that vicinity, to behold for himself the marvelous things that God had wrought. He afterwards wrote about the scenes he had witnessed;

"There on the edge of a prairie in Logan County, Kentucky, the multitudes came and continued a number of days and nights encamped on the ground....The scene was new to me and passing strange. It baffled description. Many, very many, fell down as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparently breathless and motionless state, sometimes for a few moments reviving and exhibiting symptoms of life by deep groans or piercing shrieks, or by a prayer for mercy fervently uttered....Two or three of my particular acquaintances from a distance were struck down. I sat patiently by one of them, whom I knew to be

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5. Cf. Beardsley: Op. Cit., p. 91.

a careless sinner, for hours, and observed with critical attention everything that passed, from the beginning to the end. I noticed the momentary revivings as from death, the humble confession of sins, the fervent prayer, and the ultimate deliverance; then the solemn thanks to God, and affectionate exhortation to companions and to the people around to repent and come to Jesus. I was astonished at the knowledge of gospel truth displayed in the address. The effect was that several sank down into the same appearance of death. After attending to many such cases, my conviction was complete that it was a good work--the work of God; nor has my mind changed or even wavered since on the subject. Much did I see then, and much have I seen since, that I consider to be fanaticism; but this should not condemn the work. The devil has always tried to ape the works of God, to bring them into dispute; but that cannot be a Satanic work which brings men to humble confession, to forsaking sin, to prayer, fervent praise and thanksgiving, and to a sincere and affectionate exhortation to sinners to repent and come to Jesus the Saviour." 6

And it was this man who, along with Methodist and Baptist preachers, went back to his own county and sponsored the great revival at Cane Ridge which we mentioned above.

The disorders so far mentioned have been mild in comparison to those that follow. According to Peter Cartwright in his Autobiography, we read that next to the "falling" exercise, the most terrible was the "jerks". The sinner would shake in every joint. Sometimes the head would be thrown from side to side with great rapidity; again the feet were affected, and the victim would hop like a frog. Cartwright declares that he had seen more than five hundred persons jerking at once in his own congregation. Along this same line was the phenomenon called "barking". The subjects would gather around the minister and bark like dogs.  
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This act was often called "treeing the devil".

Students of revivals have discovered that when the nervous

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6. Tyler: The Disciples, American Church History Series, Vol. XII, p. 13.

7. Cartwright: Autobiography, p. 50-51.

tension has risen to the maximum, it will fall to the minimum.

"When a year or two had elapsed, the milder hysterical forms of muscular action began to display themselves in certain quarters, until, in 1803, the 'holy laugh' became a feature of the worship. While the minister was preaching, the members would burst out one after another, and then in chorus into what was regarded a solemn laugh." 8

To students of this century, it is difficult to consider such actions as a part of the Christian program of salvation. Yet, with the above data in hand, it is impossible to wave it aside with a superficial consideration.

#### c. Conditions of the Country.

For that reason we take time to look into the condition of the country to see if we can find any clue to the cause of this special, and seemingly impossible, state of human behavior. Our attention is first directed to the age and times, to the conditions under which these emotional people lived. They were in a new and wild country, pioneers in the wilderness. The population was made up largely of degenerate and criminal people.

"There was a large influx of people drawn from the worst immigrants that perhaps were ever brought to America, the mass of convicts, servants, redemptioners and the like who formed such an excessively undesirable substratum to the otherwise excellent population of the tide-water regions in Virginia and the Carolinas. Many of the Southern crackers, or poor Whites, sprang from this class, which also in the back woods gave birth to generations of violent and hardened criminals and to an even greater number of shiftless, lazy, cowardly cumberers of the earth's surface." 9

Freedom was born in their blood, law was not a part of their life. The teaching of Knox and Calvin, on which their forefathers fed, was not a part of their ration.

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8. Davenport: Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 81.

9. Roosevelt; Winning of the West, Vol. I, p. 130.

"They were obliged to be ever on the alert against attacking savages. And the slightest alarm would bring them together, every man and boy in the settlement who could use a rifle in defense of the women and the children. They lived in an environment of fear, though they were of such sturdy stock that they grew in the midst of it to be utterly fearless and even reckless of the danger that they could understand and measure." 10

We do not mean to infer that the people of this section, Southwestern Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and the Carolinas, were in the large an inferior people or essentially sinners. For the descendants of these people have done a very great deal for America. In fact, they were the builders of the country; theirs was the foundation work.

"They were the first to declare independence, and who in the war of 1812, saw more clearly than New England the necessity of the struggle, and were for it through and through, when New England held back because of commercial interest and unpatriotic sloth. The decisive victory of General Jackson of New Orleans was largely won by the few hundred clear-eyed, straight shooting, backwoods riflemen from Tennessee. And the fact that the very heart of American democracy beats today in the central west is partly due to the same instinct and the moral stamina of these Scotch-Irish pioneers." 11

#### d. Theological Doctrines.

Now that we understand that these people were of an emotional mind, produced perhaps because of their environment, eyes and ears trained to see and hear lurking dangers, we can appreciate their reaction to religion. Surely they were prepared to meet the trials of the open forests but as for God, they felt little need. New England was awakened by Edwards and his theological partners; ministers at large were feeling their responsibilities; and so it was because of this that James McGready made the journey

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10. Davenport:Op. Cit., p. 64.

11. Ibid., p. 63.

into Logan County, Kentucky. His doctrine was a modified Calvinism. He was much impressed with John 3:3 (The Nicodemus story) combined with Paul's dramatic conversion. In other words, one had to be born again and one would be aware of the time when the new birth occurred.

"In New England under Edwards, and in old England under Wesley, it sounded forth clear and strong and terrible in fearful denunciation of the wrath of God upon impenitent sinners." 12

A friend said of the Rev. Mr. McGready that he could so array hell before the wicked that they would tremble and quake, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to overwhelm them and the hand of the Almighty thrusting them down the horrible abyss. 13 It was McGready's terrible earnestness plus his striking personality and tremendous voice that brought large crowds out to hear him. In fact, wherever he went he changed the community. It is told that after he had visited a section of the country, the one topic of conversation among the old and the young was the salvation of their souls.

Other names that stand out among the prominent preachers of this revival are, William and John McGee, Hodge, Stone and William Burke. Their gospel was the fear of hell and conviction of sin. They played upon the cord of fear. In the physical and mental excitement, outbursts of emotion took the place of rational thinking and quiet reverence.

Although, presenting theology simply from the side of fear

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12. Davenport; Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 181.

13. Cf. Ibid., p. 181.

is contrary to our interpretation of the Gospel, yet we are faced with the fact that Christianity triumphed even during these days of religious insanity. Beardsley, in his book on the history of American Revivals, classes the results of the awakening of 1800 under three heads: first, the overthrow of infidelity; second, the spiritual quickening of the churches; third, the inauguration of the great philanthropic and missionary enterprises.

Records clearly show that large numbers were added to the church during the days preceding 1800, when the preaching consisted primarily of dry discourses upon a stiff and technical theology, or a cold speculative orthodoxy. And now we are surprised by the figures of increased membership of the church under the influence of this emotional theology. Statistics show a most startling increase in additions to the churches from 1800 to 1830:

The Presbyterian Church increased from 40,000 to 173,229  
- fourfold.

The Congregational Church increased from 75,000 to 140,000  
- twofold.

The Baptist Church increased from 100,000 to 313,000  
- threefold.

The Methodist Episcopal Church increased from 64,000 to 476,153 - sevenfold. 15

Nothing like such an increase had ever before been known. In the space of three years alone, (1800-1803) the communicants of the Methodist Episcopal Church increased from 64,000 to 104,070. 16

There are those who will agree with Theodore Roosevelt that the theology of the times had a great deal to do with this rapid increase. It was a theology adapted to their emotional

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14. Cf. Beardsley: History of American Revivals, p.3.

15. Dorchester: Christianity in the United States, p. 873.

16. Ibid., 873.



life.

"Calvinism, though more congenial than Episcopacy, and infinitely more so than Catholicism, was too cold for the fiery hearts of the borders; they were not stirred to the depths of their natures till other creeds, and above all Methodism, worked their way to the wilderness." 17

## 2. Colleges Awakened.

In reviewing the effects of the revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, we must not fail to say a few words about its contribution to the colleges and universities. At that time the schools of higher education were infected with the prevalent French infidelity. When Timothy Dwight entered the duties of president of Yale College in 1795, he was faced with a group of students who took great pride in ridiculing religion and stamping themselves as unbelievers. The degree to which it prevailed may be judged from the following fact:

"A considerable portion of the class which he first taught assumed the names of the English and French infidels and were more familiarly known by them than their own." 18

But Dr. Dwight was a fair match for them and invited the freest of thinking and discussion and then prepared a series of sermons which he preached to the students in the chapel. He had carefully worked out an attack on the philosophy of skepticism, which met their doubts and arguments so satisfactorily that in the spring of 1802, a great revival broke out in the student body and about two hundred of them were converted. Not only did they unite with the church, but "nearly all the converts entered the  
19  
ministry."

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17. Roosevelt; *Winning the West*, p.

18. Beardsley: *Op. Cit.*, p. 88.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

The lives of these students were changed, not through emotional fear, but by the influence of a Christian man with the keen logic of an apostle Paul.

The college revivals had a national influence. They did more than bring religion back into the field of education, <sup>20</sup> they prepared leaders who went forth into the new frontier, placing Christian principles as basic factors in the wilderness home. This phase has been emphasized by Chandler in his book, "Great Revivals and the Great Republic." He writes:

"...but for the influence of the revival ( the revival of 1800) movement in the colleges of the East, much of its effects in the West would have been lost in the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Out of the Eastern colleges came the religious leaders of the Western Churches, and without the revival in the colleges the supply of such leaders would have been insufficient for the demand." 21

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20. Walker: History of the Christian Church, p. 580. This was a period in which higher education for minister was greatly stimulated, the result being the building of many new seminaries. "In 1807 the Moravians established a theological school in Nazareth, Penn....The Congregationalists opened a seminary in Andover, Mass. in 1808. Four years later the Presbyterians inaugurated a similar seminary at Princeton, N. J. In 1815 a Lutheran theological school was established in Hartwick, N.Y. The Divinity School of Harvard University was opened under Unitarian auspices the same year. Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, was founded by Congregationalists in 1816. The Baptists inaugurated Hamilton(New York) Theological Seminary in 1819. Two years later the Presbyterian School in Auburn, N.Y., was established, and in 1822 the Congregationalists opened the Divinity School of Yale University. These institutions for ministerial training multiplied rapidly, and by 1860 had increased to fifty, a number since greatly augmented. The whole character of pastoral preparation was broadened, deepened, and systematized."

21. Chandler: Great Revivals and the Great Republic, p. 188.

With the coming of the War of 1812, accompanied by the spiritual and moral deterioration usually attending militaristic strain, the progress of the wide-spread revivals was suddenly interrupted. Then in 1830, we have what perhaps is the most outstanding period in religious quickening. Dr. Dorchester, writing in 1887, in a volume entitled "Christianity in the United States," says of this period:

"The two decades from 1830 to 1850 are among the most important in the history of American Christianity." 22

It was in this stage of the growth of our country, that great and powerful agitations got under way. They were ecclesiastical, reformatory, socialistic and native-American. In 1830 the great temperance reformation was moving forward under a powerful influence. The Anti-slavery agitation and reform movement provoked violence, disruption and deep emotion. The new Divinity, Tractarian and Bushnell Movements, with Millerism and Mormonism, arose to vex denominational life. 23 With the organization of American and Baptist Home Missions Society, and the consequent sending forth of a large group of missionaries into the settled districts, revivals became general throughout the trans-Allegheny region, continuing 24 with unabated force right through the depression of 1837. It was a development due, to a large extent, to the religious consciousness of America's responsibility to foreign missions. And as we have seen, this was all brought about mainly through the fluctua-

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22. Dorchester:Op. Cit., p. 873.

23. Cf. Weber: Evangelism, p. 47.

24. Cf. Mode:Frontier Spirit in American Christianity, p.43.

tion of revivals, throughout the widening territories of new settlements.

## B. THE FINNEY REVIVAL INTRODUCED

### 1. From New York to Ohio.

This brings us into another period of revivals in the first half of the nineteenth century, somewhat different from the ones we have already mentioned. Here the leading light stands out in the personality of Charles Grandison Finney. His revivals spread throughout the Eastern Section of the United States, reaching as far West as Ohio--Oberlin College being the center of his work there. It is thought that he gained his greatest success, perhaps, in his religious pioneering, in the area of Western and Central New York.

The first appearance of the remarkable ascendancy which Finney exercised over an audience came at Evans Mills. Here a Miss G---, who had been a member of the local church for several years, was sitting in the congregation one day while Finney was preaching. Suddenly she was convicted of sin and conscious of the fact that she had never really known God, and it so affected her physically that she had to be assisted home, where she lay in anguish and without the power of speech for about the space of  
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sixteen hours.

Such descriptive scenes fill the pages of his autobiography. Finney's future seemed determined--every village he visited was shaken from center to circumference. The next place awakened was

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25. Cf. Finney: Autobiography, p. 66.

Rome, New York. From there the movement spread in every direction. Following the table of contents in his Autobiography, we rapidly trace the progress from place to place--Evans Mills; Gouverneur; DeKalb; Western; Rome; Utica; Auburn; Troy; New Lebanon; Stephentown; Wilmington; Philadelphia and Reading, Pennsylvania; Columbia and New York City; Rochester and Buffalo; Providence, Rhode Island and Boston, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; Syracuse, New York; and Oberlin, Ohio. But this was not all, for he also labored abroad in England and Scotland.

Such was Finney's remarkable career. The Spirit of God drove him forth to a mighty work, regardless of distance. His

"methods were purposely fashioned to gain the attention of the unawakened, and to inspire them with the necessity of an immediate decision." 26

He believed that emotional preaching was all right if guided by a logical interpretation of the truth as presented in the Bible.

a. To the Broadway Tabernacle.

While Finney was laboring in Chatham street chapel, New York City, some events occurred connected with the Presbytery, that led to the formation of a Congregational Church. This resulted in the building of the Broadway Tabernacle with the understanding that he would be the regular minister. It was at this time that Finney took his dismissal from the Presbytery.

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On Broadway, in the heart of America's greatest city, Finney as a pastor, was as searching in his sermons to his own people as he was, when, as a revivalist, he preached to multitudes of stran-

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26. Davenport: Op. Cit., p. 66.

27. Cf. Finney: Autobiography, p. 325.

gers. While serving at the Broadway Tabernacle, he had many applications from young men to take them as students in theology. He had planned to deliver a course of theological lectures in the Tabernacle to meet this request. But these plans were never completed for about this time, the breaking up of Lane Seminary, in Cincinnati, took place on account of the prohibition, by the trustees, of the discussion on the question of slavery, among the student body. This led to Finney's going into a new sphere of labor.

b. To Oberlin College.

In January, 1835, a Rev. John Jay Ship of Oberlin and a Rev. Asa Mahan of Cincinnati, came to New York to persuade Finney to go to Oberlin as Professor of Theology. A man by the name of Shipherd had founded a colony, and organized a school at Oberlin, about a year before this time, and had obtained a charter broad enough for a university. The plan was for Finney to take those students that had revolted at Lane Seminary, bring them to Oberlin and teach them theology. He accepted the Professorship with the condition that he could return to New York during the winter months, so as not to leave undone the work he had started. For three years he carried out this agreement. He made Oberlin his center for the next forty years. During this time he suffered many financial discouragements as well as constant rebuke from the ecclesiastical bodies, regarding his interpretation of theological doctrines. But his labors were blessed a thousand fold, for he moulded the minds and changed the lives of many students.

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28. Ibid., p. 336-350.

29. Beardsley: Op. Cit., p. 151, says: "During his long connection with the college as president and professor, Mr. Finney had

## 2. A New Emphasis.

Finney's emphasis was away from crude irrationalism in preaching. He made no violent appeals to terror, as did the previous evangelists. Davenport expressed his idea very well when he says,

"It was not that Finney ceased to magnify the guilt of the sinner and the awful retribution due to sin. He never forsook the lines of appeal. But it was rather a fresh and vigorous aiming at the conscience and the will, in a new and larger emphasis upon the justice of God." 30

### a. Sentiment Against Hyper-Calvinism.

Although a Calvinist at heart, Finney was strongly opposed to hyper-calvinism. He even went so far as to say that,

"...to a great extent, the truths of the blessed gospel have been hidden under a false philosophy." 31

He not only said it, but condemned it and went about to prove that his statement was correct. A fine illustration of this can be taken from one of his sermons. The sermon from which we quote is entitled, "The Excuses of Sinners Condemn God." The excuse that he is dealing with in this particular instance is the inability of the sinner. His argument follows:

"Shall God require natural impossibilities and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never!....But you take the ground that no man can obey the law, as the Presbyterian Confession of Faith has it, 'No man is able, either by himself, or by grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed.' Now observe this affirms not only that no man is naturally able to keep God's commands, but also that no man is able to do it 'by the grace received in this life;' thus making this declaration a libel on the Gospels, as

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helped to mould the lives and characters of fully twenty thousand students, who went forth to influence society and bless the world."

30. Davenport: Op. Cit., p. 203.

31. Finney: Systematic Theology, Preface, p. 1.

well as a palable misrepresentation of the law of its Author, and of man's relations to both. It is only moderate language to call this assertion from the Confession of Faith a libel. If there is a lie either in hell or out of hell, this is a lie, or God is an infinite tyrant." 32

#### b. A Reaction to Dead Orthodoxy.

Due to the fact that we shall deal with Finney's theology more comprehensively in a later chapter, it is necessary that the discussion here be limited. But perhaps it will clarify our thinking, if stated now, that Finney seems to have been raised up at a peculiar junction in the churches of the land, to introduce a new era of revivals of religion. One of his biographers believes that the field was ready for action--something had to be done. For in the East, religion was still "dead orthodoxy." Vital spiritual power and personal experience had dried up in the pond of theological stagnation. Pierson writes, "The antidote to stagnation is agitation." 33 In this case Finney was the agitator, he was a born reformer, positive to the borders of bigotry, and original to the borders of heresy. With a scourge of stinging words, as illustrated above, he lashed the hyper-calvinistic fatalism and cold pietism of the churches. There is much more to be said about this notable character and his nation-wide revivals, but ~~as not to risk repetition,~~ we shall leave further discussion of the Finney campaign until a later chapter, and continue with our resume of the century.

### C. THE REVIVAL OF 1858

#### 1. Introduction.

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32. Finney: Sermons on Gospel Themes, p. 74.

33. Pierson: Evangelism, p. 194.



History proves to us that there was an unusually dark period from 1843 to 1857. It was a most discouraging time for the churches. Spiritual movements were slow, heavy and sluggish. Only a few isolated revivals could be cited in these twelve years. The accessions to the churches were few. During these years, additions were not equal to the depletion by death and discipline.

Chandler gives us a very fine summary of conditions at this time.

"During this period of religious prosperity (the Finney Revivals) the young nation increased in wealth and power, and as gains grew godliness declined. Men forgot God in pursuit of gold. Political debates became rancorous, and, after the administration of President Monroe, the subjects of these controversies were mainly financial measures and fiscal policies. The heart of the young republic was set on wealth, and the zeal of the people for religion became lukewarm. It was during this period that President Jackson and the National Bank had their struggle, and the financial panic of Martin Van Buren's day ensued....The Slavery question began to be agitated, and the annexation of Texas became a national issue. To this period belongs also the Mexican War.... Meanwhile gold was discovered in California.... Riches increased, and multitudes set their hearts upon them. The nation was forgetting God, fighting the battles of greed, and fanning the fires of sectional animosity. Political strife grew more bitter, and the great Civil War drew on apace... While speculation was at fever heat, and when men were wild with a mania for money-making, there came a financial crash unprecedented in the nation's history. In the twinkling of an eye the riches of many took wings and flew away. Bankruptcies, failures, frauds, and defalcations were on every hand, and the wheels of industry stood still, and the noisy cries of greed were hushed, men stopped to hear the voice of the Spirit calling them to repentance. And they heeded the heavenly call. Another revival of national extent began." 34.

## 2. Business Men's Prayer Meetings.

So it was in the winter of 1857-8 that the tide turned and a glorious inflow was realized. This was known as the great revival of 1857. As already pointed out, it was a time of great financial

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34. Chandler: Op. Cit., p. 210-212.

distress, and men's minds were easily turned to a serious consideration of religious duties. The beginning of this awakening was not started by the church, but can be traced to J. C. Lamphere, a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church, in New York City. It occurred to him that a union prayer meeting of business men, from twelve to one o'clock, midday, would help the cause of religion and bring comfort to these worldly men. Throughout the East in the large cities, "Business Men's Prayer Meetings" were held every day at noon. The interest became universal and for the first time in history the secular papers published whole pages about the revival.

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Following the revival came those exciting times between the states over the slavery question, culminating in the Civil War. The attention of the people was called from aggressive religious efforts to anxieties and duties of the national struggle. With the return of peace, there soon came a new impulse to spiritual living. The Presbyterian Church began to discuss the union of its two branches--reunion came in 1870. The year 1876 was marked by a great centennial observance at Philadelphia. It was at this centennial that Dwight L. Moody began his conspicuous career. The centennial seemed to create a national consciousness that began to function on a larger scale than ever before. The spiritual activities as well as the secular, shared in this broadening. The last great revival period in the nineteenth century enters at this point and we shall give a brief account of it and its noted leader.

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35. Dorchester:Op. Cit., p. 694. (Cf.)

36. Cf. Weber: Evangelism, p. 48.

#### D. THE MOODY REVIVAL INTRODUCED

##### 1. National and International Influence.

Dwight L. Moody is characterized by one of his biographers as "The Evangelist of the people." His work was "aggressive evangelism." He never waited for open doors to present themselves; he went out to closed doors and opened them. He never waited for others to come to him, he went out after them. His motto was, 38  
 "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught."

One of the fruits of the Revival of 1858 was the formation of the Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago. Moody, then a young business man in the city, attended these meetings very frequently. He became very active in personal work and induced many a young man to join the praying band held at the "Y". At a national convention of the Young Men's Christian Association, held at Indianapolis, Indiana, Moody first met Sankey, who later became his popular co-worker and whose hymns were among the popular tunes 39  
 of the age.

From special speakers at association meetings, Moody heard much about the English method of Sunday school work. He had a great desire to meet Charles H. Spurgeon and a number of other leaders that were making an impression upon the religious world. This led to his going to England for the first time. He not only heard the men he longed to hear but delivered many lectures himself, which resulted in his returning on a second visit and starting on

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38. Pierson: Op. Cit., p. 248.

39. Cf. Chapman: Revivals and Missions, p. 36.

his great revivalistic campaign which destined him to become the greatest revivalist of his age and perhaps of all ages. Like Finney, his name was known in every home not only in America but in England, Scotland and Ireland. In view of this, it is well to remember that he was not an ordained minister, nor did he ever attend a seminary. With reference to his work, the noted Dr. Philip Schaff, known to all students of theology, made the following remarks:

"One of the most interesting and remarkable facts in the history of these days (Moody in England) is the effects produced among you by the efforts of two laymen from America. It was a greater marvel to us than to you, and the only way to account for it is to refer it at once to the grace of God! Such a movement the world has not seen since the days of Whitefield and Wesley, and it is wider in its results than the work of those two honored men. It is most unsectarian in its character, and, I may add, the most unselfish movement known in our common history. It was for the purpose of winning souls to Christ and of extending His Kingdom, without regard to denomination, that these two men came to England, and every church may reap the benefit..... We in America had no idea these two men could produce such a commotion among you all; but it is just the old, old story of the simple fishermen of Galilee over again." 40

## 2. Educational Emphasis.

Moody placed great emphasis on educational preparation. He himself having very little schooling realized how necessary proper training was in the building of character and leadership. His plans took permanent form in the establishment of Northfield. It was not to be a center of education merely for the young, but for the inspiration and training of Christian workers, and for bringing to the ministry a more complete devotion of the Bible as the word of God, and the "blood doctrines" as the source of evangelical

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40. Moody: The Life of Moody, p. 252.

power and success. Here he spent his summers with many thousands of college graduates and ministers. This is a significant fact, when we realize his own lack of academic training, for this would seem a sufficient barrier to keep him out of sight as a prominent educator. But it only goes to show how far his powers of observation, analysis and synthesis could carry him. Moody did not congratulate himself on his lack of learning and preparation, in fact he keenly felt the need of more education, especially along the lines of things spiritual as well as intellectual. In his system of education he magnified three things, the word of God; the person and work of Christ; and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. To him the Bible was a treasure of riches, Christ was all-sufficient, and every man was divinely anointed into a life of service in the world of humanity. Therefore, let no man say that Moody was not educated. His son, W.R. Moody, in his new book, "D. L. Moody," writes concerning his father as an educator:

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"In self-education Moody had made extraordinary progress. To be sure he had not retrieved the early losses in elementary schooling, a handicap of which he was most sensitive as only those who were close to him knew. But his was especially a scholar's attitude. His humility of spirit made him willing to assume the position of a learner everywhere and always." 42

Moody's work was supplemented by the religious temperance reform, under Francis Murphy and the reform clubs, and by the Woman's Christian Temperance Unions. As a whole the decade 1870 to 1880 was one of the best, spiritually, judged by its results, in the history of American Christianity. This high point was,

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41. Cf. Dorchester: Op. Cit., p. 696.

42. Moody, W.R.: D.L.Moody, p. 318.

43. Dorchester: Op. Cit., p. 696.

however, followed by a similar period of depression which lasted almost to the close of the century. It has been called the "Science and Religious Controversy." In science, the intellectual world was called on to evaluate the theories of Darwin and Huxley. Ingersoll was attracting enormous crowds of listeners in the great centers by his very upsetting, and eloquent discussions against fundamental and denominational aspects of religious thought. In Germany the higher critics were beginning to formulate conclusions which, as they were published, imposed a heavy strain on the leaders of religious groups everywhere and brought uncertainties, and the American Protestant mind became much unsettled and disturbed.

*By not being able to make sense of them*

A reaction to this folly started with the young people, and found expression in the Christian Endeavor Movement. This brings us to the close of the nineteenth century, and ends our resume of the spiritual fluctuations during this period of American history.

We are now prepared to enter upon our definite problem, to take the second step in our method of procedure, namely, to make a special study of the Finney Revival, making our approach through the personality of the evangelist. We shall consider his system of organization, his style, and the doctrines he emphasized in his preaching, searching out the scheme which brought about so many conversions; later comparing it with a similar review of the work of Moody.

PART II

THE FINNEY REVIVAL

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSONALITY OF CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

#### **IV. THE PERSONALITY OF CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY**

##### **A. INTRODUCTION**

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THE PERSONALITY OF CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY

A. INTRODUCTION

1. His Early Years.

Charles Grandison Finney was brought up in a home where there was no religion, and up to the age of twenty-six, he had little sympathy for church goers. In 1818, he entered the office of Benjamin Wright, a prominent attorney in Adams, Jefferson County, New York. In his biography he writes,

"Thus when I went to study law, I was as ignorant of religion as a heathen. I had little regard for the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth." 1

He had not heard half a dozen sermons in his life, and most of the preaching was monotonous, mechanical and fatalistic.

The frequent reference to Mosaic Code which he met in his legal studies led him to buy a Bible. He says,

"In studying the law, I found the old authors frequently quoting the Scriptures, and referring especially to the Mosaic enactments as authority for many of the great principles of common law. This excited my curiosity so much that I went and purchased a Bible, turned to the passages and consulted it in its connection. This led to my taking a deep interest in the Bible." 2

2. Conversion and Call.

From this time on the young law student became a student of

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1. Finney: Autobiography, p. 7.

2. Ibid., p. 7.

the Bible, not at first, with the idea of getting religion, but to train himself more thoroughly in the legal aspects of its content. "It never occurred to me," he says, "to be ashamed of reading it." But the revelation through the Spirit began to touch a new note in his life; religion seemed to have a meaning as never before and he became conscious of his own unworthy life. It is then that he writes:

"I kept my Bible out of sight. If I was reading it when any body came in, I would throw my law-books upon it." 3

The crucial question soon presented itself. His keen, analytical mind could not stand out against the beatings of his sin-conscious soul, he had to make the decision. So it is that we find the memorable day in his autobiography. October 10, 1821, he went out into the woods and fought it out. "His wickedness appeared awful, infinite. It broke him down!" In an outbreak of contrition the truth dawned and he felt free. He went back to his office and continued in deep meditation upon his salvation and his life work. That night he had an experience which almost equals the apostle Paul's, on the Damascus road. We have a full record of this experience from his own pen; we will quote a portion of it, with its vivid description:

"There was no fire, and no light in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it afterwards, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality,

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3. Ibid., p. 19.

that he stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him. I wept aloud like a child, and such confession as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched him, that I recollect." 4

And not only was his conversion such a reality that it never left his mind, but equal to it was the vivid experience connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. His description of it almost makes us feel that we were reading from the book of the Acts, relating the manifestation of the Spirit upon the early Christians.

"As I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without any expectation of it, without even having thought in my mind that there was any such experience for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through my body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings." 5

The Spirit of God had entered into a man, and we find a new creation.

In a moment the world had lost hold, and God had taken hold. Finney declared at once and at all times that he was the Lord's. He felt that he must preach, and was not only willing to do so, but unwilling to do anything else. Preaching to him, as we shall see later, meant no formal pulpit oratory, but direct dealing with souls.

#### B. AN AMBASSADOR OF GOD

##### 1. Preacher of the Law.

Although Finney started preaching with no training in theology, he had been taught by experience that God wanted him to work in His

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4. Ibid., p. 19.

5. Ibid., p. 20.

vineyard, and he at once set himself to the task of learning the Scriptures and their meaning. His one aim from the beginning was to obey perfectly the written law.<sup>6</sup> He called on his pastor, Rev. Mr. Gale, who was a Princeton Graduate, and had long conversations with him regarding doctrinal views. He gained little satisfaction from him, for he did not feel that Mr. Gale's views could be sustained by the Bible. Gale was alarmed by Finney's obstinacy for he knew he was but a novice in religion and in Biblical learning. Gale felt that he had no right to object to the views of one who had been trained. We learn from his writings why they disagreed.

"His rules of interpretation did not meet my views. They were much less definite and intelligible than those to which I had been accustomed in my law studies. To the objections which I urged, he made no satisfactory reply. I ask him if the Bible did not require all who heard the Gospel to repent believe the Gospel, and be saved. He admitted that it did require all to believe, and be saved. But how could they believe and accept a salvation which was not provided for them?....I believe he had the strongest conviction that I was truly converted; but he felt the greatest desire to keep me within the strict lines of Princeton theology."<sup>7</sup>

Finney was willing to believe what was found taught in the Bible, but he could not agree with the prevalent doctrines as taught in Princeton. He frankly refused to go there for his education, for he did not care to put himself under an influence which he felt confident was wrong. The Presbytery then appointed Mr. Gale to superintend his studies. Of this experience Finney says,

"But my studies, so far as he was concerned were little else than controversy."<sup>8</sup>

This brought him to the conclusion, that the main fault was a

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6. Finney: Lectures on Revivals, p. 92.

7. Finney: Autobiography, p. 43.

8. Ibid., p. 43.

lack on the part of the clergy, of a clear understanding of the doctrines as taught in the Scriptures themselves. He laid great emphasis on this fact in this later teaching.

"Ministers should be educated to know what the Bible is, and what the human mind is, and know how to bring one to bear on the other. They should have the Bible in one hand, and the map of the human mind in the other, and know how to use the truth for the salvation of men." 9..

Therefore he made the Bible his one study, always aided by constant prayer for the spirit of light.

"He concentrated his remarkable powers upon its interpretation, and used its truths to convince men as a lawyer uses his evidence to win his case." 10

He was a true expositor, this gave him an intense feeling of the sacredness of the truth which he delivered to the people with a great deal of earnestness backed by persuasive argument. He was not slipshod in method but had a definite plan. He aimed, in the first place, to gain attention of the unawakened and to bring them to an immediate decision. He had an unusual power in compelling people to follow his will and purpose. Just by suggestion he would influence the most learned minds. It was this splendid quality, in combination with a consecrated life, which brought the most learned out to hear his message.

"Indeed, as he preached on, the time came when merchants, judges, lawyers, physicians,--educated men of all the professional classes,--were to receive his message. In 1842 he was invited to Rochester by a petition signed by practically every lawyer in the city." 11

Another important feature in his preaching was the stressing of practical application, dealing with the needs of his people. To

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9. Finney; Lectures on Revivals, p. 179.

10. Hoyt; The Pulpit and American Life, p. 156.

11. Davenport; Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 201.

him it was impossible to separate the doctrinal from the practical.

"A great deal of preaching in the present day, as well as in the past, is called doctrinal, as opposed to practical preaching. The idea of making this distinction is a device of the devil. And a more abominable device Satan himself never devised. You sometimes hear certain men tell a wonderful deal about the necessity of 'indoctrinating the people'. By which they mean something different from practical preaching; teaching them certain doctrines as abstract truths, without particular reference to practice....To preach doctrines in an abstract way, is absurd. God always brings in doctrine to relate practice. To bring forward doctrinal views for any other object is not only nonsense, but it is wicked." 12

Finney did not pick out hypothetical cases as illustrative material but studied the community and aimed directly at its faults. He did not preach about men but to men, they knew who he meant when he condemned the actions of certain people. He was so rough in his manner and so personal in his application that his pulpit appearance has often been criticized. At times he would say hard things of those whose doctrines he opposed and whose practical action he deprecated, as for example, when he declared that there was a jubilee in hell whenever the Presbyterian General Assembly met. <sup>13</sup> Although he was aware of his undignified manner in the pulpit, he felt confident that it was his natural manner and his best way to win souls to God, therefore he made no effort to change. He says,

"I came from the law office to the pulpit, and talked to the people as I would have talked to a jury...with directness, using common language because I aimed not at ornament, or at supporting the dignity of the pulpit." 14

To him, there was only one thing to preach, and that was the law of God and man's responsibility to it. Strong, in his book, "Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism," affirms that Finney's

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12. Finney: Lectures on Revivals, p. 189.

13. Strong: Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism, p. 369.

14. Finney: Autobiography, p. 89.

preaching of the law was providentially ordered:

"The time needed it. Orthodoxy had stiffened into something like Antinomianism. In the conviction that it is God that worketh in us, it had been sometimes forgotten that we are to work out our own salvation also. The churches settled down in selfish contentment and put forth no efforts for the rescue of the perishing. It was thought by some that efforts of this sort were presumptuous interferences with God's peculiar work, and that the saints must wait God's time to save sinners. And sinners on their part were lulled to sleep also,--what could they do to promote their own salvation? They could not submit to God, they could not believe, they could not even pray a prayer that was not a sin. The sinner's inability was conceived of as a physical inability,--the inability of the man physically dead to raise himself to life. Against all this Finney inveighed and stormed." 15

The one great aim in all his labors, was to save souls; and in this he was a great success, having perhaps been instrumental in bringing more converts to Christianity than any other man since the days of Whitefield. Strong mentions that it is believed that a

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hundred thousand persons united with Christian churches as the result of his evangelistic work; and at least twenty thousand students came under his instruction as an educator.

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## 2. A Unique Sermonizer.

In his homiletics, Finney was precisely individualistic. His sermon outlines look like the beginnings of a debate speech--there is that ever-present logic running throughout. Although, at first glance, it appears as a long list of separate points, numbered consecutively, yet, upon closer observation, one detects a steady progression directed to a definite conclusion.

"The labor elaborateness of his sermon-plans would be almost amusing, if they were not so instinct with life and power. His sermon on 'Christians the Light of the World,' has five main divisions; the subdivisions are respectively eight, six, six, seven, and five in number; and he concludes with seventeen

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15. Strong: Op. Cit., p. 381.

16. Kirk: Lectures on Revivals, p. 142.

17. Strong: Op. Cit., p. 364.

separate remarks. He had no hesitation in enumerating all these divisions, subdivisions, and remarks, as he went on. The effect was something overwhelming at times. When he preached on the 'Searching of Conscience,' he specified ninety-five different ways in which men's consciences were seared; and in a second sermon he mentions eighty-four others." 18

Speaking of his sermon preparation, Finney says that he makes it a habit to first study thoroughly the Gospel, in the light of its application to all people at all times. He never confines himself to hours and days of writing sermons, but goes among the people and learns their wants, then through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he selects a subject, thinks on it intensely, prays over it much, getting his mind full of it, then goes and pours it out to his people.

In the field of the Greek and Hebrew languages, Finney was far from a scholar. He was not competent to enter upon any textual criticism of the Scriptures in their original languages, but he did have what was far more important, a very complete knowledge of them in their broader outlines of thought, which are sufficiently plain in the English translation. Just how much greater as a theologian Finney would have been, if he had known the Scriptures in their original tongue, cannot be answered; but Rev. George F. Wright, writing for the Bibliotheca Sacra, October, 1877, says,

"If he lacked some of the advantages to be derived from a microscopical examination of the original Scriptures he was saved from the petty bondage to details, which, with so many, confused the perspective biblical theology." 20

It perhaps would not be wise to suggest him as a model to

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18. Strong: Op. Cit., p. 366.

19. Finney: Autobiography, p. 94.

20. Wright: Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. XXXIV, p. 708.



be followed in sermonizing, yet we must recognize that he was not bound by the mechanism of traditional homiletical training. And no doubt he was able to present the great doctrines in relation to the conditions of individual life because he was free to use his own style in delivering the truths that came direct from his heart, through constant searching and earnest prayer.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATION OF REVIVALISTIC WORK

V. ORGANIZATION OF REVIVALISTIC WORK

A. PREPARING THE CHURCH

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## CHAPTER V

## ORGANIZATION OF REVIVALISTIC WORK

## A. PREPARING THE CHURCH

## 1. Introduction.

How did Finney organize his forces for revivalistic work? This is the question which the present chapter will seek to answer. After making a study of his book, "Lectures on Revivals of Religion," we have felt justified in outlining, under three main heads his method of procedure in promoting a revival: Preparation of the church; direction to sinners; and instruction to converts. But Finney was not interested in the mechanics of organization. His method was primarily to study human nature, thus interpreting men's hearts to themselves. In his analysis he sought to move the heart through the mind. Never did he think it wise to use simply the emotion already engendered in his hearers by his own personality.

Before we go further, it is necessary that we mention the exercise of faith in all his work. He never felt alone, he was constantly surrounded by unseen realities. In other words, he "materialized" the spiritual world, bringing it down to his hearers through his powerful imagination. He made them feel the presence of truth as well as hear it. It was his own conviction that

"No being can look at the great truths, and not feel deeply concerning them....An intellectual conviction of truth is always accompanied with feeling of some kind." 1

In another sermon he remarked,

"He that feels nothing, and does nothing, believes nothing; this

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1. Finney: Lectures on Revivals of Religion, p. 134.

is a philosophical fact." 2

He felt the certainty that St. John reveals in his first epistle:

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled..." 3

It was in this way that he made the living reality of the truth irresistible to the mind as well as the heart. He brought to religious truth, through his presentation, a sense of certitude and infallibility that left no room for doubt. To him that was the first thing that had to be done in a church before they could expect to have a revival. The church itself had to feel the religion. He says,

"Unless ministers can get the church to wake up and act as if religion was true, and back their testimony by their lives, in vain will they attempt to promote a revival." 4

## 2. Sins of Neglect.

In preparing the church for a revival it is necessary that every member take part, by looking into his own heart to examine his own state of mind to see where he is in respect to the divine truth of Christianity.

"Now you draw off your attention from other things, and look at this. Make it a business, do not be in a hurry. Examine thoroughly your hearts, and see where you are--whether you are serving God or serving the devil most....Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character." 5

Finney suggests that the minister call on each member of his congregation, having them set down on a sheet of paper, those sins

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2. Ibid., p. 351.

3. I John 1:1

4. Finney: Op. Cit., p. 146.

5. Ibid., p. 37.

which are commonly called sins of omission. There is then to follow a thorough study of each, in the light of the individual life under examination. He offers the following list of sins, with comments on how to make the test or survey:

1. Ingratitude.
2. Want of love to God.
3. Neglect of the Bible.
4. Unbelief.
5. Neglect of Prayer.
6. Careless manner in Prayer.
7. Neglect of the means of grace.
8. Your want of love for your fellowmen.
9. Your want of care for the heathen.
10. Your neglect of family duties.
11. Neglect of social duties.
12. Neglect of watchfulness over your life.
13. Neglect to watch over your brethren.
14. Neglect of self-denial.

In respect to the church, Finney deals with it in relation to the passage from Hosea, on fallow ground (Hosea 10:12); that is, if the church is in a hardened state, because the evil conditions mentioned above, exist, then a place to prepare for a revival is right there--break up the fallow ground. He remarks,

"The mind of man is often compared in the Bible to ground, and the word of God to seed sown in it, and the fruit represents the actions and affections of those who receive it. To break up the fallow ground, therefore, is to bring the mind into such a state, that it is fitted to receive the word of God. Sometimes your heart gets matted down hard and dry, and all run to waste, till there is no such thing as getting fruit from them till they are all broken up, and mellowed down, and fitted to receive the word of God." 7

He reasons from this, that preaching is wasted unless the above preparation is made and that so many churches fail to revive under the preaching of God's word because the people have not been prepared in heart, mind and soul, through personal contact.

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6. Cf. Ibid., p. 39, 41

7. Ibid., p. 35.

8. "A preacher may wear out his life, and do very little good, while

He looks upon religion as a mere mechanical process unless people immediately set to work upon their own souls, locating each sin, driving it out, and then seeking for others. Without this spiritual house-cleaning, people can expect little from hearing the preacher expound the vital truths of the Bible. In fact, without this "deep-heart-work", one's soul becomes calloused and every sermon hardens it more.

Now that the church is ready, each member prepared, the next step is to gather in the ungodly.

#### B. DIRECTIONS TO SINNERS

##### 1. Prayer meetings.

+ Prayer is closely associated with a sense of need on the part of every human soul. It is a power that moves the hearts of wicked men, and is therefore, one of the vital factors in the organizing of a revival. The first appeal to sinners must come from prayer-filled lives, from the church prayer meeting, for its very design is to seek and save the lost. Finney says,

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there are so many stony-ground hearers....Professors of religion should never satisfy themselves, or expect a revival, just by starting out of their slumbers, and blustering about, and making a noise, and talking about sinners. They must get their fallow ground broken up. It is utterly unphilosophical to think of getting engaged in religion in this way. If your fallow ground is broken up, then the way to get more feeling, is to go out and see sinners on the road to hell, and talk to them, and guide inquiring souls....You may get into an excitement without this breaking up; but you may show a kind of zeal, but it will not last long, and it will not take hold of sinners, unless your hearts are broken up." Ibid., p. 46.

"Not only is prayer calculated to impress the minds of sinners, but when Christians pray in faith, the Spirit of God is poured out, and sinners are melted down and converted on the spot." 9

So important is the relation of the prayer meeting to the sinner, that Finney is led to make this indictment:

"You have not done enough by any means, when you have gone to prayer-meeting yourself. You cannot pray if you have invited no sinner to go. If all the church have neglected their duty so, and have gone to the prayer-meeting and taken no sinner along with them, no objects of prayer--what have they come for?" 10

This leads us into a further development, that of conducting the meeting held for prayer. Too often the time spent has been wasted because of no definite object in view, no reason for coming except to fulfil a sort of spiritual requirement. There is little reason for their existence, says Finney, if they have no definite purpose, no feeling for those outside the kingdom of God, for a season of wandering and much speaking hinders and destroys the very  
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spirit of prayer.

The prayer meeting itself should not be too long. Many have become discouraged and stopped going because the leader insisted on reading a long disconnected passage of Scripture and then urged that every one pray. Consequently, the meeting was dull and cold,

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9. Ibid., p. 119.

10. Ibid., p. 132.

11. "Prayers should always be short. When individuals suffer themselves to pray long, they forget where they are, that they are only the mouth of the congregation, and that the congregation cannot be expected to sympathise with them, so as to go along and feel united in prayer, if they are long and tedious, and go all around the world and pray for everything they can think of. Commonly, those who pray long in meeting, do not because they have the spirit of prayer, but because they have not....Some preach, some exhort the people, till everybody wishes they would stop, and God wishes so too, undoubtedly. They should keep to the point... and not follow their own foolish hearts all over the universe."  
Ibid., p. 122.



whereas a short meeting led by the Spirit would have made a far greater impression. The prayer meeting that is led by the Spirit is never dull or lacking in energy.

"Let it never be forgotten, that no Christian ever prays aright, unless led by the Spirit. He has natural power to pray and so far as the will of God is revealed, is able to do it; but he never does, unless the Spirit of God influences him." 12

Anything outside of this is not prayer, and though the meeting lasted all night it would yield no fruit.

Finney firmly believed that the great object of all the means of grace is to aim directly at the conversion of sinners, and that will come only as the church exercises the spirit of prayer. 13

## 2. The Anxious Seat. —

This was a peculiar term used by Charles G. Finney to express his idea of a particular seat in the church where the anxious could come and be addressed and made subjects of prayer, and be conversed with individually. 14 Although it met with much opposition, Finney held that it was philosophically sound, according to the laws of the mind.

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12. Ibid., p. 93.

13. "It was an essential feature of Mr. Finney's method as a revivalist to establish daily prayer meetings at the outset, in connection with his preaching, and even the coldest rationalizing observer of his work would have been forced to confess that the praying, if only as a means of human self-excitation, was not less than the sermons, the secret of his wonderful success." Wilkinson: Modern Masters of Pulpit Discourse, p. 288.

14. "I never, I believe, except in rare instances, until I went to Rochester, used as a means of promoting revivals, what has since been called "the anxious seat." I had sometimes asked persons in the congregation to stand up; but this I had not frequently done. However, in studying upon the subject, I had often felt the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand. From my own experience and observation I had found, that with the higher classes especially, the greatest obstacle to be overcome was

He handles his proof in the following manner: In the first place, nearly everyone will admit that when a person is seriously troubled in mind, there is a tendency for him to conceal his condition. The desire is, on the part of the minister, that he break the chains of pride, for only then can he hope to be converted.

"And our many thousands are there who will bless God to eternity, that when pressed by the truth they were even brought to take this step, by which they threw off the idea that it was a dreadful thing to have anybody know that they were serious about their souls." 15

In the second place, he believes that the "anxious seat" met its purpose in detecting deception and delusion, thus preventing false hopes. He illustrates his point in the following:

"Supposing I was preaching on the subject of temperance and that I should first show the evils of intemperance, and bring up the drunkard and his family, and show the various evils produced, till every heart is beating with emotion. Then I portray the great danger of moderate drinking, and show how it leads to intoxication and ruin, and that there is no safety but in TOTAL ABSTINENCE: till a hundred hearts are ready to say, 'I will never drink another drop of ardent spirit in the world; if I do I will expect to find a drunkard's grave.' Now, I stop short, and let the pledge be circulated, and everyone that is fully resolved is ready to sign it. But how many will begin to draw back and hesitate, when you begin to call on them to sign a pledge of total abstinence. One says to himself, 'Shall I sign it or not? I thought my mind made up, but this signing a pledge never to drink again, I do not know about that.' Thus you see when a person is called upon to give a pledge, if he is found not to be decided, he makes it manifest that he was not sincere. That is he never came to that resolution on the subject, which could be relied on to control his future life. Just so with the awakened sinner. Preach to him, and at that moment he thinks he is willing to do anything; he thinks he is determined to serve the Lord; but bring him to the test, call on him to do one thing, to take one step that will identify him with the people of God, or cross his pride--his pride comes up and he refuses; his delusion is brought out, and he finds himself a lost sinner still; whereas, if you had not done

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their fear of being known as anxious inquirers. They were too proud to take any position that would reveal them to others as anxious for their souls." Finney: Autobiography, p. 288.

15. Finney: Lectures on Revivals of Religion, p. 253.

it he might have gone away flattering himself that he was a Christian. If you say to him there is the "anxious seat", come out and avow your determination to be on the Lord's side, and if he is not willing to do so small a thing as that, then he is not willing to do anything, and there he is, brought out before his own conscience. It uncovers the delusion of the human heart, and prevents a great many spurious conversions, by showing those who might otherwise imagine themselves willing to do anything for Christ, that in fact they are willing to do nothing." 16

Finney compares the "anxious seat" to baptism as it was administered in the early Apostolic Church; for it was a direct call to prove the sincerity of those offering to follow the Christ; in other words it was a "public manifestation of their determination to be Christians." 17 He did not introduce it merely for the sake of having something new and different, but because it served, as we have seen, a vital purpose in handling sinners. Next to prayer, the anxious seat is the important factor in the Finney organization of revivals, and when we come to the study of the Moody revival we will find a parallel to it in the so-called "Inquiry Meeting."

### C. INSTRUCTIONS TO CONVERTS

#### 1. Joining the Church.

The church's responsibility does not end with conversions, but is increased by them, for young converts need attention as do young children. They are sadly in want of understanding regarding their new life. To quote Finney again,

"The church is verily guilty for her neglect in regard to the instruction of young converts....If the church had only done her duty in training up young converts to work, and labor for Christ, the world would have been converted long ago." 18

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16. Ibid., p. 254.

17. Ibid., p. 254.

18. Ibid., p. 408-409.

In too many instances they are left idle, which naturally makes it easy for them to slide back into their old way of life; instead of cheering them on when they are enthusiastic in the spirit of re-birth, they are neglected and their zeal is soon extinguished.

Therefore, we find Finney suggesting that they be trained to labor just as carefully as young recruits are trained for war.

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The first instruction should be in regard to their admission to some church of Christ immediately. They should not be left to wander without a church-home. That there be no misunderstanding as to what is meant by instruction to young converts in general, we submit a list extracted from one of Finney's lectures on this subject:

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1. Taught to distinguish between emotion and principle in religion.
2. To renounce the ownership of all their possessions, and of themselves.
- 3. To cultivate a tender conscience.
4. To pray without ceasing.

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19. "Suppose a captain in the army should get his company enlisted, and then take no more pains to teach and train and discipline them, than is taken by many pastors to train and lead forward young converts. Why, the enemy would laugh at such an army... such an army would represent the church her young converts. Instead of being trained to stand shoulder to shoulder in the onset, they feel no practical confidence in their leaders, no confidence in their neighbors, no confidence in themselves, and they scatter at the first shock of Battle." Ibid., p. 409.

20. "Sometimes persons professing to be converts will make an excuse for not joining the church, that they can enjoy religion just as well without it. This is always suspicious.... It is almost certain they have no religion. Ordinarily, if a person does not desire to be associated with the people of God, he is rotten at the bottom. It is because he wants to keep out of the responsibilities of a public confession. He has a feeling within him that he had rather be free, so that he can by and by go back to the world again if he likes, without the reproach of instability or

5. To be faithfully warned against adopting a false standard in religion.
6. To do all their duty.
7. To feel that they have no separate interests.
8. To maintain singleness of motive.
9. To aim at being useful in the highest degree possible.
10. Not to aim at comfort but usefulness in religion.
11. To have moral courage.
12. To be sound in the faith.
13. To guard others against censoriousness.
14. To learn to say no.
15. What is and what is not Christian experience.
16. Not to count anything a sacrifice which they do for God.
17. To be strictly honest.
18. That religion is not a substance as a part of mind itself.
19. That religion does not consist in going to meeting, Bible reading and prayer.
20. That it does not consist in raptures, or ecstasies, or high flights of feeling.
21. That religion does not consist in desires to do good actions.
22. That nothing which is selfish is religion.
23. That nothing is acceptable to God, as religion, unless it be performed heartily, to please God.
24. Be taught self-denial, perseverance.
25. What sanctification is.
26. To be religious in everything.

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hypocrisy. Enjoy religion just as well without obeying Jesus Christ! It is false on the face of it. He overlooks the fact that religion consists in obeying Jesus." Finney: Op. Cit., 377.

27. That they should aim to be perfect.

28. Taught to exhibit their light.

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29. How to win souls to Christ.

## 2. Receiving the Holy Spirit.

In reviewing the Finney revivals, one's attention is drawn to the emphasis given to the Holy Spirit. It almost makes you feel as if you were reading from the Lukan writings. The presence of the Spirit not only is revealed as a special gift, but it pervades all the work, the prayers, the sermons and the instructions to those converted. It was not only essential that one be possessed by the Spirit, in the mind of Finney, but absolutely necessary if one counted himself a member of the kingdom of God.

"He has placed his Spirit at your disposal, and if you have it not, he has a right to look to you and to hold you responsible for all the good you might do, did you possess it." 22

It is the command of God that we "be filled with the Holy Spirit," therefore, it is necessary that the young converts feel this need.

"The Spirit is given not to enable them to see or believe, but because without it they will not look, nor feel, nor act, as they ought." 23

Finney implies that the Christian without the Spirit of God is guilty of disobedience:

"Christians are as guilty for not having the Spirit, as sinners are for not repenting." 24

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21. Finney: Lectures on Revivals of Religion, p. 364-392. This list has been selected from two of Finney's lectures on the general subject, "Instruction to Converts," in which he gives a full explanation of each.

22. Ibid., p. 116.

23. Ibid., p. 106.

24. Ibid., p. 115.

Every man who is a child in the faith must understand that he is useless in the Kingdom unless he works through the Spirit. Even the older church members fail to sense this important factor. Finney remarks that

"...there are many people who do not blame themselves at all for not having the Spirit. They even think themselves quite pious Christians, because they go to prayer meetings, and partake of the sacrament, and all that, though they live year after year without the Spirit of God. Now you see that the same God who says, 'Do not get drunk', says also, 'Be ye filled with the Spirit.'"<sup>25</sup>

The Christian is constantly faced by opposition from within as well as from without the church. This terrible discouragement leads to fretting and irritation, but the Spirit makes it possible for one to be calm under affliction. For you will have peace with God if you are led by the Spirit, and will also have peace of conscience. So many professors of the faith lack energy and skill and are even unkind to others who make suggestions, because they have little spirituality. They are ignorant of the whole plan concerning the spiritual kingdom. And so it was that Finney taught his converts the necessity of having the Holy Spirit.

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25. Ibid., p. 108.

26. Ibid., p. 117. "Many professors of religion are as ignorant of spirituality as Nicodemus was of the new birth. They are ignorant and I fear unconverted. If anyone talks to them about the spirit of prayer, it is all algebra to them....How different was the character of the Apostles! Read the history of their lives, read their letters, and you will see that they were always spiritual, and walked daily with God. But how little is there of such religion! 'When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?' Set some of these professors to work in a revival, and they do not know what to do, have no energy, no skill, and make no impression. When will the professors set themselves to work, filled with the Spirit? If I could see this church filled with the Spirit, I would ask nothing more to move the whole mighty mass of minds."

It was in the instruction of converts that the Finney revivals were placed on a higher plane than those of the Second Awakening. We shall see in a later chapter that this was also true of the Moody revivals. Both of these revivalists are unique as educators as well as preachers.



CHAPTER VI

FINNEY'S SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

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## FINNEY'S SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

## A. A NEW THEOLOGY

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## CHAPTER VI

## FINNEY'S SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

## A. A NEW THEOLOGY

## 1. The Idea of Logical Consistency.

"It becometh not religion to disparage reason. She owes too great a debt to it." 1

Finney would fully agree to this statement. For he not only revolted against the prevalent silly emotionalism and fanaticism of the early nineteenth century, but also against the false philosophy of his own day, both being guilty of lack of reason and inconsistency of thought.

As he sought for definitions and explanations of the doctrines taught, he found that the ministers themselves did not understand the things they were teaching. He was struck with the fact that they seldom defined even their own position. He writes,

"Among the words of most frequent use, I could find scarcely a single term intelligibly defined." 2

He firmly believed that Christianity could stand under the test of an intellectual analysis; if it could not vindicate its right to exist through logical consequences, he cared to have nothing to do with it. Christians should think about their religion, know why they believe. He challenges everyone to study:

"My brother, sister, friend--read, study, think, and read again. You were made to think. It will do you good to think; to develop your powers by study. God designed that religion require thought,

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1. Davenport: Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 275.  
 2. Finney: Systematic Theology, Preface, p. ix. "I inquired in what sense the terms 'regeneration,' 'faith,' 'repentance,' 'love,' etc.,

intense thought, and should thoroughly develop our powers of thought. The Bible itself is written in a style so condensed as to require much intense study. Many know nothing of the Bible or of religion, because they will not think and study." 3

Finney was surprized to find that even the discriminating teachers of religion were forced to confess that they could not establish, what he terms, the logical consistency of their system; that they would only shut their eyes and believe when revelation seemed to conflict with the affirmations of reason. To him this was a disgrace, simply an easy way. He says,

"I regard the assertion that the doctrines of theology cannot preserve a logical consistency throughout, as both dangerous and ridiculous." 4

It was therefore his endeavor to define the terms used by Christian divines and the doctrines of Christianity, pushing them to their logical consequences, as found in the Bible, thereby producing a systematic theology that would meet all argument.

This does not go to say that he was stereotyped in his theological views and not willing to midify old views and opinions to be consistent with the revealing of new truth. In fact it is on this point that he so vigorously opposed the old authoritative creeds.

"No Christian and no theologian should be afraid to change his views, his language, or his practices in conformity with increasing light."

His argument against creeds follows:

Every uninspired attempt to frame for the church an authoritative standard of opinion which shall be regarded as an unquestionable exposition of the word of God, is not only impious in itself, but is also a tacit assumption of the fundamental dogma of Papacy. The Assembly of Divines did more to assume the necessity of a Pope to

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were used, but could obtain no answer, at which it did not appear to me that both reason and revelation revolted."

3. Finney: Systematic Theology, Preface, p. xi.

4. Ibid., p. x.

give law to the opinions of men; they assumed to create an immortal one, or rather to embalm their own creed, and preserve it as the Pope of all generations; or it is more just to say, that those who have adopted that confession of faith and catechism as an authoritative standard of doctrine, have absurdly adopted the most obnoxious principle of Popery, and elevated their confession and catechism to the Papal throne and into the place of the Holy Ghost. That the instrument framed by that assembly should in the nineteenth century be recognized as the standard of the church, or in an intellectual branch of it, is not only amazing, but I must say it is highly ridiculous. It is better to have a living than a dead Pope. If you must have an authoritative expounder of the word of God, let us have a living one, so as not to preclude the hope of improvement. 'A living dog is better than a dead lion;' so a living Pope is better than a dead and stereotyped confession of faith, that holds all men bound to subscribe to its unalterable dogmas and its inverting terminology." 5

Finney himself was constantly holding his mind open to receive the rays of truth from every quarter, ready to change with increased knowledge.

"Should I refuse or fail to do this," he writes, "I should need to blush for my folly and inconsistency, for I say again, that true Christian consistency implies progress in knowledge and holiness, and such changes in theory and in practice as are demanded by increasing light." 6

With Finney came the strong common-sense reaction in revivalistic philosophy and sentiment against hyper-Calvinism of the earlier day.

"He stood at the turn of the tide, and with all the strength of a really vigorous intellect, he repudiated the theological concept of the total depravity of humanity, and espoused with vehemence the notion of moral agency, that the will of man is free to choose between the motives that come to it through reason and emotion." 7

Regardless of this revolution in thought and policy, Finney remained distinctly Calvinistic and conservative in theology. Perhaps it is well to say here that Finney was not primarily a theologian, but a

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5. Finney: Systematic Theology, Preface, p. xii.

6. Ibid., p. xiii.

7. Davenport: Op. Cit., p. 385.

preacher, and was only interested in theology as it helped to bring men to God. We have not only noticed this in our study, but Dr. Strong emphasizes this fact when he says:

"Finney was not interested in theological speculation. Only as theology affected men's salvation was he ardent in its study of it. Theory was valuable only as it had to do with practice. His constant evangelizing kept his doctrine from bringing forth all its natural fruits." 8

## 2. The Bible the Only Source Book.

The inability of the ministers of his day, to explain their doctrinal views in respect to the Scriptures themselves, led Finney to go directly to the Bible. He would go to his room and spend hours at a time on his knees over his Bible, beseeching the Lord to teach him regarding its interpretation.

Soon after he was licensed to preach, Finney went to his minister to get some books pertaining to theological studies. He remarks relating to this experience,

"I had been used to the close and logical reasoning of the judges as I found them reported in our law works; but when I went to Rev. Gale's old school library, I found almost nothing proved to my satisfaction. I am sure it was not because the positions of these theological authors were unsound and not satisfactorily sustained. They often seemed to me to state one thing and prove another, and frequently fell short of logically proving anything. I finally said to Rev. Gale, 'If there is nothing better than I find in your library to sustain the great doctrines taught by our church, I must be an infidel.'" 10

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8. Strong: Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism, p. 385.

9. Finney: Autobiography, p. 375. "I gave myself to a great deal of prayer. After my evening services I would retire as early as I well could; but rose at four o'clock in the morning, because I could not sleep longer, and immediately went to the study, and engaged in prayer. And so deeply was my mind exercised, and so absorbed in prayer, that I frequently continued from the time I arose, at four o'clock, till the gong called to breakfast, at eight o'clock. My days were spent as far as I could get time, in the searching of the Scriptures. I read nothing else, all that winter, but my Bible; and a great deal of it seemed new to me. Again the Lord took me from Genesis to Revelation. He led me to see the

Finney later thanked God for this experience for it drove him to a thorough and fresh study of the Bible, which gave him a system of doctrines that were not only true but logical.

#### B. DOCTRINAL PREACHING

##### 1. The Sovereignty of God.

Finney's preaching was peculiarly adapted to meet the requirements of the age in which he lived. A sort of fatalism prevailed because of the over-emphasis of the teaching of God's sovereignty and man's inability.

"Men were taught that they could do nothing to save themselves; they must wait God's time; if he chose to save them he would do so, otherwise they would perish." 11

Now there was only one way to counteract this type of preaching and that was to use the same type but with a different emphasis. In other words, not to do away with doctrinal preaching but preach the right doctrine.

Finney could see no other way to preach the gospel of Truth but by doctrinal preaching. He writes,

"Some people are opposed to doctrinal preaching. If they have been used to hear doctrines preached in a cold, abstract way, no wonder they are opposed to it. They ought to be opposed to such preaching. But what can a man preach who preaches no doctrine? If he preaches no doctrine, he preaches no gospel. And if he does not preach it in a practical way, he does not preach the Gospel. All preaching should be doctrinal and all preaching should be practical. The very design of doctrine is to regulate the practice. Any preaching that has not this tendency is not the Gospel." 12

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connections of things, the promises, threatenings, the prophecies and their fulfilment; and indeed, the whole Scripture seemed to me all ablaze with light, and not only light, but it seemed as if God's word was instinct with the very life of God."

10. Finney: Autobiography, p. 51.

11. Beardsley: History of American Revivals, p. 148.

12. Finney: Lectures on Revivals, p. 179.

We can gather from this statement that he was a doctrinal preacher, just to glance at the titles of his sermons will also reveal this fact: "The Wages of Sin;" "On the Atonement;" "Christ our Advocate;" "Quenching the Spirit;" "Death of Sin Through Christ;" "Where Sin Occurs God Cannot Wisely Prevent It;" and so on throughout all his sermons, he emphasized the great doctrines of the Bible.

Let us be reminded at this point, that it is not within the scope of this thesis to criticize nor even to evaluate Finney's theology. Our purpose is but to select those doctrines which deal primarily with matters of conversions, those which he emphasized most in his revival preaching, in order that, as stated in our method of procedure, a comparison can be made with the doctrinal views preached by Moody.

Believing that the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty had been mis-stated and perverted, therefore leading to an "iron system of fatalism," Finney not only restates the doctrine as he believes the Bible presents it, but also explains and defends it over against the accepted view of his day. In the first place, he endeavors to show what is not intended by the term "sovereignty" when applied to God. Quoting from his lecture on Divine Sovereignty, he says:

"It is not intended, at least by me, that God, in any instance, wills or acts arbitrarily, or without good reasons; reasons so good and so weighty, that he could in no case act otherwise than he does, without violating the law of his own intelligence and conscience, and consequently without sin." 13

This leads him to affirm

"That God should therefore never be presented as a sovereign, in the sense implied that he is actuated by self or arbitrary will, rather than by his infinite intelligence." 14

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13. Finney: Systematic Theology, Lecture XLV, p. 515.

14. Ibid., p. 515.



In this he represents himself as opposed to those who say that God is wholly above and without any law or rule of action guiding His will through infinite reason and conscience. For this reason they represent God's sovereignty as controlling and disposing of all events with an iron or adamantite fatality, inflexible and omnipotent.  
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In the second place, he states what he believes is intended by divine sovereignty.

"The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge."

In explaining his view, he remarks that God is sovereign,

"...not in the sense that he is not under the law, or that he is above the law, but in the sense that he is al law to himself; that he knows no law but what is given him by his own reason." 15

Thirdly, "God is and ought to be an absolute and a universal sovereign." Here again Finney begins by defining his terms.

"By absolute, I mean that his expressed will, in obedience to his reason, is law"... "His expressed will is law, because it is an infallible declaration of what is intrinsically fit, suitable, right." 16

It follows therefore according to Finney's reasoning, that God not only ought to be an absolute sovereign, but that He Must be, if He

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15. Finney: Systematic Theology, Lecture XLV, p. 516. He further defends this position by saying, God consults his own intelligence only, not from any arbitrary disposition, "but because his knowledge is perfect and infinite, and therefore it is safe and wise to take counsel nowhere else....He must make his own reason his rule of action."

16. Ibid., p. 517. This leads to the conclusion that, what God wills, "must be right; not because he will it, but that he wills it because it is right."

is God at all. This he says will appear more intelligible if we consider:

1. "That his end was chosen and means decided upon, when no being but himself existed, and of course, there was no one to consult but himself."
2. "Creation and providence are only the results, and the carrying out of his plans settled from eternity."
3. "The law of benevolence, as it existed in the divine reason, must have eternally demanded of him the very course he has taken."
4. "His highest glory and the highest good of universal being demand that he should consult his own discretion, and exercise an absolute and a universal sovereignty, in the sense explained." 17

To substantiate this argument Finney gives thirty-eight references from the Bible, the passages being selected from both the Old and the New Testaments. If stated and explained in this manner, the divine sovereignty of God, says Finney, is nothing to be afraid of as if it were revolting and tyrannical. In fact, it is the opposite.

"The Sovereignty of God is an infinitely amiable, sweet, holy, and desirable sovereignty....It is nothing else than infinite love, directed by infinite knowledge, in such a disposal of events as to secure the highest will-being of the universe; that, in the whole details of creation, providence and grace, there is not a solitary measure of his that is not infinitely wise and good." 18

In the last place, it is proper that we call your attention to the fact that Finney outlined this doctrine, as he did all the important doctrines, in logical sequence because he felt that it was the only way in which to understand, which is so essential to the best improvement of all, the relation of the righteousness and love

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17. Ibid., p. 117.

18. Ibid., p. 223.

in the divine nature. To express the blessing which comes from such an understanding, he writes:

"When it is understood that God's hand is directly or indirectly in everything that occurs, and that he is infinitely wise and good, and equally wise and good in every dispensation--that he has one end steadily and always, in view--that he does all for one and the same ultimate end--and that this end is the highest good of himself and of universal being;--I say, when these things are understood and considered, there is a divine sweetness in all his dispensations. ...The soul, in contemplating such a sacred, universal, holy sovereignty, takes on a sweet smile of delightful complacency, and feels secure, and reposes in perfect peace, surrounded and supported by the everlasting arms." 20

With this brief development, we can see at the outset, why Finney held theology in such high regard, and firmly demanded that every Christian, in order to be an intelligent and sympathetic believer, must ground himself in the doctrines of the faith.

## 2. Doctrine of Election.

During the revival at Antwerp, Finney overheard some Methodist people say that he was a Presbyterian but dared not preach on Predestination in a Methodist community. Needless to say this made him determined to preach on the doctrine the following Sunday. He

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19. Strong: Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism, p. 369-370. A practical application of Finney's belief on this point. "When Oberlin became a principal station on the underground railroad by which fugitive slaves escaped from bondage, Mr. Finney was asked what he would do if a fugitive could be rescued from the kidnapper only by taking the Master's life. 'Do?' said he, 'Do?' I would kill him. And yet I would love him with all my heart!' There is so much good theology in that utterance that it has ceased to provoke a smile in me. It illustrates what so many are inclined to deny, namely, the possibility of a conflict between righteousness and love in the divine nature, a conflict that is reconciled only by an eternal sacrifice--'the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.'"

20. Finney: Systematic Theology, p. 523.

started his sermon by saying, in the first place, what the doctrine of election is not; secondly what it is; thirdly, that it is a doctrine of the Bible; fourthly, that it is the doctrine of reason; fifthly, that to deny it, is to deny the attributes of God; sixthly, that it opposes no obstacle in the way of salvation to the non-elect; seventhly, that all men may be saved if they will; and in the a last place, that this doctrine is the only hope whereby anyone will be saved. He concluded by saying,

"I believe it convinced the Methodists themselves." 21

Perhaps it will be well for us to follow at least in brief, his order of argument. He clearly states what the Bible doctrine of election is not.

"It is not that any are chosen to salvation, in such a sense that they will or can be saved without repentance, faith and sanctification. 22 Nor is it that some are chosen to salvation, in such a sense, that they will be saved irrespective of their being regenerated, and persevering in holiness to the end..... The Bible doctrine of election is not that God elected some to salvation, upon such condition that it is really uncertain whether they will comply with those conditions, and be finally saved. The elect were chosen to salvation, upon condition that God foresaw that he could secure their repentance, faith and final perseverance." 23

This entire argument is backed by quotations from the Scripture.

After he clearly defines his terms, so as to show what election is not, he proceeds by further analysis to prove what the Bible doc-

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21. Finney: Autobiography, p. 107.

22. Finney: Systematic Theology, p. 404. Finney's interpretation of term, "sanctification." "Its simple and primary meaning is a state of consecration to God....To sanctify is to set apart to a holy use--to consecrate a thing to the use of God. It consists in the consecration or devotion of the constitutional powers of body and soul to God....It belongs neither to the reason, conscience, nor understanding. In short it cannot consist in any state of the intellect whatever."

23. Ibid., p. 483-484.

trine of election is:

"It is that all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts to God by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end--their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end....It is admitted that God by his own agency secures the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of all that ever were or will be saved." 24

It is now his purpose to show why some are classed as non-elects, why they are not chosen and what part they have in this particular doctrine.

"He also does much for the non-elect, in the sense of using such means with them as might secure, and ought to secure, their salvation. But he knows he will not succeed in securing their salvation, on account of their voluntary and persevering wickedness, it cannot be truly said, that he uses means different to save the elect....Although he foresees, that he cannot secure their salvation, because of their wilful and persevering unbelief, yet he sees it important under his government to manifest a readiness to save them, and such as will ultimately be seen to leave them wholly without excuse." 25

Fimney uses the words of Christ as an illustration.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" (Matt. 25:34)

that is from eternity.

"Now, has the Judge at that time any new knowledge or design respecting those individuals? Certainly not!...It must be true that God foreknew all that ever will be true of the non-elect, and must have eternally had some design respecting their final destiny. And also that he has had from the beginning the same and the only design that he will have in respect to them." 26

Fimney did not regard his views upon the distinctive points of Calvinism to be of small importance. This is quite evident

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24. Ibid., p. 483.

25. Ibid., p. 485.

26. Ibid., p. 186.

both from the extent and vigor of his treatment of them (having eighteen large pages on this one doctrine of election) and also his earnest desire that all might understand them; that is why he preached doctrinal sermons in the most simple, yet logical manner.

All these doctrines, rightly explained, seemed to him so natural. Surely in the order of nature what would be wisely done must have been foreseen before it was determined what should be done, and what should be done must have preceded the knowledge of what was done. And so, fore-knowledge of what would be done followed, or was subsequent to, election. In other words, God must have known whom He could wisely save prior to his determination to save them.

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### 3. Doctrine of Sin.

The doctrine of sin was Finney's first departure from what his minister( Mr. Gale ) understood to be orthodox theology. In his autobiography, Finney tells us that Mr. Gale held tenaciously to the old school doctrine of original sin, or that the human constitution was morally depraved. That men were utterly unable to comply with the terms of the Gospel, to repent, to believe, or to do anything that God required them to do; that while they were free to do all evil, in the sense of being able to commit any amount of sin, yet were not free to perform any good; that God had condemned men for

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27. Finney; Systematic Theology, p. 499. Summary statement: "The responsibility is yours. God does all that he wisely can, and challenges you to show what more he could do that he has not done. If you go to hell, you must go stained with your own blood. God is clear, angels are clear. To your own Master you stand or fall; mercy waits; the Spirit strives; Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Do not then pervert this doctrine, and make it an occasion of stumbling, till you are in the depths of hell."

their sinful nature; and for this, as well as for their transgressions  
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 they deserved eternal death.

These doctrines he could not receive as stated, and many times they so perplexed him that he was on the point of giving up the study for the ministry altogether. But after a thorough study of the Bible, he reached a conclusion that presented itself in a logical doctrine of sin. He constructed his case under the following heads: Voluntary sin--sin a unit--Sin not chosen for its own sake--sin natural to mankind--sin not necessary to the highest good--sin of Adam and sinful state. It is impossible within the scope of this thesis to cover his argument in full, so we have chosen to deal with those points which are perhaps most peculiar to Finney's idea, and will lead us to an understanding of his position.

Going to his Bible, he finds there the history of the introduction of sin into the world. He gains from observation of the narrative that the first sin consisted in selfishness, or

"..in consenting to indulge the excited constitutional propensities in a prohibited manner." 30

He can not justify the position that some take in holding so firmly that Adam's sin, physically, is the cause of all the sins of men.

This is his position:

"The Bible once, and only once, incidentally intimates that Adam's sin has in some way been the occasion, not the necessary physical cause, of all the sins of men. (Romans 5:12-19) It neither says nor intimates anything in the relation to the manner in which Adam's sin had occasioned this result. It only incidentally recognizes the fact, and then leaves it, just as if the quo modo was too obvious to need explanation. In other parts of the Bible we are informed how we are to account for the

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28. Finney: Autobiography, p. 46. (Cf.)

29. Finney: Systematic Theology, Index, p. 622. (Cf.)

30. Finney: Systematic Theology, p. 252.

existence of sin among men. James says, that a man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts ("desires") and enticed. That is his lusts or the impulses of his sensibility, are his tempters. When he or his will is overcome of these, he sins. Paul and other inspired writers represent sin as consisting in a carnal or fleshy mind, in the mind of the flesh, or in mind-ing the flesh. 31

Out of this study he finds certain conclusions that lead him to form an opinion of interpretation. He says therefore,

"Sin is a transgression of the law. The law requires benevolence, good-willing. Sin is not a mere negation, or a not willing, but consists in willing self-gratification. It is willing contrary to the commandment of God. Sin, as well as holiness, consists in choosing, willing, intending. Sin must be voluntary; that is, it must be intelligent and voluntary. It consists in willing, and it is nonsense to deny that sin is voluntary. The fact is, there is no sin, or there is voluntary sin." 32

He puts in the form of a definition, his opinion as how sin is to be accounted for in the humanity of all mankind:

"The sensibility acts as a powerful impulse to the will, from the moment of birth, and secures the consent and activity of the will to procure its gratification, before the reason is at all developed. The will is thus committed to the gratification of feeling and appetite, when first the idea of moral obligation is developed." 33

That is to say, Adam and Eve's sin did not lie in the constitutional desire of food, or of foreknowledge, nor in the excited state of these appetites or desires, but in the consent of the will to prohibited indulgence. Therefore, Finney says,

"This sinful choice is properly enough called indwelling sin." 34  
And it is, if looked at in this way, easily understood why sin is so natural to mankind. It is

"...not because their nature is sinful, but because the appetites and passions tend so strongly to self-indulgence. These are temptations to sin, but sin itself consists not in these appetites and propensities, but in the voluntary committal of the will to

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31. Ibid., p. 253.

32. Ibid., p. 122.

33. Ibid., p. 254.

34. Ibid., p. 254.



their indulgence. This committal of the will is selfish, and when the will is once given up to sin, it is very natural to sin."<sup>35</sup>

We find that he preached many sermons on sin. His sermon from the text, "The Wages of Sin is Death" (Romans 6:23) is a good illustration of how he presented his argument to the popular public. His outline is as follows: I. Illustrate the nature of sin.

II. Specify some of the attributes of the penal sanctions of God's law.

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III. Show what this penalty must be.

It would almost be impossible to explain Finney's position and attitude regarding sin, apart from his personal experience. In his own life, sin was a very real thing. He was constantly in struggle with it. Dr. Strong tells of a visit he once had with Finney and how Finney related to him his temptations, of times in revivals of religion when the risings of ambition and self-complacency were such as to horrify him; that for hours he would plead with God to cleanse him of his sin and that he would never preach again until God delivered him from himself. One other time he went through the terrible experience of sin-consciousness and all his past sins loomed up before him.

"Oh, it seemed to me during these weeks, as if Satan had been let loose upon me. All my past sins have come up before me. Thousands of things that I had forgotten loomed up again in my memory. Things I had never dreamed of as sinful showed themselves to torment me. It seemed to me as if I should be overcome by the revelation of my wickedness, and that if God had not reached to the very depths to save me I should have been lost forever." 37

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35. Ibid., p. 257.

36. Finney: Sermons on Gospel Themes, p. 37.

37. Strong: Christ in Creation and Ethical Monism, p. 378.

In all of his preaching he demanded the instant surrender of sin, but he always made the same demand regarding his own private life. In his earlier days he had always used tobacco and continued to use it even after he became a minister, until one day he was ready to fill his pipe, and a good Christian man seeing him with his tobacco-box in his hand, said, "Brother Finney, do you think it right to use tobacco?" It was the first time the question had ever come up in his mind as a possibility of its being wrong. Without any hesitation he made a decision. "Right?" he replied, "Right? No, of course it isn't right. Here, you take this tobacco and keep it until I call for it." And, according to Dr. Strong's statement,<sup>38</sup> he never touched tobacco again.

So it was that, from his own heart experiences, Finney preached to the people that only as they submitted and believed would they be able to know God, and rest in peace. Immediate surrender of the soul to Christ, was the one and the first duty of every sinner.

#### 4. Doctrine of Atonement.

An argument with a Universalist, on the doctrine of the atonement, led Finney to defend the governmental theory of the atonement.<sup>39</sup> He delivered two lectures showing that the atonement did not consist in the literal payment of the debt of sinners, in the sense which the Universalists maintained. But that it simply rendered the salvation of all men possible, and does not of itself lay God under obligation to save anybody. He does not believe that Christ suffered just for those for whom He deserved to suffer.

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38. Ibid., p. 379.

39. Finney; Systematic Theology, p. 261. Position in the form of a definition. "The term properly means substitution. An exami-

He states that

"Christ died simply to remove an insurmountable obstacle out of the way of God's forgiving sinners, so as to render it possible for Him to proclaim a universal amnesty, inviting all men to repent, to believe in Christ, and to accept salvation; that instead of having satisfied retributive justice, and borne just what sinners deserve, Christ only satisfied public justice, by honoring the law, both in his obedience and death, thus rendering it safe for God to pardon sin, to pardon the sin of any man and of all men who would repent and believe in him." 40

In every generation there are those who find it impossible to accept the doctrine of the atonement because of certain obvious objections. They say it represents God as unmerciful, and that it is impossible to conceive of a God of justice punishing an innocent man for the guilt of the world. These and various other objections Finney faced with perfect calmness. Not that he passed them by with a wave of his hand, but to the contrary, he answered them in a most simple and logical manner.

We shall give a brief summary of the objections with their answers, for it will help to clarify Finney's position regarding the doctrine itself. To those who say it represents an unmerciful God, he replies that it shows just the opposite, a merciful disposition because God was disposed to pardon, therefore he was willing to give His own Son as the substitute of sinners. Quoting his own words:

"The doctrine is infinitely the most illustrious exhibition of mercy ever made in the universe. The mere pardon of sin, as an act of sovereign mercy, could not have been compared, had it been

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nation of the original words, will show that the atonement is the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners. It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings."

40. Finney: Autobiography, p. 50.

possible, with the merciful disposition displayed in the atonement itself." 41

Perhaps the most illogical objection is that the atonement is not necessary. This is contrary to the testimony of the world, for the consciences of all men prove otherwise.

"This is universally attested by their expiatory sacrifices." 42 The religious history of every nation shows that human beings are universally conscious of being sinners, and that God is opposed to sin.

"Their (even that of the heathen) intelligence demands either the punishment of sinners, or that a substitute should be offered to public justice; and they all have the idea that substitution is conceivable, and hence they offer their sacrifices as expiatory." 43

It is also objected that it is unjust to punish an innocent person instead of the guilty party. Here we will quote Finney's answer in full:

"Yes, it would not only be unjust, but it is impossible for God to punish an innocent moral agent at all. Punishment implies guilt. An innocent being may suffer, but he cannot be punished. Christ voluntarily 'suffered, the just for the unjust.' He had a right to exercise this self-denial; and as it was by his own voluntary consent, no injustice was done to anyone. If he had no right to make an atonement, he had no right to consult and promote his own happiness and the happiness of others; for it is said that 'for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.'" 44

Is the atonement utterly incredible, as some would say? Not according to the position taken by the writers of the Bible, who say that God is love. And if

"God is love as the Bible expressly affirms that he is, the work of the atonement is just what might be expected of him, under

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41. Finney: Systematic Theology, p. 279.

42. Ibid., p. 279.

43. Ibid., p. 279.

44. Ibid., p. 279.

the circumstances; and the doctrine of atonement is then the most reasonable doctrine in the world." 45.

There are those who feel that the atonement in its bloody character is a demoralizing doctrine and having this tendency, it is an instrument of evil. In this case Finney is careful to make clear the difference between the natural tendency of a thing and the abuse of a good thing.

"The best things and doctrines may be, and often are, abused, and their natural tendency preverted. Although the doctrine of the atonement may be abused, yet its natural tendency is the direct opposite of moralizing....These who have the most cordially believed in the atonement, have exhibited the purest morality that has ever been in this world; while the rejectors of the atonement, almost without exception, exhibit a loose morality." 46

#### C. THE OBERLIN THEOLOGY

Finney began the publication of his lectures on theology in 1840. These were later bound in two volumes under the general title Systematic Theology. His first volume begins with a long treatise on the moral government, which is very similar to the position taken by Nathaniel W. Taylor. Dr. Strong says,

"Finney derived his theology from Taylor as much as from any other man. As Taylor's system of theology is actually entitled, 'Moral Government,' Mr. Finney's 'Systematic Theology' is little more than a treatise on moral government under another name." 47

Finney's position as to moral obligation has often been thought original; but, according to Foster in his book, "History of New England Theology," there is little difference in any degree from that held by the great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, for

"...he differs only in his conception of freedom which affects the moral action of man, but not the specific point of the foundation of moral action." 48

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45. Ibid., p. 280.

46. Ibid., p. 280.

47. Strong: Op. Cit., p. 383.

48. Foster: History of New England Theology, p. 466.

The term "Oberlin Theology" gained its name from the historical account of a discussion between two faculty members of Oberlin College, Mahan, who advocated intuitive rightarianism, and Cowles, who argued for a rational utilitarianism. The discussion was summed up by Finney who was chairman, in the statement

"The well-being of God and the universe is the absolute and ultimate good, and therefore it should be chosen by every agent." 49

Such theologians as Alexander and Hodges did not consider Finney's theology strict orthodoxy. They discredited his work because of his doctrine of human responsibility, calling for the immediate and decisive act of the will. But Arthur Hoyt says this:

"But this was the very truth that made him a prophet-voice and profoundly stirred the generation. His work carried Christians to a higher pitch of experience, renewed churches and reached multitudes that were practically ignored by the church. He reached strong men especially. At one time nearly the entire bar of Rochester was converted." 50

Dr. Augustus Hopkins Strong criticizes Finney on his conception of law. He says:

"If Mr. Finney had had a profounder conception of law, his theology would have more permanent influence. Great preacher of the law as he was, it may seem presumptuous to criticise him here. But at this very point of strength lay also a point of weakness. Lawyer as he was by instinct and by training, he failed to ground law in the holiness of God, and made it too much a matter of expediency. It was the old error of Grotius. Government was a means to the good of being, rather than an expression of God's nature." 51

It is well to notice that Dr. Strong adds to this and other remarks these words of appreciation:

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49. Ibid., p. 467.

50. Hoyt: *The Pulpit and American Life*, p. 161.

51. Strong: *Op. Cit.*, p. 383.

"How plain it is that God uses imperfect agencies to accomplish his purposes! A little truth thoroughly believed makes its way in spite of much error mingled with it. God keeps the wheat and burns the chaff. The word of God abides forever." 52

PART III

THE MOODY REVIVAL

CHAPTER VII

THE PERSONALITY OF DWIGHT LYMAN MOODY



## CHAPTER VII

### THE PERSONALITY OF DWIGHT LYMAN MOODY

#### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Early Years
2. Conversion and Call

#### B. A SHEPHERD OF GOD

1. Personal Worker
  - a. Young Men's Christian Association
  - b. Sunday Schools
2. An Educator
  - a. Northfield
  - b. Mount Hermon

## PART III

## THE MOODY REVIVAL

## CHAPTER VII

## THE PERSONALITY OF DWIGHT LYMAN MOODY

## A. INTRODUCTION

## 1. Early Years.

Forty-five years after the birth of Charles Grandison Finney God brought to the light of day another soul destined to shepherd the scattered sheep and bring them back to the fold. In contrast to the home of Finney, Moody's was a religious one. It was in the atmosphere of Unitarianism<sup>1</sup> that he first heard the story of the Gospel.

Northfield, Massachusetts was his birthplace; and, like Finney, he must be studied in view of his environment of New England theology. For let us remember that the joyous note was hardly ever sounded, and anything pertaining to it was denounced as liberalism.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Moody, W. R.: D. L. Moody, p. 14. "When asked in later life if the ordinance at the hands of the Unitarian (baptism of all the Moody children) satisfied him, Moody replied, 'I found I was baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I could not see what anyone could add to this.'"
  2. Moody, W. R.: D. L. Moody, p. 14. Although Dwight was in Sunday school regularly, he knew little Scripture for most of the time was spent in instruction of discipline. "...young Moody knew nothing of the Bible and had no conception of evangelical Christianity. He related an occasion of great embarrassment to him when at the age of seventeen he went to Boston and became a member of a Bible Class. On being asked to read a verse from Daniel, he was at a loss to know whether it was in the Old Testament or the New."

His father followed the Mason trade, but was unable to provide for the large family; consequently, at his death, he had contracted many debts. Dwight was but a child, one of seven other children, when his mother was left a widow. This meant that everyone who was able, had to go to work.

"Dwight worked for a while cutting logs in the Massachusetts woods; finally becoming discouraged with his outlook, and though only seventeen years old and with but five dollars in his pocket, he set out for Boston to try his fortune."<sup>3</sup>

It was here that he worked as a shoe clerk for his uncle, but to his youth came the call of the West and he drifted into Chicago, the place which altered his future and compelled him to give up a five thousand dollar job as a commercial salesman that he might give his full service to the work of his Master and Lord.

## 2. Conversion and Call.

On entering the employment of his uncle, and according to mutual agreement, he attended the Mount Vernon Congregational Church. He had always been a Sunday School boy but had never experienced the regenerating work of God's Spirit, nor had he ever made a public confession.

Whereas Finney's conversion was sudden, dramatic and realistic, Moody's was gradual and less spectacular, but nevertheless definite and impressive. When Mr. Kimball, his Sunday School teacher, presented Christ to him, while he was busy wrapping shoes in the rear of his uncle's store, the spark of divine love ignited the soul of the young man, this young shoe clerk, and his life flamed with a new freedom and joy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tucker: Builders of the Church, p. 249

<sup>4</sup> Moody: Op. Cit., p. 33. It is interesting to note that in con-

After noticing the emphasis, placed by Finney, on the righteousness of God and man's duty of obedience, it is striking to see the effect of religious awakening in the life of Moody, and his emphasis on love and joy. He expresses his feeling, regarding the early days of his conversion, in the following words:

"I thought the old sun shone brighter than it ever had before. I thought it was just smiling upon me. As I walked upon Boston Common and heard the birds singing in the trees, I thought they were all singing for me. Do you know how I fell in love with the birds? I had never cared for them before. It seemed to me that I was in love with all creation--I had not a bitter feeling against any man, and I was ready to take all men to my heart. If a man has not the love of God shed abroad in his heart, he has never been regenerated. If you hear a person get up in prayer meeting and find fault with everybody, you may doubt whether his is a genuine conversion; it may be a counterfeit. It has not the right ring, because the impulse of a converted soul is to love, and not to be getting up and complaining of everyone else and finding fault." 5

It was during a general revival in Chicago, that Moody witnessed for the first time a new type of religion, one which radiated a spiritual warmth. He wrote home to his mother:

"I go every night to meeting--O, how I do enjoy it! It seems as if God was here Himself. Pray that this work may go on until every knee is bowed. I wish there could be a revival in Northfield, that many might be brought into the fold of Christ. Oh, Mother, keep the family away from Spiritualist meetings, for I am afraid they will be led astray." 6

Never did Finney have this opportunity of spiritual fellow-

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trast to Finney, Moody had no apparent struggle with sin. "Apparently there was no deep conviction of sin or wrestling of the Spirit. His allegiance was a reasonable service joyously rendered ....That one conversation was the turning point in Moody's life. There was a new incentive, ultimately revolutionizing all his early objectives. No longer was he to view religion as a set of inhibitions, but as a power applicable to daily life and an unfailing source of joy."

5. Ibid., p. 33.

6. Ibid., p. 41.

ship with his own family, nor did he receive this gospel warmth in the religious meetings he attended after his conversion. This difference doubtless had a great influence in the shaping of their future methods of presentation of the Gospel, which were so peculiarly individualistic.

Being a Christian and serving the Lord were synonymous terms with Moody. When determined to make Chicago his home he transferred his letter from Mount Vernon Church, Boston, to the Plymouth Church. In harmony with his conception of Christianity he immediately sought some form of service. Unlike Finney, speaking was not his gift and he found it most difficult to express his opinions. <sup>7</sup> But this did not keep him silent, for he organized a Sunday School class of boys and proceeded to teach them about Jesus. This same attitude of perseverance is manifested in his Y.M.C.A. work, and throughout his later life as an evangelist. From what has already been said we can gather that Moody had no definite, on the minute, call to take up Christian work. But his enthusiastic devotion and seemingly unlimited energy, soon led him to full time service. This was at the beginning of the Civil war, and Moody along with the young<sup>men</sup> of the North <sup>8</sup> was challenged to take up arms in defense of the Union.

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7. Ibid., p. 46.

8. Ibid., p. 84. "Many were urging Moody to join a company being organized from the members of the Chicago Y.M.C.A....From the first Moody had zealously championed the cause of the Union and vigorously expressed his allegiance to Abraham Lincoln. To prove the genuineness of his profession, did not duty demand that he enroll as a soldier in defense of his principles? On the other hand having dedicated himself to Christian service, could he morally take up arms? Moody made his decision in the light of what he believed his immediate duty and continued in the service of peace instead of war."

After much consideration, he came to the decision that his duty was to serve the soldiers on the battle field fronts instead of serving as a soldier. These stories of his missionary services on the bloody fields of battle are most interesting and exciting. And without a doubt these experiences made a lasting impression on Moody. In his revivalistic sermons we find many illustrations revealing his consciousness of these war day experiences.

## B. A SHAPHERD OF GOD

### 1. Personal Worker.

Although Moody dealt with vast crowds in his evangelistic campaigns, he was primarily a personal worker, and one of his outstanding characteristics is this personal touch. He knew men. He instinctively could read the human heart. Souls were the same to Moody, whether they be clothed in silks and satins or barely covered with rags. His gentle, simple and honest nature led people to place great confidence in him. They felt at home in his presence. Wherever he went, he frankly put the personal question, "Are you a

9. Ibid., P. 91. "The war years brought Moody face to face with such such sin and suffering as he had never known before. At times a dying youth yearned to be told the 'old, old story' and in the simplest and briefest terms to learn the way to God. Such experiences aroused Moody to the immediacy of the need of the Gospel, for simplicity in its statement and for definite decision."

10. Bradford; D.L. Moody, A Worker In Souls, P. 55. "No society was too low or too rough for him to plunge into with flawless courage and considerate tact. No group of men of the world was too wealthy or too hardened for him to venture upon with absolute dignity and with a keen sense of the side of his undertaking, what ever it was, that would appeal to them."

11  
 Christian?" And instead of getting angry, they took him seriously  
 12  
 and often returned to thank him.

a. Young Men's Christian Association.

The Y.M.C.A. was perhaps the first outlet of Moody's spiritual energies.

"Its interdenominational character appealed to him." 13

It held up no ecclesiastical barriers as did many of the sectarian churches. He took great interest in the noonday prayer meetings. Here again he is like Finney, first prayer then work. These prayer meetings soon grew to be the center of Christian fellowship. Under the presidency of Moody a fine modern hall was built, and the Chicago association attracted nation-wide interest. Moody's methods were uncommonly sane and sensible, and he was always prompt in executing his plans. While the above mentioned new building was still in flames, during the Chicago fire, hand bills given out, announced that the noon prayer meeting of that day would be held in the Methodist  
 14  
 Church. And he immediately called the trustees together and plans for a new building were put under way at once.

The letter "C" held the center of attention in the work of the Y.M.C.A. under the leadership of Moody.

"Direct evangelistic preaching, often in the streets, was a prominent feature of these early years in the association work; Moody could frequently be seen on summer nights speaking from the courthouse steps assisted by a group of young people as his choir. Supplementing these outdoor services were meetings held in the common prison, talking, reading and praying with the prisoners." 15

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11. Ibid., p. 56.

12. Ibid., p. 56. "Mr. Moody, I thank you I have been prayed for, and at a great many times; but no one ever prayed with me until now."

13. Moody: Op. Cit., p. 92.

14. Ibid., p. 94.

15. Ibid., p. 95.

Not only did Moody show this evangelistic enthusiasm but he instilled it in others. A favorite proverb, which Moody often quoted, was "The reward of service is more service,"<sup>16</sup> and he truly believed it. For along with his Y.M.C.A. work, almost linked with it, is that of Sunday School promotion.

b. Sunday Schools.

Moody's first experience as a Bible teacher was with a group of young Chicago reprobates that he gathered from off the streets.<sup>17</sup> Soon after this he went to a Sunday School convention, the speaker not being present, he and his friend were asked to give short talks.

"He poured out such a torrent of red-hot words, words so full of meaning and spiritual life, that the people started in surprise, and then were moved profoundly by the eloquence of this unlettered rugged young giant from Chicago."<sup>17</sup>

During the days of the Civil War, Moody said to one of his associates, "When the war is over let's give our strength to Sunday School work." And he held to this suggestion, building up a mission school that startled every minister in Chicago.<sup>18</sup> His methods were unique, and entirely new to his age. He used many devices to attract the children to his school.

"At one time he offered a squirrel with its cage to the one who would bring in the largest number of scholars within a specified time."<sup>19</sup>

Once he had them on the roll, he watched over them as a true shepherd watches over his lambs. When absent he would call at their homes, He remembered from his own boyhood days the desires and

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16. Ibid., p. 96.

17. Ibid., p. 51.

18. Moody: Life of Dwight L. Moody, p. 97.

19. Ibid., p. 97.



notions, which made him one of them.

Through his efforts the state of Illinois became enthusiastic on Sunday School work. The great conventions held, soon attracted the attention of other states and the movement spread from state to state.<sup>20</sup> In 1876, Moody was made president of the Illinois state Sunday School Union, and he was rapidly making himself known throughout the country. In 1896 he was the daily speaker at the International<sup>21</sup> Convention held in Boston. Great and lasting systems were introduced, but Moody's main interest was in one thing--the souls of men. Again and again he pleaded with his workers to be faithful to their one mission. In one account we read:

"If I had the trumpet of God, and could speak to every Sunday-school teacher in America, I would plead with each one to lead at least one soul to Christ this year."<sup>22</sup>

He was a born evangelist, and in harmony with Finney he had at his heart the salvation of every sinner. Surely these men were what they were because of this consciousness of their mission.

## 2. An Educator.

While both Finney and Moody are looked upon as educators as well as preachers, they can hardly be put in the same class. In the first place, Moody was an experienced and shrewd business man, whereas Finney was not. An illustration will show very well this characteristic of Moody.

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20. Ibid., p. 102. "He attended county and state conventions in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa."

21. Ibid., p. 102. Among these new systems was the International Sunday School Series of Bible Lessons, arranged at the National convention held at Newark, New Jersey, in 1869.

22. Ibid., p. 104.

"One day in the fall of 1878 he stood discussing the project (purchasing of a school site) with Mr. H.N.F. Marchall of Boston, when the owner of sixteen acres of land adjoining his original purchase (his own home) passed them. They asked the man if he would sell, and learning his price, invited him into the house, made out the papers, and before the owner recovered from his surprise the land had passed out of his hands." 23

Moody depended almost entirely on practical experience and observation, he had little to do with theory and scientific experiment, as such.

"That he contravened tradition signified little to him." 24

Although Finney was practical, he was also scientific and logical, never getting away from his early law training. Philosophically speaking, Finney was a rationalist whereas Moody was an empiricist.

#### a. Northfield.

In the founding of Northfield Seminary many other Moody characteristics come to the surface. Inculcating early in life the right use of money, having a practical knowledge of the value of responsibility and learning to be sound in judgment are all characteristic of Moody's well-rounded idea of education. His emphasis on the spiritual development of youth, in his program of education, is commonly known.

"No one who is ignorant of the Bible can be said to be well educated, while one who is familiar with God's Word can never be said to be illiterate." 26

Therefore it is natural to understand why the Bible was listed among the required courses in the curriculum of Northfield. Again we are faced with a definite point of contrast in comparison to

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23. Moody, W. R.: D.D. Moody, p. 306

24. Ibid., p. 309.

25. Ibid., p. 309.

26. Ibid., p. 309.

Oberlin, where the emphasis was spiritual, yet narrowed to a definite conception of right theology, with little said regarding the develop-  
 27  
 ment of the practical side of the student. Finney as an educator was primarily a theologian, Moody a practitioner. Moody's system of education has been called

"..a clinic in elementary economics, social philosophy and Christian ethics." 28

It is also of importance to notice that these men were similar in that both firmly believed that righteousness was necessary before knowledge could attain its highest goal. Moody says,

"Without righteousness knowledge may become a keener instrument for wickedness. What we want is not education of the head alone, but rather regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit." 29

b. Mount Hermon and the Bible Institute.

The girls' school at Northfield was only one link in the chain constituting Moody's educational system. As soon as Northfield Seminary was established, the founding of a boys' school was suggested, and materialized in the purchase of two hundred and seventy-five  
 30  
 acres of land plus a gift of twenty-five thousand dollars. Mr. Hiram Camp who made the cash contribution was awarded the privilege of naming the school. He named it "Mount Hermon" after the ancient school of the prophets, "For there the Lord commanded the blessing,  
 31  
 even life evermore." (Psalms cxxxiii:3).

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27. In all of Finney's works that we have read, including his own account of Oberlin in his Autobiography, we found nothing relating to practical development in his system of education.

28. Moody: Op. Cit., p. 310.

29. Ibid., p. 310.

30. Moody: Life of D.L.Moody, p. 19.

31. Moody: D.L.Moody, p. 314.

Here again is manifested Moody's practical insight. There were many boys over sixteen years of age who never had the opportunity of an advantage of education. In Mount Hermon, Moody desired to remedy this handicap. The school was to adopt the same policies which characterized Northfield Seminary. For the sum of one hundred dollars any boy over sixteen years of age could secure the advantages of a year's training. The justification for such a school was seen in the large numbers of applications that came from all parts of the country.

The founding of the "Chicago Bible Institute," was the greatest  
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burden Moody ever undertook. He did not want it to be a Seminary for the training of ministers, but he had in mind men and women, already experienced in life, feeling impelled to enter missionary work as lay workers. No one could teach the Bible without thorough training, many had not received a high school diploma, say nothing of a college degree--the Bible Institute was founded primarily to meet this need. Difficult as this project was, Moody lived to see his ideas discussed by prominent educators. For in his day the plan was quite unique; many had suggested that there should be a more thorough and systematic study of the English Bible, but the experiment had not been tried, in the large, until Moody's attempt. Another practical aspect of the plan was the requirement that all students must work among the unconverted during their course of training.

With original solutions Moody solved the problems of his day. Ever spiritual, yet always practical never forgetting the physical. And by the co-ordination of both, he developed boys and girls into superior men and women. We can therefore remember Dwight L. Moody as a great Christian educator.

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANIZATION OF EVANGELISTIC WORK

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANIZATION OF EVANGELISTIC WORK

A. INTRODUCTION

B. INQUIRY ROOM

1. Use of the Bible
2. Use of Prayer

C. SACRED SONGS

D. BRIEF SERMONS

E. SUMMARY

## CHAPTER VIII

## ORGANIZATION OF EVANGELISTIC WORK

## A. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we purpose to consider Moody's method in promoting revivals. One of his personal friends has said:

"Moody is a great general. He is a great thinker, and plans his work even to the samllest details." 1

We have already seen some of this generalship displayed in his earlier work with the Young Men's Christian Association, Sunday School mission work and in the founding of educational centers. But how did he go about organizing his great revivals?

His work as an evangelist started in the British Isles. So popular had his preaching become, that when he returned to America he found the people anxious to hear him. In Philadelphia he rented the old Pennsylvania Depot, <sup>and</sup> had it remodeled into an auditorium which seated thousands. In New York City the people came in such great numbers that Barnum's Hippodrome was not large enough to hold the crowds which came to hear him. At the time of the World's Fair in Chicago, he rented Forepaugh's circus tent for Sunday morning services and commanded the attention of the people to the old Gospel story with such enthusiasm that his crowds were greater than those at the afternoon and evening performances of the circus. 2

## B. THE INQUIRY ROOM

The emphasis placed on personal work was perhaps Moody's out-

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1. Wharton: A Month with Moody, p. 11.

2. Moody: The Life of D.L.Moody, p. 412-414.

standing characteristic as an evangelist. And his development of the "Inquiry Room" is another illustration of his originality in meeting problems in a practical way. As a preacher, his main interest was in the individual, and he could produce exactly the effect that Finney aimed at when in making a personal appeal, he would thunder out,

"Do not think I am talking about anybody else; but I mean you, and you, and you!" 3

It was the ability to make people feel that the sermon fit them, and that they were preaching for them alone, which characterized the work of these men. Yet they were quite different in method.

As was mentioned in an earlier part of this thesis, Finney's method in bringing about personal confessions was through the "Anxious Seat." To this system Moody was not very friendly. It was too public and there was in back of it a psychological pressure that he did not wish to emphasize. In this respect he differs quite radically from Finney yet he is aiming at the same results. He was of the opinion that one must place a person in a position

"....where you could look into his eyes and lay a quiet, controlling finger upon his arm and so upon his heart." 4

For this reason he developed what was called the "Inquiry Room." It was simply a room set aside where they held after-meetings for those who were touched by the sermon. A part of his plan was to use leading business men, bringing them with their practical ministrative powers of organization, into all his plans. The "Inquiry Room" was con-

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3. Finney: Autobiography, p. 92.

4. Bradford: D.L.Moody, A Worker In Souls, p. 266.



ducted with great system and with common sense workers who knew how to handle people by past experience in their lay business.

In this Moody cooperated with all the churches and their pastors, selecting men who were best fitted for this difficult task. Moody met personally all workers, and in private conference they received suggestions and instructions. It was necessary that common sense always be exercised, keeping in mind the peculiarities and differences in people.

As the inquirers entered the room their names and addresses were taken, also the name of the church they attended most. The following morning the ministers of these various churches would receive notices that such and such members of their congregations met in the Inquiry Room the night before. It was expected that they follow up with a personal visitation.<sup>5</sup>

It was in this way that Moody made a systematic, yet personal contact with all interested seekers. He firmly believed in this individual contact, for he says,

"Personal dealing is of the most vital importance...No one can tell how many souls have been lost through lack of following up the preaching of the Gospel by personal work....People are not usually converted under the preaching of the minister. It is in the Inquiry Room that they are most likely to be brought to Christ." 6

Perhaps it would be well to mention that he had women to deal with the women and men for the men. He did not believe in mixing the sexes in this delicate work. He says,

"Don't deal with a person of the opposite sex if it can be otherwise arranged." 7

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5. Goodspeed: A Full History of the Wonderful Career of Moody and Sankey in Great Britain and America.  
 6. Bradford: Op. Cit., quotation from "Moody at Home," p. 41.  
 7. Moody: The Life of D.L.Moody, p. 491.

He also suggests that one should not tell his own experience in trying to save others, for every one must have an experience of his own.

"A great many men are kept out of the Kingdom of God because they are looking for somebody else's experience, the experience their grandmother had, or their aunt, or some one in the family." 8

Like all of his work, these meetings were characterized by their simplicity and at-homeness. People felt free to express their most personal thoughts and faults. This leads us further into his method of bringing about this freedom and confidence.

#### 1. The Use of the Bible.

Although Moody's plan was unique, it was not spectacular. It was strictly Biblical in that he simply interested the people in the Word of God and let it do the work. He says,

"Always use your Bibles in personal dealing.... Make the person read the verse for himself. Do not use printed slips or books." 8

Moody himself had an unmovable faith in the Bible. It is said that he believed it from "back to back." There were many things in the Scriptures that he could not understand but he believed them just the same. One day when asked if he accepted anything he did not understand, he replied,

"Yes, I certainly do. There are lots of things I do not understand but I believe them. I do not know anything about higher mathematics but I believe in them. I do not understand astronomy, but I believe in astronomy." 10

Moody was not a critical student of the Word of God. He accepted it as he found it in the Bible and brought his people into contact with its spiritual nourishment and left it to others to solve the problems of dates and authorships of the various books.

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8. Ibid., p. 490.

9. Wharton: Op. Cit., p. 15.

10. Moody: Op. Cit., p. 496.

## 2. The Use of Prayer.

In the Inquiry Room men and women were taught to pray.

"Sometimes a few minutes in prayer have done more for a man than two hours in talk." 11

It was not enough for the workers to pray but they must get the in-  
quirer to pray. "Don't send a man home to pray." 11 The place to get  
him started was right then and there when his heart was seeking com-  
munion with God.

"It is a good thing for a man to hear his own voice." 12

Once they began to commune with God, Moody knew they were on their way to salvation.

### C. SACRED SONGS

Another outstanding characteristic of the Moody revivals is the use of the sacred songs. It is impossible, in this study, to deal adequately with this phase of his work, but we shall consider it as a part of Moody's method of organization.

It was Ira D. Sankey, Moody's co-worker and soloist, who introduced the gospel hymn as a part of the art of revivals. One of their many biographers writes:

"The value of music for religious services generally and especially for revivals had always been appreciated, but the prominence of solo singing was novel and still more so was the intimate cooperation of preacher and singer. Nothing like it had been known before Moody and Sankey and nothing since has quite equalled their popular reputation." 13

The great evangelist himself could not sing a note; he had

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11. Ibid., p. 490.

12. It is well to mention here that Moody believed in short prayers. "I say five minutes, some pray fifteen minutes; I don't know any meeting that can stand that. If you can't pray short, don't pray at all. The men who make long prayers are generally the ones that pray least in their homes." (Quoted by Bradford; D.L. Moody, A Worker in Souls, p. 106.)

13. Bradford; D.L. Moody, A Worker In Souls, p. 156

absolutely no musical ear, being unable to distinguish one tune from another. He says,

"I cannot sing. I could not start 'Rock of Ages,' but I suppose I have heard it once a day for six years." 14

He used to joke about it but always insisted that he had just as much music in his heart as did Sankey, only he could not get it out.

Unmusical as he was, Moody knew the difference between good and bad music. And he did not put all the responsibility of the singing on Sankey, but spent hours in studying over the words and music himself. Speaking of this phase of his work, Mr. Bradford says:

"He (Moody) studied the tunes not for their musical value, but for their practical use to him. He always had an eye for new tunes, and their rhythm, for their swing, for their significance, and when the tunes were growing a trifle threadbare, he would discard them for a time and turn to others." 15

His son says,

"Moody gave prominence to singing because he believed that it prepared his hearers for the sermon by creating a receptive frame of mind....He regarded the use of hymns as an invaluable medium by which the gospel message might be conveyed to those on whom the spoken word had no effect." 16

The extent to which Moody's judgment went regarding the permanent value of hymns, can be seen in his own remarks:

"For a hymn to live it must be based upon some great doctrine of the Christian faith. Music alone will never make it live." 17

To confirm his statement he named such evangelical hymns as "Rock of Ages," "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand," and "Jesus Lover of My Soul."

In all of Finney's written works, including his "Lectures on Revivals," we find nothing that relates to the art of singing as a

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14. Goodspeed: Op. Cit., p. 589.

15. Bradford: Op. Cit., p. 165.

16. Moody: D.L.Moody, p. 198.

17. Ibid., p. 208.

factor in promoting revivals. He either left it out entirely in his plan of organization, or simply placed little emphasis on its value. But the great value of this method, that of using the sacred songs to change the hearts of men, was proved over and over again by the Moody revivals in this country and Great Britain.

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#### D. BRIEF SERMONS

In studying these great evangelists as preachers, it seems that they are one in letting their own passionate impulse speak forth. Nothing pertaining to an artificial element can be found. They had a message from God and they could not rest until they preached it. Moody -

"If God has given you a message, go and give it to the people as God has given it to you. It is a stupid thing to try and be eloquent." 19

We find this same demonstration of reality in Finney:

"When I came to preach the Gospel, my mind was so anxious to be thoroughly understood that I studied in the most earnest manner, on the one hand to avoid what was vulgar and on the other to express my thoughts with the greatest simplicity of language....I addressed them in the language of the common people...I borrowed my illustrations from various occupations." 20

Moody always spoke without notes, as did Finney, but both of them carefully thought through and outlined their sermons, perhaps not in an order that could be copied, yet one which they could understand. Moody was precise. He used short sentences that were very emphatic. Dr. Goss once made a comparison of several preachers and his conclusions

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18. Ibid., p. 204. W.R.Moody quotes from the London Daily News an article written by T.R.Glover, on the Moody-Sankey collection of hymns. "Most of us grow more conscious that we need guidance, and many of us that we need forgiveness. Here it is that my old hymnbook comes in, with more hope and assurance than some collections can give me. In homely language that one cannot mistake, it speaks of sin, of man's need of forgiveness and salvation, and of God's provision in Christ for all man's need."

19. Bradford: Op. Cit., p. 101.

20. Finney: Autobiography, p. 81.

were that in various passages of about five hundred thirty words chosen from representative sermons, Moody uttered thirty-six sentences, Spurgeon twenty-one, Bushnell twenty, Chalmers nine.

Moody was quite modern in that his sermons averaged in length from twenty to thirty minutes. In other words, he knew when to stop. His sermon on "Love" can easily be read in fifteen minutes. His sermon, "Reaping what we Sow," is not over ten minutes long. In a volume containing about ninety of his most popular sermons, we estimate all of them to be under thirty minutes and many only fifteen minutes in length.

The filing system that Moody used was very simple, being nothing more than ordinary envelopes. Every time he preached a sermon he put it in this envelope writing on the outside the place and date of delivery. Records show that he repeated the sermon, "Son of Man," one hundred forty-two times and the one on the "New Birth" one hundred eighty-six times. To those who criticized him he replied,

"If I find a sword effective, why shouldn't I use it often?"

Moody was no trained exegete; like Finney he knew nothing about Greek or Hebrew. But out of the English Bible, with the help of the Spirit, he got his message. Wilkinson writes:

"He knows his Bible by inward personal experience. He had a personal experience of sin. He thus knows the Bible teaching about sin in a sense immeasurably more profound than is possible to the scientific student of Scripture who is concerned only to find out what the Scripture writers meant by the word sin when they used it."

The preacher Moody studied the conditions under which he preached with utmost care. Not only did he hold his sermons to a reasonable

22. Moody: Moody's Sermons, "The Gospel Awakening," edited by L.I. Palmer

23. Moody: Life of D.L. Moody, p. 435.

24. Ibid., p. 436.

25. Wilkinson: Modern Masters of Pulpit Discourses, p. 384.

length but he was careful to see that conditions were right under which he preached the sermon. People would not listen if they were uncomfortable. The room must be well ventilated, not too hot and not too cold. If there was any noise or disturbance the ushers were instructed to attend to the trouble.

"And he planned every detail so that there should be no break, no dragging, no slightest occasion or excuse for a yawn." 26

#### E. SUMMARY

In this chapter we have outlined in a general way those methods relating to his plan of organization, which were most characteristic of Moody, in promoting great revivals of religion.

Although there is that element which might be termed "mechanics" we must not fail to notice that in back of it lay a spirit of willing sacrifice, and an attitude of humility. Moody, as well as Finney never made any plans without first consulting God. They were true servants, simply carrying out the work of their Master. Says one of his biographers,

"Moody could appeal to others because he was denying himself to serve." 29

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26. Bradford: Op. Cit., p. 119.

27. Moody: Op. Cit., p. 202. "During all these years neither Mr. Moody nor Mr. Sankey had any fixed income....Neither of them during the whole continuance of the trust (Income of Copyrights) received one dollar of personal advantage, and as they had no definite means of support the self-sacrifice and the unselfishness of this course... were very remarkable and very beautiful. I have never known anything like it."

28. Ibid., p. 426. "On one occasion some appeals were being prepared by his son and after they had been mailed Moody turned abruptly on him and said, 'Did you pray over these letters?' 'No, I didn't.' 'Well, how do you expect to get responses if you don't pray?'

29. Ibid., p. 428.

CHAPTER IX

MOODY'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS



## CHAPTER IX

### MOODY'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

#### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Moody as a Constructive Evangelical
2. His Attitude Toward Higher Criticism

#### B. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

1. The Reality of Sin
2. Heaven a Place
3. The Love of God (Atonement)
4. The Holy Spirit

#### C. THE SECOND COMING

1. Indefinite Time
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## CHAPTER IX

## MOODY'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

## A. INTRODUCTION

We cannot determine Moody's theological doctrines and state them in definite terms as we did those of Finney, for he had no system of theology. One day a woman questioned him regarding his theology and he replied:

"My theology! I didn't know I had any. I wish you would tell me what my theology is." <sup>1</sup>

Although his sermons are filled with theological propositions, we can only find one statement that gives us any hint as to his doctrinal position. It is in this sentence, "I am an Arminian up to the Cross, <sup>2</sup> after the Cross, a Calvinist." F.M.Davenport who made a study of the Moody revivals, came to the conclusion that:

"Moody was not a theologian. His life was too busy for the study of philosophy, and his doctrinal views were simply taken over, truth and error together from a bygone age. But theological necessity never manacled him. When it came to a crisis, theology went by the board, and religious experience and common sense were his guides." <sup>3</sup>

#### 1. Moody as a Conservative Evangelical.

In reading the sermons of Moody we see at once that he was a conservative in theology, and that his doctrines were evangelical. He accepted all narratives as stated in the Bible, and explained them in the light of experience. The Scriptures speak of sin and the atoning blood of Christ, so Moody dealt with them, not as doctrines but as a part of the plan of God and the experience of men. He spoke

1. Bradford: D.L.Moody, A Worker in Souls, p. 61, quoted from "Moody's Life and Sermons," by J.S.Ogilvie.

2. Moody: D.L.Moody, p. 437.

3. Davenport Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, p. 204.

of sin and sinners with such sympathy and feeling that the most wicked came to the Inquiry Room in tears.

In his sermon entitled, "Salvation For Sinners," we have a very good example of the tenderness manifested in his dealing with sinners. Speaking of Christ's interview with the woman at the well, he says,

"Now, my friends, He did not condemn the poor adulteress. The Son of God was not ashamed to talk with her, and tell her of that living water, those who drank of which, he said, would never die. He did not condemn her. He came to save her, came to tell her how to be blessed here and hereafter." 4

In that same sermon he mentions his own experience with a fallen woman who came to the Inquiry Room in tears, saying that she had fallen too low for God to save her. Moody replied, "A merciful Father is waiting and longing to pardon you." These extractions, from one of his own sermons, show plainly the difference between Moody's preaching and that of the strict Calvinists, yet both come under the title, "Evangelical Conservatism."

To illustrate his literal acceptance of all Biblical narratives we need but refer to his explanation of the adventure of Jonah. It was as historic a fact to Moody, as the Civil War. In his proof he mentioned that Christ believed the story for he likened his resurrection to it. And to the old argument that it was impossible, he replied,

"The book of Jonah says that God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Couldn't God make a fish large enough to swallow Jonah? If God could create a world, I think He could create a fish large enough to swallow a million men." 5

Moody was never troubled regarding Biblical problems, such as contradictions and inconsistencies. He dismissed them in a very

4. Moody; Moody's Sermons, Edited by L.T.Palmer, "Salvation for Sinners, p. 526.

5. Bradford; Op. Cit., p. 59; quoted from Moody; Pleasure and Profit, p.20

un-scientific way, by simply saying, "The Bible was not made to be understood."<sup>6</sup> To him the Bible was authority not to be questioned. This is just opposite to the view of "logical consistency" as held by Finney. Whereas Finney proved all Scriptural doctrines to be true, Moody accepted them without question as to facts.

## 2. His Attitude Toward Higher Criticism.

The cardinal sin of all times, according to Moody, was UNBELIEF. He almost reaches the extreme Calvinistic view, when he cries out with great force:

"A great many people think that unbelief is a sort of misfortune, but do not know, if you allow me the expression, it is the damning sin of the world today; that is what unbelief is, the mother of all sins." <sup>7</sup>

He expressed his attitude toward what is known as higher criticism in a story of a man who followed his minister carefully in his sermons cutting out those passages from the Bible which the minister said were not authentic. One day this man carried to his pastor the mutilated Bible:

"'Here, Pastor, is your Bible.'

'My Bible?' said the clergyman impatiently.

'Yes, I have cut out all that you say is fable and allegory and folklore and also the mythical and so-called unauthentic parts, and this is what is left.'

'Give it to me,' said the preacher.

'No, you don't,' the man replied. 'You haven't touched the covers yet, and I am going to cling to them at least.'" <sup>8</sup>

Moody was of the opinion that these men who cut up the Bible in this way, denying the historicity of Moses, Daniel, Jonah and the rest, were doing a great injury to the church. To quote him,

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6. Goodspeed: A Full History of the Wonderful Career of Moody and Sankey in Great Britain and America.

7. Bradford: Op. Cit., p. 66; quoted from Moody, "Secret Power," p. 76.

8. Moody: Life of D.L. Moody, p. 494.

"I don't say they are bad men, but that makes the results of their work all the worse. Do they think they will recommend the Bible to the finite and fallen reason of men by taking the supernatural out of it?" 9

"Moody remained essentially conservative through life," writes his son. But he always showed tolerance to those who differed from his point of view. Even under strong opposition he invited as a guest to Northfield the distinguished scholar and higher critic, George Adam Smith. Still he was often criticized for his narrow conservatism. To this he would cheerfully answer, "I had rather be narrow and right than broad and wrong."

He would be in agreement with Warren A Chandler who says,

"Liberalism has never produced a revival of religion, nor does it promise to do so at any early date." 12

Throughout his life he preached nothing but that which was the authoritative truth of the gospel revelation.

#### B. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Moody met the needs of the people with one book. The Word of God as found in the Holy Bible won for him, as it did for Finney, an education unique and usable. A.T.Pierson, writing about Moody, says,

"The man of one Book was getting a strange education in the school of Christ. In that Book were his grammar and lexicon, his logic and his philosophy, his poetry and his oratory. And as he studied and mastered it, his imagination grew, his style pure, his English correct and eloquent, his argument convincing, and his appeal persuasive. He was getting God's university education, learning that greatest logic, 'the demonstration of the Spirit;' that highest science, 'the knowledge of God;' that loftiest philosophy, 'the mastery of grace.'" 13

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9. Moody: Life of D.L.Moody, p. 495.  
 10. Moody: D.L.Moody, p. 446.  
 11. Bradford: Op. Cit., p. 65; quoted from "Moody's Latest Sermons," p.53.  
 12. Chandler: Great Revivals and the Great Republic, p. 271.  
 13. Pierson: Evangelism, p. 251.

## 1. The Reality of Sin.

Sin, in Moody's theology, was no theory but a terrible reality. He knew it in his own experience and from what he observed in the life of others. But he also knew the redemptive power of the Gospel. Although Moody is known as the great preacher of love, we are not to think that he dealt lightly with sin. To him it was worse than a deadly disease. He once cried out:

"For my own part, I would a thousand times sooner have the leprosy of the body eating my eyes out, and feet and arms, I would rather be loathsome in the sight of my fellow-men than die with the leprosy of sin in my soul, and be damned." 14

Moody held to the Biblical idea of original sin, and that the only salvation for man was through the divine gift of grace. In many cases he emphasized the necessity of good works but in speaking of the human soul he frankly admits good works alone will never lead to salvation. In one of his "Short Talks" he says:

"We are a bad lot, the whole of us, by nature. It is astonishing how the devil does bind us and makes us think we are so naturally good....The first man born of women was a murderer. Sin leaped into the world full grown, and the whole race has been bad all the way down. Man is naturally bad." 15

In a sermon on "Reaping What We Sow," Moody brings out the consequences of sin. Though we are forgiven we still must reap the harvest of our evil deeds.

"Now some of you will say: 'If God is going to forgive me my sins, how does he make me reap what I have sown?' Well, I will illustrate it....One of those men who spoke here today was a drunkard for thirty years. I have no doubt his sins are forgiven; but oh, how he is reaping what he has sown! His wife and his children are away from him; he has not seen his little boy for fifteen years." 16

14. Bradford; Op. Cit., p.85; quoted from "Studies in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena," by J.H.Leuba.

15. Ibid., p. 89; quoted from "Short Talks," by Moody.

16. Moody; Moody's Sermons, p. 361.

This seems about as harsh a treatment of sin as that preached by Finney, but in a final analysis we find Moody striking the dominant note of love, as shown in the sacrifice of Christ. He preached many times on the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. By it only could the world be purified and made whole, and this was due to the very fact that our God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save us from the evil one. In his sermon on "The Blood--The New Testament," he writes:

"You are redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without a spot or blemish. The joy of every Christian is, that he has been bought back by the blood of Christ." 17

## 2. Heaven a Place.

According to Moody's interpretation of the Scriptures, heaven is a place. In fact, he says the Bible speaks of three heavens:

"The first is the aerial--the air, the wind, the air that the birds fly in; that is one heaven. Then, there is the heaven of the firmament, where the stars are; and then there is the heaven of heavens, where God's throne is and the mansions of the Lord are--the mansions of light and peace, the home of the blessed, the home of the Redeemer, where the angels dwell. That is the heaven we believe in." 18

Moody did not hesitate to speculate about heaven; in this he differs from Finney who never speculated about things where an uncertainty existed. In a list of twenty-five sermons we find nothing that parallels this heaven theory presented by Moody. This is carrying the doctrine of eschatology to its very extreme. In his sermon on "Heaven" he says:

"We believe it (heaven) is just as much a place and just as much a city as New York is, and a good deal more; because New York will

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17. Ibid., p. 256.

18. Ibid., p. 265.

pass away and that city will abide forever." 19

Moody was not in sympathy with those who held that heaven was neither above nor below but was everywhere. He believed it was where the Bible said it was--above. And he always looked up when he prayed for God dwelt in the heaven above. Not only did he believe in the Trinity of the Godhead but believed that he would see them some day as separate persons. He says:

"There is but one God; but there are three persons, God the Father, God, the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; when I get to heaven, I expect to see them all there....I would be unhappy, when I got to heaven, if I could not find him there who redeemed me." 19

In heaven are also the angels, but they have the power to wander away from the throne of God to this worldly sphere, to watch over the soul's welfare of those they have left behind. He makes a distinction between angels and the departed souls of friends.

"And we have (in heaven) not only the presence of the angels already established, but we have friends...Do you not think that those who have died in Christ are not there with the Master today? ....All the redeemed ones are in heaven." 19

### 3. Future Punishment.

Not only did Moody believe in the reality of heaven but he firmly held to the Scriptural teaching of everlasting retribution and future punishment for the ungodly. He believed it was a part of the Holy Word and that God would condemn him if he did not preach all of the truth. In his sermon on "Future Punishment" he writes:

"If the Word of God tells us about the glory of heaven and the mansions that Christ is going to prepare, it tells us also about the torments of hell; it tells us about the rich man lifting up his face out of torment, and crying for one drop of water...I do not want any one to say I have covered up the doctrine of lost souls." 20

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19. Moody: Moody's Sermons, "Heaven," p. 265.

20. Ibid., "Future Punishment," p. 292.



He illustrates in a dramatic way the condition of the lost. There will be no tender, loving Jesus coming and offering his salvation, for He will not be where the lost are. Neither will they be comforted by the tears of a praying wife.

"Did you ever think how dark this world would become, if all the praying wives and mothers and ministers were out of it? Think of that lost world, where there are no praying wives or mothers! Remember the time is coming when you will have no loved mother to pray for your soul and for you... You laugh at the Bible; but how many there are in the lost world of today that would give countless treasures if they had the blessed Bible there!" 21

But contrary to the calvinistic doctrine and in harmony with Finney's view, Moody holds that God does not condemn sinners, that they condemn themselves. As he states it;

"We won't need anyone to condemn us at the bar of God. ..we will condemn ourselves. It will be our own conscience that will come up as a witness against us. God won't condemn us." 21

The very force and feeling of this statement can hardly be realized until it be contrasted with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. A good illustration of this is his much quoted sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Here Edwards reflects the hyper-Calvinistic theology of his day;

"The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours..."

When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed His awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it." 22

So we see that Moody even in his preaching about punishment emphasizes

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21. Ibid., p. 293.

22. Edwards; Jonathan Edwards' Sermons, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

a kindly attitude and reveals a more sympathetic tendency toward the sinner.

#### 4. The Love of God (atonement).

When speaking to his son about the atonement Moody once said:

"In the atonement you never lose sight of the fact of the oneness of God the Father and the suffering Christ. The mystery of the atonement is the mystery of the Trinity. You cannot understand the sacrifice of Christ and its relation to God until you can understand the Trinity." 23

In other words, we can never understand the love that will sacrifice a son until we understand the relation of God to Christ. We make the mistake, says Moody, of continually measuring God's love by ours.

Mothers tell their children when they are good that God loves them, and when they are bad that He doesn't love them. This is false teaching for God loves them all the time.

"Now God hates sin, but he loves the sinner." 24

What makes hell so terrible is not that God does not love you but that you despise his love. In the theology preached by Moody, the atonement was just this fact:

"That the Son of the very bosom of God came to redeem us from the curse of the world." 24

Another manifestation of that divine love was when Christ, on the cross, lifted up His eyes and said "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." The atonement is this wonderful love. 25

#### 5. The Holy Spirit.

Moody's theology, coming directly from his experience with the Bible, makes it easy to understand why he taught the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In his own conversion we find him earnestly seeking the Holy Spirit through prayer.

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23. Moody; D. L. Moody, p. 440.

24. Moody; Sermons, "Love of God," p. 286.

25. Ibid., p. 287.

"I was crying all the time that God would fill me with the Holy Spirit." <sup>26</sup> Spiritual power comes only with the coming of the Spirit, and therefore the Christian can never be satisfied until he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>27</sup> In the theology of Moody, the Holy Spirit was a part of the Trinity for He was a part of God's system of love. "If we have the Spirit, we have the fruit of the Spirit. If the Spirit of God is in us, we will have the qualities of the Spirit." <sup>27</sup> It is essential that we notice that both Finney and Moody place great importance on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.

### C. THE SECOND COMING.

Moody believed in the second coming of Christ. In fact it always occupied a prominent place in his own personal Bible study, and seemed to influence his whole life. He made many references to the fact that he would like to be present when the Lord comes. Speaking of his father, William Moody says: "He would love to talk about the personal return of his Master." <sup>28</sup>

#### 1. Indefinite Time.

Moody never belonged to the school that set dates for the visible appearing of Christ. He never speculated or prophecied about it. In rebuke to those who did set dates, he makes this comment:

"Now, let me say that this doctrine has suffered a good deal from those who claim to be its friends, because they set a time - a certain day - for his coming. Now we read here in Matthew, twenty-fourth chapter and thirty-sixth verse, that no man knows when he shall come. 'But the day and the hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only...' Now when a man comes and tells you that he knows when Christ is coming - that he is coming next year or in 1980 - he has no truth for that assertion." <sup>29</sup>

The Bible says that we should watch for His coming, and from this Moody infers that we would not watch if we knew the exact time. He

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26. Gray: The D.L. Moody Pamphlets, Series no. I, p. 10.

27. Moody: Sermons, "The Holy Spirit", P. 688

28. Moody: D.L. Moody, P. 446

29. Moody: Sermons, "The Second Coming", P. 661.

also corrects those who believe death itself is the coming of the Lord. There is a great difference between death and His coming.

"If the world remains, if we wait until Christ comes, we are going to defy death." 29

It is our business not to set the time but to pray for His coming.

He takes this argument from his Bible.

"The last prayer in Scripture -what is it? 'Come quickly, Lord Jesus.' And that ought to be the cry of every child of God." 30

## 2. A Scriptural Fact.

The doctrine of the second coming was a scriptural fact to Moody, and therefore it must be a part of his teaching.

"If I read my Bible correctly, in the Epistles Baptism is referred to thirteen times and the Lord's return upwards of fifty times." 31

Throughout his sermon on "The Second Coming" he uses proof texts to back up his argument. It must have been a great incentive in his ministry for he taught that we should be ready for the return of Christ at any moment. He corrects his first view which he held in his early days, that the Christ would not return until after the thousand years of the millennium. He says:

"Since I have got a little better acquainted with the word of God, I find that this is not God's plan... Why, just see what it says: 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.' ...I think we are coming pretty near those days now." 31

He then continues to quote Scripture to show that He may come any day at any hour.

This doctrine so permeated the theology of Moody's latter days that the school in Chicago, bearing his name, has given it a very prominent place in their curriculum.

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30. Ibid., p. 663.

31. Moody: Sermons, "The Second Coming," p. 660.

## D. SUMMARY.

After our study we are convinced that Moody had a definite theology, just as much so as the Bible has. It was a theology, not fitted for a theologian, but for a layman, such as he was. It would not have satisfied Finney, for the analytical mind of the Oberlin Professor sought logical proof for everything. Things had to be dealt with in a systematic order. But not so with the lay evangelist, -he took God's truth as presented in the Bible, accepted it without bothering to prove it, and made application of it in the experiences of men. He cared little as to whether it lined up with the historical theologies of the past. His systematic theology was the Holy Bible, and his work shop the human soul.

He was conservative in that he insisted on the literal interpretation of the Bible. He was opposed to higher criticism because it was opposed to certain parts of the Scriptures. He believed that in the Word of God, and in the historic experience of the human race, sin was the blackest of all realities. And because of this, and the love of Almighty God, Christ was sent to free man and put him again in his rightful relationship with his Father in heaven.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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SUMMARY

- A. BACKGROUND AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS
- B. RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES AND ACTIVITIES
- C. THEOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL EMPHASES

CONCLUSION

### THE SUMMARY

The work of this thesis has centered around a comparison of the revivalistic labors of Charles G. Finney and Dwight L. Moody. The aim has been to find wherein these two great Ambassadors of God are alike and wherein they differ in their methods of approaching the unconverted. The findings are summed up in the following points of comparison:

#### A. BACKGROUND AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

1. In contrast to the non-religious home of Finney, Moody's was a religious one.
2. Both were from New England homes; Finney was born in Connecticut Moody in Massachusetts.
3. Finney was a school teacher and later a lawyer; Moody a commercial salesman then a Y.M.C.A. secretary.
4. Whereas Finney was a gifted speaker, Moody was slow of speech.
5. Neither pursued college or seminary training.

#### B. RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Finney's conversion was sudden and dramatic; Moody's gradual and less spectacular.
2. Finney was influenced by the Presbyterians, whereas Moody was a member of the Unitarian Church.
3. Finney was an ordained minister; Moody a lay preacher.
4. Both received their religious training from direct contact with the English Bible.
5. Neither was a trained exegete in the use of Greek and Hebrew.
6. Finney directed his teaching to the church and its members; Moody sought to influence non-church members through personal work and the Y.M.C.A.
7. In their great evangelistic gatherings, Finney interested the intellectuals in contrast to Moody's appeal to the average laborer.



8. Their method of personal work is contrasted by the use of the "Anxious Seat" instituted by Finney and the "Inquiry Room", by Moody.
9. Both placed great stress on the need of daily and definite prayer, each spending many hours in their private devotions.
10. Finney claimed a direct baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of his conversion; Moody sought with confidence the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all his work but mentions nothing regarding a personal manifestation.

#### C. THEOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL EMPHASIS

1. Both were eminently conservative in theology.
2. Finney emphasized law and obedience; Moody, love and joy.
3. Finney was a theologian; Moody was a Biblicist.
4. Finney emphasized reason; Moody, experience.
5. Finney was apologetic in attitude; Moody accepted the conservative position without question.
6. Finney accepted the Bible after proving it to be the Word of God; Moody accepted it because it was the Word of God.
7. Moody had a co-worker in the singer, Sankey; Finney worked alone.
8. Both were pioneer educators, Finney in the Oberlin school of theology, Moody in Mount Hermon, Northfield and the Moody Bible Institute.
9. Whereas Finney was primarily a professor, Moody was primarily an executive in the field of education.
10. Finney was considered a radical among the theologians and educators of his day; Moody was progressive in his educational policies but traditional in Biblical views.
11. Whereas Moody's schools have remained fundamental and conservative in theology, Oberlin College is now considered a liberal school.
12. Finney's work has been almost forgotten for only a Finney could continue his labors; whereas Moody established his work so that it could be continued by others.
13. Each was a genius in the field of evangelism. Each was an individualist, but they were one in their aim.

## THE CONCLUSION

After completing our study and summarizing the results, we are prepared to draw certain conclusions as to the contribution made by these two typical revivals of the nineteenth century in the light of their leaders, to the general field of preaching and teaching the Christian religion.

In the first place, it is important that we again bring to our attention the fact that both Finney and Moody were thorough students of the English Bible. They knew the Word of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they were able to sense the divine truth contained therein.

In the second place, we have noticed throughout this thesis an unflinching loyalty to prayer and private devotions. Out of these hours of direct communion with God came the dynamic which led Finney and Moody from city to city, conquering all discouragement, to proclaim to a lost world the salvation through Christ. So vital was the need of prayer in the life of every man that both of these evangelists gave it a most prominent place in their program.

Although we call these evangelists typical representatives of their generation and say that each is a genius in the art of revivalism, it is necessary that we note the individualistic methods manifested in their work. We mention this fact to show how God can use conflicting methods to produce the same desired end. Whereas Finney proved that the preacher should have a definite systematic theology and be able to meet the various doctrines with logical and consistent reasoning, Moody shows the possibilities of presenting the same truth in simple and non-

theological terms, even to the extent of using the gospel in song as a medium to bring men to Jesus. Something of this same contrast can be pointed out in Finney's preaching on the law of God as compared to Moody's general theme, the love of God expressed through His Son.

It is not so much a point of difference as it is one of emphasis. They both claimed the authority and integrity of the Bible as the Word of God and their only source book, which brings us to the conclusion that method is a by-product in the art of evangelism. Both of these men kept within the shadow of the Cross. Never did they minimize the lost condition of natural man, nor the need of the new birth.

It has been observed in these revivals that little thought was given to denominational differences, even in that day of bitter prejudice when a Methodist would hardly speak to a Presbyterian. Both Finney and Moody held great evangelistic meetings in nearly every type of Christian Church, as well as in tabernacles, where all sectarianism as such was focused in the life of Christ. This is evidential proof of the universality of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in bringing about unity in the hearts of men.

A lawyer and a business man gave up prominent positions and willingly sacrificed future success to take up the work of the Kingdom and preach the gospel of Christ the Saviour. The explanation of this was found in the work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the lives of Dwight L. Moody and Charles G. Finney. The emphasis placed upon the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit is a phase of the Finney-Moody type of preaching that should not be overlooked.

This leads us into the other sphere of their labors, that of

religious education. Remembering that these were days of pioneering in the building of institutions of learning, we can sense the sacrifice that had to be made in developing schools such as Oberlin College, Northfield Seminary and the Bible Institute of Chicago. Finney's firm belief that the errors of New England theology could only be corrected by teaching Biblical theology from direct contact with the Bible in a logical and consistent manner, led him to the forty years of labor in Oberlin College. Moody's consciousness of the need of higher education for young women, which resulted in the Northfield school was also a step calling forth great faith and courage. The Bible Institute in Chicago is a further demonstration of his progressive educational program.

All this goes to prove the ability of these revivalists to see the Kingdom of God in its larger sense. Not only were they mighty preachers but they were far ahead of their fellowmen in understanding the place of education in the program of Christianity.

Charles Grandison Finney followed by Dwight Layman Moody produced the greatest religious awakenings in the nineteenth century. Although these men were individualistic in their methods of organization and presentation of the Gospel message, they were the same in their loyal devotion to the revelation of God through Jesus Christ and their undying passion for the souls of men.

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