Charles Finney vs. The Westminster Confession

MICHAEL HORTON

The most famous evangelist of the nineteenth century declared that The Westminster Divines had created "a paper pope" and had "elevated their confession and catechism to the Papal throne and into the place of the Holy Ghost." "It is better," he declared, "to have a living than a dead Pope," dismissing the Standards as casually as the boldest Enlightenment rationalist: "That the instrument framed by that assembly should in the nineteenth century be recognized as the standard of the church, or of any intelligent branch of it, is not only amazing, but I must say that it is highly ridiculous. It is as absurd in theology as it would be in any other branch of science."[1]

Given the unpopularity of Calvinism in particular and confessionalism in general, all of this might not have raised the slightest hint of impropriety except for the fact that the evangelist was Charles G. Finney, an ordained Presbyterian minister. In his introduction to Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, William McLoughlin wrote the following:

> *The first thing that strikes the reader of the Lectures on Revival is the virulence of Finney's hostility toward traditional Calvinism and all it stood for. He denounced its doctrinal dogmas (which, as embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith, he referred to elsewhere as 'this wonderful theological fiction'); he rejected its concept of nature and the structure of the universe...; he scorned its pessimistic attitude toward human nature and progress...; and he thoroughly deplored its hierarchical and legalistic polity (as embodied in the ecclesiastical system of the Presbyterian Church). Or to put it more succinctly, John Calvin's philosophy was theocentric and organic; Charles Finney's was anthropocentric and individualistic. ... As one prominent Calvinist editor wrote in 1838 of Finney's revivals, 'Who is not aware that the Church has been almost revolutionized within four or five years by means of such excitements?'*

[1] Charles Finney, Charles Finney's *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1976), author's preface, xii.

In this brief survey, our purpose will be two-fold: first, to understand the factors that shaped Finney's theology and practice and, second, to appreciate the legacy of both for contemporary evangelicalism and especially Reformed faith and practice in the United States.

I. The Man: His Life & Times

We must remember that the period just prior to the Great Awakening was not congenial to an undiluted Calvinism: Jonathan Edwards lost his pulpit in 1750 in large part because he would not moderate his belief in total depravity; Solomon Stoddard, Edwards' grandfather, had softened the Puritan emphasis on conversion in the interests of civil order with his "Half-Way Covenant," and the Enlightenment, having practically extinguished the remnants of orthodox Calvinism in English nonconformity, was threatening the citadels of American learning.

It was in reaction to the spiritual state of New England, ranging in general from nominal to skeptical, that a handful of preachers—Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Dutch Reformed, but Calvinists all, began to recover the evangelical emphasis of the Protestant Reformers, summoning men and women to a confrontation with God through the Law and the Gospel. A cursory glance at the most popular sermon titles illustrates the dependence on classical biblical categories of sin and grace, judgment and justification, Law and Gospel, despair and hope, and these gifted evangelists were convinced that the success of their mission rested in the hands of God and faithfulness to the apostolic proclamation.

In spite of such biblical rigor, matched with evangelistic zeal, the Great Awakening (1739-43) itself was not without its excesses of enthusiastic religion, as Edwards himself was painfully aware. The Princeton divine labored to distinguish between true and false religious emotions. A man of towering presence and celebrated oratory, George Whitefield proved a valuable colleague in awakening sinners to God, and yet, as Harry S. Stout has argued in a controversial work, Whitefield himself may have contributed to some of the seminal features of mass evangelism that would manifest themselves in the revivalism to follow.[2] The Tennent brothers, along with James Davenport, were also accused by some of their brethren as sowing seeds of unwholesome enthusiasm and a host of questions could be raised concerning the Awakening in terms of its ecclesiology and the prominence given to radical individual conversion over and against the more traditional covenantal motifs of Reformed theology. While the "New Light" and "Old Light" factions do not directly parallel the "New School" and "Old School" divisions to

[2] Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

follow, they do reflect the controversial innovations introduced by those who sought to wed a pietistic impulse to Reformed orthodoxy, leading to a secession of Gilbert Tennent's "New Light" Presbyterians from the more traditional Philadelphia presbytery in 1741.

However essential it may be to raise those questions within the Reformed family, it is not within the scope of this brief survey to explore. It is sufficient for our purposes to at least recognize the fundamental Reformed consensus of the Great Awakening on anthropological and soteriological grounds. Revival was "a surprising work of God," as Edwards expressed it, and depended entirely on divine freedom.

The revivals associated with the Great Awakening created a rift in New England Congregationalism, encouraging many who were offended on grounds of taste and style (as well as the resurgent Calvinism) to embrace Unitarianism, while Edwards provided the intellectual resources for a courageous defense of Calvinism in conversation with, not merely in reaction to, the Enlightenment. Perhaps no other movement has had such a profound hand in shaping the religious character of Revolutionary America and the evangelicalism that is its heir—with the possible exception of the Second Great Awakening.

Following closely on the heels of the first, the Second Great Awakening (1800-10) launched a succession of "revivals" that would last to the present day. However, it was very different both in style and substance from the first. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., observes, "By the time the revolutionaries came to Philadelphia in 1776, the flames of Calvinism were burning low. ... Original sin, not yet abandoned, was, like everything else, secularized."[3] Even on the frontier, the experience of the rugged individualist who had pulled himself up by the bootstraps in the wilderness, matched that of the self-confident Enlightenment thinker in New England.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Scots-Irish immigrants brought their tradition of Sacramental Occasions to the Jacksonian democracy. In Scotland, such festivals would draw Presbyterians from the far reaches who, after preparing for such "Seasons," anxiously anticipated the event, often surrounded with preaching, teaching, and exhortation. Meanwhile, in the academies—some of which had been founded out of the Great Awakening, revival stirred as well. In 1802, Yale's president, Timothy Dwight, led a revival that left one third of the student body converted—a rather significant result, considering that all but a few were nominal or skeptics. Still, for Dwight, Calvinism's orthodox convictions and intellectual rigor were considered indispensable to genuine

[3] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *Cycles of American History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), p. 5.

awakening, and the divisions that would come to distinguish "New School" and "Old School" were not yet obvious.

Meanwhile, on the frontier, revival was removed from the watchful eye of New England. By "frontier," we are thinking of western New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and—to the south, various sections of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. It was the Presbyterian minister James McGready who, transforming the "Sacramental Season," instigated the Cumberland revival at the turn of the nineteenth century, assisted by Methodists and Baptists. Tents were erected for the "camp meetings," where sinners and saints gathered to experience "revival fires." The Cumberland revival was followed a year later by the Cane Ridge meeting, another interdenominational affair with at least ten thousand in attendance. At Cane Ridge, enthusiasm reached a fever pitch, as women's combs flew in the air, and such "exercises" as falling, running, jumping, and "holy jerks" and "holy laughter" amazed those who gathered. In response, the Presbyterian Church excommunicated the Cumberland Presbytery for the excesses as well as for ordaining ministers without qualifications or authority. The Presbyterian Church's action itself resulted in the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a schism led by Barton Stone, who eventually founded the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), while remarking that he did not have time for creeds and confessions, that he despised Calvinism, and could care less about the doctrine of the Trinity. The Baptists and Methodists, however, were both more enthusiastic and reaped the greatest benefits from these revivals.

Whitney Cross explains the growth of the "camp meeting": "Methodists held camp meetings and permitted physical exercises upon which Congregationalists frowned. Free-will Baptists inclined to tolerate such activities, while Calvinistic Baptists were more strict. ... Methodists and Baptists, more literal, more emotional, and better understood by common folk, increasingly 'strung Presbyterian fish' and gained adherents more rapidly, just as they had at the expense of the established New England church."[4] Unitarianism was especially popular among many sectarians coming out of the Great Awakening, even of the common sort, including the "Christians" (not to be confused with Disciples or "Campbellites"), weakening the argument that New England Unitarianism was entirely due to an allegedly Calvinistic tendency to ignore Christ and the Holy Spirit in favor of "God" (i.e., the Father).

It became increasingly clear, however, that these meetings could not be dismissed as "mass hysteria" without a backlash from the common folk, and there was no promise that Presbyterians and Congregationalists could dominate the landscape, especially on the

[4] Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*, pp.8-9.

frontier, with the remarkable adaptability of the Methodists and Baptists to the new environment. In part, to consolidate its interests in the face of the growing threat, Presbyterians and Congregationalists in New England decided to merge and throw their common resources behind the missionary effort. The Plan of Union, as it was called, was put into effect in 1801, and those who were bent on recovering losses and maintaining cultural dominance were willing to settle for minimal doctrinal commitments in the interest of success. Cross observes,

> *The entire evangelical movement of the first quarter of the century seemed in many respects to stress piety rather than sectarian peculiarities. The Plan of Union itself evinced an early desire to redeem sinners without undue creedal emphasis. The whole string of benevolent societies was nondenominational in form, nondoctrinal in bearing, and at least officially directed toward common Christian goals...It is paradoxical that purportedly nonsectarian revivalism and benevolence should encompass much of the spirit they professed and yet engender interdenominational strife of a bitterness scarcely to be paralleled*.[5]

From the Plan of Union, the old guard recognized a further ecumenical step was required to advance the cause on the frontier, so the Presbyterians and Congregationalists joined the Methodists and Baptists in the formation of the American Home Missions Society (A.H.M.S.). Nevertheless,

> *Fixed in dominant position in the large older settlements, the Presbyterians found themselves losing ground to others in the countryside and the younger towns. This loss may be ascribed to their insistence upon an educated ministry, their emphasis upon settled pastors rather than itinerants, and their conservative, limiting theology. In part consciously, but more largely unconsciously, they set out to overcome these handicaps by zealous effort and by compromise*.[6]

In order to participate in the American Home Missionary Society (and attempt to lead it), Presbyterians and Congregationalists had to leave their creed out of the literature and tone things down a bit at their educational institutions, where evangelicals of all stripes were encouraged to attend. Where before Presbyterians and Congregationalists would have held a ministerial hopeful back due to insufficient learning or orthodoxy, William Burchard was declared unfit for his home missionary agency in western New York in 1823 because he did not make "such an appeal to the heart as would have brought the people to take hold of the missionary cause." After all, "Baptists in the region expected that ministers would 'let the Holy Ghost' prepare their sermons. ... Even Auburn Seminary dallied with the notion of a short course to stave off the competition of the

[5] Ibid., p. 40.
[6] Ibid., p. 47.

revivalistic training schools springing up at Troy, Whitesboro, and Rochester."[7] When faced with a choice between marginalization and shared success, the New School Presbyterians were convinced that the "practical" would have to be allowed precedence, at least for the time being, over the "theological." This was generally understood and implied, if not explicitly stated.

Sylvester Finney, a farmer, moved to the frontier from Connecticut with his wife Rebecca and children. The year was 1794, and the Oneida County area of New York had already distinguished itself for its odd spiritual fads. John Humphrey Noyes's perfectionistic Oneida Community had gathered followers who were intent on duplicating the Book of Acts by holding all goods—and wives—in common. Millerites, Mormons, Campbellites, Spiritualists, Swedenborgians, Shakers, Quakers, and a host of sects sharing an enthusiastic, millennial, and Gnostic orientation, found the region's spiritual soil rich for the most fantastic visions, earning the nickname, "Psychic Highway." According to Keith J. Hardman, by 1850 Spiritualism and Mesmerism, antecedents to what one today might recognize as "New Age" ideas, boasted sixty-seven periodicals, thirty-eight thousand mediums and two million followers inside and outside the church.[8]

It was into this "Burned-over District," as it came to be called, that Charles Finney arrived with his family at age two. Handsome and charming, Finney seemed to take up anything to which he set his mind with great skill and energy. Although it is not certain that he actually had been enrolled himself, Finney began teaching elementary school. "There was nothing which anyone else knew," a student later reflected, "that Mr. Finney didn't know, and there was nothing which anyone else could do that Mr. Finney could not do—and do a great deal better."[9]

Finney's parents were not church-goers and in his *Memoirs*, he could recall nothing religious from his upbringing. However, he did begin attending the services at the Congregational church in Warren, Connecticut, when he lived briefly with his uncle. Peter Starr, whose preaching Finney later recalled with great frustration, became an icon of Old School intellectualism that would inspire the evangelist's caricatures. Evidently, Starr's method of preaching was mundane, dispassionate, and lecture-like: he rarely even made eye-contact with the congregation. And his theology did not fare any better, from the young man's point of view, as Starr was an ardent Calvinist—if, indeed, ardor was at all expressed by the minister.

---

[7] Ibid., pp. 51, 156.
[8] Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker and Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 25.
[9] Ibid., p. 31.

Disinterested in religion, Finney eventually entered the practice of law near his home, but experienced a profound change in direction while walking among the woods in 1821. As he records the event, it was a purely rational decision that suddenly made its impression upon the lawyer's mind, as the resolution to any case in the courtroom. He returned to his office the next day to inform his client that he had a retainer from the Lord to preach the Gospel.

However, things were not as easy for converts to simply decide to become a preacher as Finney assumed and the frontier was no exception. His Presbyterian pastor, George W. Gale, with Old School roots, but New School interests, encouraged him to attend seminary and go under the care of presbytery. What followed differs in the accounts of Gale and Finney. According to Finney, presbytery offered him a full scholarship to Princeton Seminary, "but Gale, whose memory played fewer tricks on him, recorded in 1853 that he 'had written to Andover, to Princeton, and to Auburn' for admission for Finney, but received 'no encouragement.'" In fact, Finney's version of the story not only included pleas on the part of the presbytery to fund such an endeavor; Finney accounts for the outcome by saying that he declared to the presbytery that, against its protestations, "I would not put myself under such an influence as they had been under; that I was confident they had been wrongly educated, and they were not ministers that met my ideal of what a minister of Christ should be." "I told them this reluctantly," he added, "but I could not honestly withhold it."[10] One thing of which both his friends and enemies were constantly reminding the self-confident ordinand throughout his life was that his displays of arrogance and conceit could get him into trouble. Even when Gale's generous attempts to secure a place for Finney failed, the pastor convinced presbytery to allow him to personally supervise his instruction, using his own library. Nevertheless, Finney's reminiscences of Gale's generosity included the remark that, "...so far as he was concerned as my teacher, my studies were little else than controversy." Hardman's analysis of Finney's recollections are pointed: "It is to be seriously doubted that dignified, competent clergymen of many years' experience would meekly accept the tongue-lashing of a rather arrogant, newly converted law clerk who patently knew nothing of theology and whose application for scholarship aid had just been rejected by three seminaries!"[11]

Finney's remark that Gale taught him "little else than controversy" was probably calculated to leave the impression that anything Finney really learned during those years he had to teach himself. And to some extent, he was correct. Finney refused to follow the systematic thinking that had occupied divines in the past; he was more interested in practical successes here and now. Anti-intellectualism, so much a part of the frontier

[10] Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[11] Ibid.

revivalism that had "burned-over" the region, was very much in evidence in such remarks.

What is rather surprising—even if this tongue-lashing was a figment of Finney's active imagination, is that on December 30, 1823, as Gale was ill and the church was in need of pastoral assistance, the presbytery agreed to license Finney to fill the pastoral ministry there in Adams. This even after one examiner, in passing, allegedly inquired whether Finney subscribed to the Westminster Standards and the evangelist replied that he had never even read it. "I had not examined it. ... This had made no part of my study." And yet, as Hardman points out, it would have been inconceivable that a Princeton graduate such as Gale would have ignored the Confession in preparing Finney for ministry.[12] Whether this was simply an error of Finney's memory of the events, an attempt to evade his examiners on a subject that would certainly have jeopardized his ordination, or a deliberate attempt to portray his theological convictions as having never changed (as he later insisted), it is rather remarkable to think that one would embark on a ministry in a confessional denomination without ever having even read the document to which he subscribed in good conscience.

At last, on July 1, 1824, Finney preached his ordination sermon and, refusing to mount the exalted pulpit, strolled throughout the congregation and paced the platform. Even before Finney arrived in many towns, revivalism had already produced strange phenomena. The frontier revivalist Peter Cartwright reported that the preachers themselves would become hysterical and Hofstadter describes the scene:

> *They laughed senselessly, 'holy laughs,' they called them. And then they jumped around like dogs on all fours and, still barking, 'treed the devil' like dogs chasing a squirrel. When all else failed, they spoke in a gibberish which they believed to be the 'other tongues' used by the apostles in the Bible*.[13]

In DeKalb, Presbyterians and Methodists had divided over the phenomenon of "fainting under the power of the Spirit," endorsed by the Methodists, but when Finney arrived in 1823, he brought the Presbyterians into agreement with the practice. Indeed, Finney occasionally wondered aloud why he did not become a Methodist and praised them as better revivalists than the Presbyterians.[14] According to Cross, "Lawyers, real-estate

[12] Ibid.
[13] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (NY: Vintage, 1963), p. 70.
[14] Hardman, pp. 67, 108.

magnates, millers, manufacturers, and commercial tycoons led the parade of the regenerated."[15]

Finney, however, was not the only evangelist. In fact, not all of the missionaries and evangelists of the frontier were chafing at the strictures of the Calvinistic creed. Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844), for instance, was the leader of revivals in New England and New York before Finney. From the mold of the earlier evangelists of the first Great Awakening, Nettleton emphasized sin and grace, dependence upon the sovereignty of God, and therefore eschewed all forms of emotionalism. His restrained style, however, was now considered passe for the new revivalists, although he had a firm ally in the Boston pastor Lyman Beecher (1775-1863). Born in New Haven, Beecher arrived as a student at Yale and found it "in a most ungodly state. ... Most of the class before me were infidels, and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau, d'Alembert, etc., etc.," (*Autobiography*, 27). Under Dwight, Beecher became a minister and even studied for a while in the Yale president's home. First, he was committed to opposing the evils of Jacksonian democracy, representing the New England establishment and its Congregational dominance. Jeffersonian and Jacksonian trends, he insisted, went hand in hand with religious sectarianism on the frontier. Under the 1801 Plan of Union, he served Presbyterian parishes as well and remained a Presbyterian for the rest of his life. Beecher was assisted in his revivalistic opposition to various causes by Nathaniel Taylor, father of the "New Haven Divinity," we shall discuss below. Beecher did not share, therefore, Nettleton's Old Calvinism, but was rather sympathetic to Taylor's optimistic view of human nature. When he became a pastor in Boston, Beecher bitterly attacked the Unitarians who now dominated. Finally, he became president of Lane Seminary, the western outpost for the New School Presbyterians in Cincinnati. Here, his causes included abolition, opposition to Catholic immigration and the defense of America's "manifest destiny." His own trial for heresy in 1835 was a prelude to the schism of the Presbyterian Church, along Old School and New School lines.

Nettleton, however, found in Beecher what he considered a loyal ally in opposing Finney. While Nettleton was opposed for theological reasons, Beecher was opposed on stylistic principles. Because Finney was merely applying Taylor's theology to the frontier, Beecher's criticisms were of the "New Measures" Finney employed and rested on the minister's social and intellectual snobbery rather than on firm theological grounds. Finney's problem was not that he was introducing Pelagian notions, but that he was upsetting order, both civil and religious. Eventually, that was not enough to keep Beecher in opposition, as the New Lebanon Convention in 1827 proved. There, a handful of the leading New England ministers to informally discuss their relationship to Finney. When

[15] Cross, p. 155.

it appeared that the tide of sentiment was turning in favor of the "New Measures," Beecher declared openly that there was no difference between them and he even invited the evangelist to Boston. Of course, Nettleton was crushed, although he continued to hold his meetings. Nettleton would visit townspeople in their places of business, at leisure, in their homes by invitation, and in the town square. "But," Hardman notes, "this seemed, for all its success, to be an obsolete approach, and his tenacious insistence on preaching the doctrine of original sin put him increasingly out of touch with Nathaniel Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Charles Finney."[16]

The New Lebanon Conference was the turning point. No longer was Finney an outcast; the theology and practice that had caused the Presbyterian Church, without delay, to oust the Presbytery of Cumberland at the turn of the century, had now become almost officially tolerated. Even the Old School-dominated Presbytery of Philadelphia allowed New School doctrines. When one such pastor invited Finney to that city, he warned his brethren, "To oppose them [the revivals] openly would be unpopular." The conversion of an Old School man to Finney's side led the evangelist to reason, "His love of souls overruled all difficulty on nice questions of theological difference."[17]

While Congregationalists believed that they could hold the fort in New England, there was no question about the success of the Methodists and Baptists on the frontier. While Old School Presbyterians fought the theological and practical dangers, many who had even been trained at Union and Princeton came to attach themselves to the maxim, "If you can't beat them, join them." As one interpreter put it, "Pragmatism won the day. It was statistics—numbers of converts—that counted. ..."[18]

In all of this, it is quite naive to consider Charles Finney the father of this shift. The Old School-New School rift had been a long time in the making and Hardman argues that Solomon Stoddard a century and a half earlier had introduced some of these ideas: "Stoddard's entire approach assumed that pastors and people could indeed assist in bringing down spiritual fire, and his methodology was the first to delineate the steps necessary to cooperate with God in this."[19] Even in Puritanism itself, especially in its Congregationalist variety, there is a significant emphasis on separation, conversion, piety and the affections that could sometimes lose sight of the objective focus of redemption and ever since the Antinomian Controversy in 1636 there had been a cycle of depression and revival, the latter considered a means of repairing whatever ailed both church and

[16] Hardman, p. 111.
[17] Ibid., p. 156.
[18] Ibid., xii.
[19] Ibid., p. 19.

state. What was unique ever since the Second Great Awakening, however, was the explicitly Pelagian theology that undergirded the revivalistic enterprise.

Eventually, there were enough Old School Calvinists to oppose a complete take-over of the Presbyterian Church and throughout the '30s, New School proponents, such as Beecher, Albert Barnes (the biblical commentator), and professors at Union and Auburn, were tried for heresy in church courts. This all led to a schism of the denomination in 1837, when the Old School finally had a clear majority in the General Assembly, and four synods with nearly half of the membership were cut off from the denomination. In vain the New School attempted to re-enter the General Assembly, but when the decision was final, these exiled Presbyterians discovered that they had enough support beyond their region to form their own denomination. No wonder, then, that Finney declared, "No doubt there is a jubilee in hell every year, about the time of the meeting of the General Assembly."[20]

While Finney, therefore, cannot be regarded as the father of a movement, he certainly was the most important catalyst for its success. Cross well summarizes Finney's outlook: "But no individual or school of thought could equal experience as Finney's teacher. His doctrine, in fact, grew out of actions which met the pragmatic test; success could be measured only in numbers of converts and in the apparent intensity of their convictions. Thus, it was that Finney's chief contribution in the New York campaigns was not a theology but a set of practices. These devices met effectively the demand for larger revivals and served to popularize and vitalize the New Haven theology."[21] This brings us to the discussion of the theological sources and effects of the revivals.

II. The Theology of Charles Finney

A. The New Haven Divinity

Although revivals had been conceived with somewhat more of a dynamic give-and-take between God and humans by Puritans such as Solomon Stoddard, they were still considered, as Edwards put it, "surprising works of God." In short, they were miraculous works of divine favor that in no way depended on the moral or emotional earnestness of sinful creatures. But the Unitarians had already made a break with Calvinism (and indeed orthodox Christianity). In 1757, the Reverend Samuel Webster, a Harvard graduate, wrote *A Winter-Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin*, in which he

[20] Ibid.

[21] Cross, p. 160.

rejected the biblical teaching that the sinful condition is inherited by all because of Adam's fall. Before long, this Pelagianizing sentiment extended into full-blown universalism and when linked to the increasingly popular Deism that regarded Jesus as a great moral teacher, but not the God-Man, Unitarian-Universalism became a major force in New England Congregationalism.

Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858), student of and then theological successor to Timothy Dwight at Yale, along with Beecher, attacked Unitarians, Episcopalians, and conservative Calvinists (all of whom were opposed to revivalism). Although he authored no magnum opus, Taylor's immense influence lies in the impress of his lectures, as he trained the forces of New England revivalism.

Like Edwards, Taylor was convinced that Calvinism had to interact with the current questions of the day. The Enlightenment made it impossible for Calvinists to simply repeat the old answers without taking into sufficient account the new questions that had been raised. Hobbes and Locke had left serious questions about the genuine freedom or even existence of the individual and Calvinism had to be distinguished from materialistic determinism and the moral chaos that could result from Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Furthermore, the discussions of individual rights, Kantian ethics, and democratic liberties appeared to render Calvinistic theological and anthropological assumptions anachronistic. But unlike Edwards, Taylor was not really convinced that Calvinism had the correct answers in the first place. It was not so much providing a new defense in the light of new questions, but of accommodating Calvinism to the sentiment of the times. Therefore, Taylor dismissed from the Calvinistic corpus the doctrines of original sin, regeneration, and the bondage of the will. Rather, human beings are born neutral, so that their own conversion and regeneration is self-generated by a self-determining will that possesses "power to the contrary." Therefore, humans can overcome sinning if they simply choose to do so.

Another popular figure of the New Haven Divinity was Joseph Bellamy (1719-90), a Congregationalist minister during the Great Awakening and both student and associate of Edwards who, according to Stephen Berk, "subordinated doctrine to practice" and utility.[22] While retaining an Edwardsean interest in explicating the divine purpose in permitting the Fall and insisting on divine sovereignty over evil, Bellamy also denied original sin and argued that an individual only becomes a sinner by committing the first act. This, of course, affected the doctrine of the atonement. Embracing a governmental theory similar to that of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Bellamy and Taylor both emphasized the idea that God punishes sin rather than sinners. It is his justice, rather than his wrath, that is at issue in the work of Christ. Therefore, they argued, Christ did not actually atone

[22] Stephen Berk, *Calvinism Versus Democracy* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 59-61.

for the sins of any individual, but demonstrated divine justice. Further, it exhibited divine love (the moral influence theory). However, there was no room for the theory of penal substitution, since God was not requiring a legal satisfaction for the guilt of sinners. The atonement should move sinners to turn from their wickedness and simply reorient their moral lives, something that was entirely within their power apart from regeneration. That is not to say that God was entirely absent from conversion, but he exercised merely an "influence of persuasion," much the way another person might attempt to convince someone of a particular course of action.

Such sentiments did not rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of a once luminous Calvinism; Richard Baxter had appropriated the Grotian insights two centuries earlier and seventeenth century English Puritanism was filled with accusations and counter-accusations of Antinomianism, enthusiasm, Arminianism, and Socinianism. The affinities between Baxter's arguments in his *Catholick Theologie* and those in Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated* are striking, and Baxter's departures had earned for the English Puritan the ignominious accusation of Socinian and Arminian heresy from no less a person than John Owen.

B. Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology

In an April 1876, article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, G. F. Wright criticized Charles Hodge's review of Finney's *Systematic Theology* for representing Finney as "putting the universe in the place of God," but Warfield agreed with Hodge that this is the logical conclusion of his theology.[23] But was this rather severe indictment justified in the light of the evidence?

In the *Lectures*, Finney demonstrates an unwitting dependence upon the Newtonian metaphysics that conceived of the universe rather mechanically. Frequently, the author will refer to a universal "intelligence," "reason," "law," "government," or "principle," that is supreme and to which even God is subject. As far as the divine attributes are concerned, "All God's moral attributes are only so many attributes of love or of disinterested benevolence,"[24] and such comments are pronounced without the slightest exegetical appeal, much unlike the Confession itself. In fact, one is impressed throughout the Lectures with the absence of proof texts, the collection reading like a volume of Blackstone's *Law*.

Nothing like a traditional method of systematic theology is attempted and the doctrine of God is strangely deduced from "self-evident principles" rather than from Scripture. The result is a deity whose features are virtually indistinguishable from Islam's "Allah."

[23] Cross, p. 158.
[24] Ibid., p. 27.

There is nothing specifically Christian about Finney's doctrine of God, much less is it an explicitly evangelical description.

Finney's anthropology suffers from a similar lack of exegesis and historical-theological reflection. Once again, the theory is proved that those who naively and self-confidently presume to be independent of the sources (i.e., "mere men") are often the most easily beguiled by the subtleties of what they do not understand. Finney's anti-intellectualism and self-confidence notwithstanding, he was a mirror reflection of his age. Taylor, in *The Quarterly Christian Spectator*, June 1829, argued that children are not born into the world sinful, but rapidly acquire a self-indulgent disposition by practice and repetition until it becomes a bias. Assuming a Kantian categorical imperative, Finney follows the Taylorites to the conclusion that if God commands something, it must be possible. Edwards, of course, argued that this was acceptable if by "possible" one meant "naturally possible." There is nothing inherent in nature essentially that predisposes one to sin. Sin cannot be attributed to a defective faculty. Rather, human beings are "morally incapable" of doing that which lies within their natural ability. With that distinction denied, the New Haven Divinity embraced Kant's "ought implies can" and Finney took that to mean that if God commands absolute perfection, it must be attainable by human beings according to their present condition. Hodge responded to this aspect of Finney's work in the following manner: "It is merely a dictum of philosophers, not of common people that 'I ought, therefore I can.' Every unsophisticated heart and especially every heart burdened with a sense of sin says rather, 'I ought to be able, but I am not."[25]

One need go no further than the table of contents of the *Lectures* to discern that Finney's entire theology revolved around human morality. Chapters one through five are on moral government, obligation, and the unity of moral action; chapters six and seven are on "Obedience Entire," as chapters eight through fourteen discuss attributes of love, selfishness and virtues and vice in general. Not until the twenty-first chapter does one read anything especially Christian, on the atonement. This is followed by a discussion of regeneration, repentance, and faith. There is one chapter on justification followed by six on sanctification. In fact, Finney did not really write lectures on systematic theology, but lectures on ethics. That is why, in his review, Hodge wrote, "It is altogether a misnomer to call such a book *Lectures on Systematic Theology*. It would give a far more definite idea of its character, to call it, *Lectures on Moral Law and Philosophy* ... Let moral philosophy be called moral philosophy and not Systematic Theology."[26]

Nevertheless, the author does make his views quite plain on the essential doctrinal matters in question. For our purposes here, we will restrict the discussion of Finney's

[25] B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed), p. 195.
[26] Finney, *Systematic Theology*, op. cit., p. 31.

anthropology to its soteriological implications, rather than exploring the philosophical assumptions of the New Haven anthropology.

The classical dogma of original sin, embraced by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike, is "anti-scriptural and nonsensical dogma," Finney declared.[27] In explicit language, Finney denied the notion that human beings possess a sinful nature.[28] Therefore, if Adam leads individuals into sin merely by his poor example, this leads logically to the corollary of Christ redeeming by offering a perfect example. Guilt and corruption are not inherent, but are the result of choices. The author responds to a number of proof texts commonly adduced in support of original sin. When the Psalmist, for instance, declares, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Ps.58:3), Finney replies, "But does this mean that they are really and literally estranged from the day and hour of their birth, and that they really go astray the very day they are born, speaking lies?" In other words, is this verse really telling us the truth? "This every one knows to be contrary to fact," as if "fact" and Finney's interpretation of his experience are synonymous. Therefore, the text must mean, "...that when the wicked are estranged and go astray from the commencement of their moral agency," in spite of what the text actually says.[29] With Pelagius, Kant, and all who have been unable to accept this rather enigmatic biblical doctrine, Finney simply concludes of original sin, "It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma, that a holy God is angry with any creature for possessing a nature with which he was sent into being without his knowledge or consent."[30] Later, he wrote, "Original or constitutional sinfulness, physical regeneration, and all their kindred and resulting dogmas, are alike subversive of the gospel, and repulsive to the human intelligence."[31]

The medieval church, of course, entertained a notion of concupiscence, attaching sinfulness to desire—not the desire for a particular thing, but desire in and of itself. Warfield argued that Taylor's and Finney's twist on "concupiscence" "differs from that doctrine at this point only in its completer Pelagianism."[32]

From the denial of original sin, Finney is free to move to a denial of the doctrine of supernatural regeneration. Like revival, regeneration itself was a gift of God, a "surprising work of God," according to the first Great Awakening. But for Finney, while

---

[27] Charles Hodge, "Finney's Lectures on Theology," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, April 1847, pp. 244-258.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 179.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., p. 179.
[32] Ibid., p. 180.

the Holy Spirit exerted moral influences, "the actual turning ... is the sinner's own act."[33] The evangelist's most popular sermon, which he preached at Boston's Park Street Church, was titled, "Sinners Bound To Change Their Own Hearts." "There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature," Finney declared, rendering the charge of Pelagianism undeniable. "Religion is the work of man," he said. "It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not enabled to put forth exertions which they were unable before to put forth. They only exert powers which they had before, in a different way, and use them for the glory of God. A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of constituted means—as much as any other effect produced by the application of means" (emphasis in original).[34]

One notices in the preceding citation the dominance of the mechanical and pragmatic view of the universe. It was, after all, the dawn of the Industrial Age and the human attempt to imitate Newtonian metaphysics by creating an ordered, predictable existence through mechanics and technology. As William James' philosophical pragmatism was well-suited to the American psyche, so Finney's popular version said more about the factors by which he was shaped than about the influences he himself exerted. James (1842-1910) argued, "On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true." Thus, James wanted to know "the truth's cash-value in experiential terms."[35] "Many servants of the Lord," the foreword to a modern edition of Finney's *Lectures* reads, "should be diligently searching for a gospel that 'works,' and I am happy to state they can find it in this volume." The American pragmatic impulse that produced both Finney and James, and their respective heirs, could not have been more aptly expressed than the former's insistence upon revival depending on the correct techniques rather than on the sovereign freedom and grace of God.

In fact, what is already observable up to this point is that Finney's theology hardly requires God at all. It is an ethical system based on general self-evident principles that men and women can discover and follow if only they make that choice.

The next domino to fall in terms of the classical construction was the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. The first thing one must note concerning the atonement, Finney insists, is that Christ could not have died for anyone else's sins other than his own. His obedience to the Law and his perfect righteousness were sufficient for his acceptance before God, but it is legally impossible and unjust to substitute one person

[33] Ibid., p. 236.
[34] Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 189.
[35] Cited in above, p. 176.

on behalf of others. That Finney's entire theology is driven by a passion for moral improvement is seen on this very point: "If he had obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a sine qua non of our salvation?"[36] In other words, if Christ fulfilled the conditions of our obedience and satisfied divine justice for our sins, why would our own obedience be a necessary condition of salvation? Here, Finney is careful to distinguish between ground and condition, as he is in the later discussion of perfection: the believer's perfect obedience is a condition, while God's mercy is the ground, of redemption. How God could be described as being merciful to those who, by their obedience, simply merited eternal life is another enigmatic feature of Finney's argument.

In line with the New Haven Divinity, Finney describes the atonement in governmental and moral rather than substitutionary language: "The atonement would present to creatures the highest possible motives to virtue. Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. ... If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless."[37] Notice again that the goal of the atonement is not the redemption of sinners from divine wrath, but a moving exhibition designed to exert moral influence to the end of subduing selfishness and the flesh. In other words, the work of Christ itself is a purely ethical category. The substitionary view of the atonement is explicitly rejected because it "assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement. ... It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one."[38]

Original sin, divine sovereignty, regeneration, and the substitutionary atonement pushed aside, Finney bravely faced his next challenge: the doctrine of justification *sola fide*, "by which," according to the evangelical faith, "the church stands or falls." As if he were entirely unaware of the sixteenth century debate between justification through an inherent righteousness and a justification through an imputed righteousness, Finney adopts a view of justification that is as Pelagian as the preceding foundation upon which it was erected.

First, in answer to the question, "Does a Christian cease to be a Christian, whenever he commits a sin?", Finney answers:

> *Whenever he sins, he must, for the time being, cease to be holy. This is self-evident. Whenever he sins, he must be condemned; he must incur the penalty of the law of God....If it be said that the precept is still binding upon him, but that with respect to the Christian,*

[36] Finney, *Revival Lectures*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
[37] William James, *Pragmatism* (N. Y.: Meridian, 1955), pp. 192-195.
[38] Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 206.

> *the penalty is forever set aside, or abrogated, I reply, that to abrogate the penalty is to repeal the precept; for a precept without a penalty is no law. It is only counsel or advice. The Christian, therefore, is justified no longer than he obeys, and must be condemned when he disobeys; or Antinomianism is true....In these respects, then, the sinning Christian and the unconverted sinner are upon precisely the same ground.*[39]

Finney was convinced that God required absolute perfection, but instead of that leading him to seek his perfect righteousness in Christ, he concluded that "...full present obedience is a condition of justification." The position taken by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century was far more Augustinian: Sanctification, to be sure, preceded final justification; nevertheless, the former was always incomplete in this life and imperfections were covered by Christ's atoning work, mediated through the sacramental and sacerdotal ministry. Finney's gospel, however, is pure law. Regardless of his distinction between works as the condition and works as the ground, Finney embraced a works-righteousness that exceeded the Counter-Reformation position.

"But again," writes Finney, "to the question, can man be justified while sin remains in him? Surely he cannot, either upon legal or gospel principles, unless the law be repealed. ... But can he be pardoned and accepted, and justified, in the gospel sense, while sin, any degree of sin, remains in him? Certainly not."[40] With the Westminster Confession in his sights, Finney declared concerning the Reformation formula, *simul iustus et peccator*, "This error has slain more souls, I fear, than all the universalism that ever cursed the world." For, "Whenever a Christian sins, he comes under condemnation and must repent and do his first works or be lost."[41] With regard to the Confession's insistence on the forensic character of justification, Finney makes the following reply:

> *But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd. ... As we shall see, there are many conditions, while there is but one ground, of the justification of sinners....As has already been said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification, or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification. They hold to the legal maxim that what a man does by another he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours, on the ground that he obeyed for us.*[42]

---

[39] Ibid., p. 209.
[40] Ibid., p. 217.
[41] Ibid., p. 46.
[42] Ibid., p. 57.

If Finney had not read the Confession prior to his ordination, it is not likely that he gained great familiarity with it afterward, since federal theology insists upon "universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law" as the proper ground of justification. It is Christ, however, whose fulfillment of this requirement forms the ground of the sinner's justification. Finney, on the contrary, insists that this should refer instead to the believer's obedience:

> *The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption, for Christ's righteousness could do no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us. ... It was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey in our behalf. Representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many.*[43]

Such remarks led Warfield to conclude, "When Finney strenuously argues that God can accept as righteous no one who is not intrinsically righteous, it cannot be denied that he teaches a work-salvation, and has put man's own righteousness in the place occupied in the Reformation doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ."[44] Furthermore, the view that faith is the sole condition of justification is "the antinomian view." "We shall see that perseverance in obedience to the end of life is also a condition of justification," placing justification at the end rather than at the beginning of the Christian life. But that is not all: "Present sanctification, in the sense of present full consecration to God, is another condition ... of justification. Some theologians have made justification a condition of sanctification, instead of making sanctification a condition of justification. But this we shall see is an erroneous view of the subject." Each act of sin requires "a fresh justification." Referring to "the framers of the Westminster Confession of faith," and their view of an imputed righteousness, Finney wondered, "If this is not antinomianism, I know not what is." The legal transaction is unreasonable to Finney, so he concludes, "I regard these dogmas as fabulous, and better befitting a romance than a system of theology." The doctrine of justification, therefore, is "another gospel." He concludes this section against the Westminster Assembly:

> *The relations of the old school view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, a return to personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to the law, cannot with them be a condition of justification. They must have a justification while yet at least in some degree of sin. This must be brought about by imputed righteousness. The*

[43] Ibid., p. 60.
[44] Ibid., p. 320-321.

intellect revolts at a justification in sin. So, a scheme devised to diver the eye of the law and of the lawgiver from the sinner to his substitute, who has perfectly obeyed the law.[45]

Finney understood the significance, therefore, of his break and he also exhibited a surprising grasp of the Reformation position. His denial is not the result of confusion, it seems, but was born out of careful reflection, and he was so uncomfortable with the evangelical doctrines of imputation and substitution that he did not trouble himself with the Wesleyan-Arminian compromise. He recognized the implications and, unlike Wesley, found them unavoidable. Therefore, he went the entire distance to Pelagianism.

There are debates as to whether the New Haven Divinity owed its origins to Edwards himself, or whether it was a reaction to the mentor's strict Calvinism. Allen Guelzo, in favor of the first proposal, argues concerning the New Haven doctrine of the atonement, "Governmental images came easily to the New Divinity, since it was one of the chief philosophic objects of Edwardseanism to prove that God was a moral, not an arbitrary, Governor of creation."[46] After all, Edwards did contribute the preface to Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated* in 1750 and Guelzo argues that his private notebooks, mostly unpublished, confirm a drift toward a governmental view of the atonement. Others argue that Bellamy and Taylor simply rediscovered Hugo Grotius for the "enlightened" moralism of the age.[47] Regardless, the New Divinity and the so-called "Consistent Calvinists" proved the adage, "With friends such as these, who needs enemies?" It was at the hands of these Edwardsean pupils that Calvinism was turned on its head. The New Divinity would have died on its own, but the New Haven theologians incorporated it through the zealous fervor of Nathaniel W. Taylor, and it made its way to the revivalistic bloodstream until it reached the western frontiers in the person of Charles G. Finney.

III. The Practice of Finney

The "New Measures"

"We must have exciting, powerful preaching, or the devil will have the people, except what the Methodists can save," Finney declared in his 1835 revival lectures.[48] The demand assumed that the preaching Finney heard in his uncle's congregation—monotonous,

---

[45] Ibid., p. 321-322.

[46] Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 154.

[47] Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p.p. 326-339.

[48] Allen Guelzo, "Jonathan Edwards and the New Divinity, 1758-1858," in *Pressing Toward The Mark*, ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard Gamble (Philadelphia: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986). See also his major work on Edwards published by Wesleyan University Press.

plodding, dispassionate, was the most common. Ever since the Reformation, preaching had been a hallmark of Protestants, both Lutherans and Calvinists insisting that "the preached Word of God is, in a special sense, the Word of God." (Second Helvetic Confession). In the place of idols, God wishes his people to be taught "through the **lively preaching** of his Word" (Heidelberg Catechism, emphasis added). One cannot read the sermons of the Reformation period, or those of the Puritans, without being moved by the passion and power of the sermon.

However, many sermons in the colonial and antebellum era were dry, formal lectures on various points and were not, properly speaking, proclamation, in their style, content, or urgency of address. While Finney's antipathy to being bogged down by "nice theological questions" and historical as well as exegetical reflection may have led him to exaggerate the conditions, he certainly had many followers for whom the caricature corresponded to a real individual.

The New Measures included the following: First, a direct and confrontational form of address. Informed of the notorious sinners in town before the meeting, Finney would pray publicly for these misguided strangers by name and even point them out in the meeting if they were present. It was high popular drama in an age without television, a combination of whodunit and situation comedy. Second, he would include in these public prayers the names of local clergy who were unsympathetic to the revivals, praying for their souls as if they were unconverted. Third, when Finney came to town, churches suspended their normal services and, in their place, the "protracted meeting" would occur nightly for a week or more. A fourth "new measure" is perhaps the most noted: the "anxious bench," a seat up front to which "seekers" and those "under conviction" might move as the meeting progressed. From this practice emerged the "altar call," the practice of calling forward those who were interested in "making a decision for Christ." However, even this innovation was not as controversial as the practice of encouraging women to "testify" in the meetings and even share in public prayer. Of course, in antebellum America, both women and men regarded the public speaking of women as degrading and socially unacceptable. This was as true for liberal Unitarians as for conservative Calvinists. However, the sects and revivalists were making room for such practices, and it is no surprise that the original leaders of the women's rights movement were converts and associates of such New Measures revivalism. A final "measure" was advance publicity. Sending a team ahead of him, Finney would arrive much as the circus: with a ready-made tent and audience. If revival and religion in general were not supernatural, but "philosophical results of the right use of constituted means," such measures seemed only best suited to the times. As Finney put it, "The evangelist must produce excitements

sufficient to induce sinners to repentance."[49] Sydney Ahlstrom observed the connection between theology and practice at this point: "Finney's emphasis on the human production of conversions was not the only point on which he strayed from strict Westminster standards. And far from concealing the fact, he proclaimed it. From the first he demanded that some kind of relevant social action follow the sinner's conversion, and in time this led to an even more disturbing emphasis on 'entire sanctification.'"[50] In a letter on revival, Finney issued the following:

> *Now the great business of the church is to reform the world—to put away every kind of sin. The church of Christ was originally organized to be a body of reformers...to reform individuals, communities, and governments ... Look at the Moral Reform movement. A few devoted, self-denying females, engaged in a mighty conflict with the great sin of licentiousness. This struggle has been maintained for years; and yet how few comparatively of the churches as such have treated this effort in any other way than with contempt. A few devoted Christian women in various churches form societies to aid in this work: but where are the churches themselves as a body? Where are these sworn reformers—these men and women who profess to be waging everlasting war against every form of sin?*

"Moral suasion" being Finney's watch-phrase for evangelism and social reform (one and the same), the revivalist contended that

> *Law, rewards, and punishments—these things and such as these are the very heart and soul of moral suasion. ... My brethren, if ecclesiastical bodies, colleges, and seminaries will only go forward—who will not bid them God speed? But if they will not go forward—if we hear nothing from them but complaint, denunciation, and rebuke in respect to almost every branch of reform, what can be done?*[51]

Therefore, as Cross relates, for Finney, "Pulpit manners matched the burden of the address. The imitator of Finney and Nash 'must throw himself back and forward just as far as they did; and must if strong enough, smite as hard upon his chair, besides imitating their wonderful drawl and familiarity with God.' Hand clapping, wild gesticulation, and the shift of voice from shout to whisper added visual and auditory sensation to a theatrical performance." These revivalists could reuse their sermons, but the average pastor had to develop a long-term preaching ministry. Those who could not imitate the

---

[49] Cf. especially Joseph Haroutunian's important work, *Peity Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Holt, 1932).

[50] Finney's *Lectures on Revival*, second ed. (N. Y., 1835), pp. 184-204.

[51] Ibid.

revivalist were often suspect. "Finney's relatively sane popularizing tendency grew among his emulators into a mania."[52]

This attachment to popular forms, which, more than theology, drew the ire of so many among the established New England clergy, was pointed out by the Presbyterian and, later, German Reformed theologian, John Williamson Nevin (1803-86), who insisted in The Anxious Bench that he did not oppose revivalism because of its earnestness. "Its professional machinery, its stage dramatic way, its business-like way of doing up religion in whole and short order, and then being done with it—all made me feel that it was at best a most unreliable mode of carrying forward the work and kingdom of God."[53] Nevin complains, "All is made to tell upon the one single object of effect. The pulpit is transformed, more or less, into a stage. Divine things are so popularized as to be at last shorn of their dignity as well as their mystery. Anecdotes and stories are plentifully retailed, often in low, familiar, flippant style. ... **The preacher feels himself, and is bent on making himself felt also by the congregation; but God is not felt in the same proportion**" (emphasis in original).[54] For Nevin, the issue of style was no less indicative of one's theological convictions than the matter of creed. There was not only a Reformation theology, but a Reformation style of evangelism and churchly life as well. Nevin added the following introduction to his rather lengthy critique of the revivalistic enterprise:

> *The system of New Measures has no affinity whatever with the life of the Reformation, as embodied in the Augsburgh Confession and the Heidelbergh Catechism. It could not have found any favor in the eyes of Zwingli or Calvin. Luther would have denounced it in the most unmerciful terms. His soul was too large, too deep, too free, to hold communion with a style of religion so mechanical and shallow. Those who are actively laboring to bring the Church of Luther, in this country, into subjection to the system, cannot be said to be true to his memory or name. ... The system in question is in its principle and soul neither Calvinism nor Lutheranism, but Wesleyan Methodism. Those who are urging it upon the old German Churches, are in fact doing as much as they can to turn them over into the arms of Methodism. This may be done without any change of denominational name. Already the life of Methodism, in this country, is actively at work among other sects, which owe no fellowship with it in form. ... And whatever there may be that is good in Methodism, this life of the Reformation I affirm to be immeasurably more excellent and sound....If we must have Methodism, let us have it under its own proper title, and in its own proper*

[52] Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 460.
[53] Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering An Evangelical Heritage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 20. Finney's "Letters on Revival—No. 23."
[54] Cross, p. 175.

> *shape. Why keep up the walls of denominational partition in such a case, with no distinctive spiritual being to uphold or protect? A sect without a soul has no right to live. Zeal for a separate denominational name that utters no separate religious idea, is the very essence of sectarian bigotry and schism.*[55]

Although Nevin and Schaff, with roots in Princeton's Old Calvinism, did not always see eye to eye with Hodge and Warfield, the Mercersberg Theology sought to recover not only the theology, but the liturgical style and form, of the Reformation and, when matched with the penetrating theological critiques of their close colleagues and mentors, Hodge and Warfield, the combined resources appear striking.

But Finney's revivals encouraged further measures as well, including an emphasis on healing and the "prayer of faith," requiring absolute trust on the part of the entire congregation, uniting in a common feeling of expectation. Finney complained that more orthodox prayers were a "mockery of God," since they lacked a sense of expectation and depended too much on divine sovereignty.[56] "Rumors, dreams, and visions went hand in glove with religious excitement," Cross relates. "The revival engineers had to exercise increasing ingenuity to find even more sensational means to replace those worn out by overuse. In all of these ways the protracted meeting, though only a form within which the measures operated, helped the measures themselves grow even more intense, until the increasing zeal, boiled up inside of orthodoxy, overflowed into heresy."[57]

In addition to the "New Measures," and partly because of them, Finney's revivals also produced a spirit of divisiveness. Ironically, this had been the standard criticism of orthodox churchmen and their commitment to creeds and confessions. And yet, nowhere was sectarian zeal more acutely realized than on the western frontier. Enthusiasm proved to be a more unstable guarantor of unity than theological conviction, as the former is inherently more subjective and individualistic than the latter. The result of fanaticism and "no creed but Christ" was that the sects most confident in the latter-day overthrow of church, tradition, creed and the alleged disunity that these created was that, as one wag reported, the churches were "split up into all kinds of Isms ... [that] hardly any two Believe alike."[58] Enthusiasm, not theology, emerged as the agent of discord. While Finney may have objected to a "paper pope" in the Westminster Standards, the nineteenth century created scores of living ones.

---

[55] John Williamson Nevin, *Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John W. Nevin*, ed. by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and George H. Bricker (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978), p. 5.
[56] Ibid., p. 93.
[57] Ibid., pp. 12-13.
[58] Cross, p. 179.

Nevertheless, New School presbyteries (and even some traditionally dominated by Old School men) increasingly accommodated themselves to the New Measures. In spite of its opposition to the measures, the Oneida Presbytery, for instance, invited him anyway. And why? "'God was with him,' and their hands were tied."[59] Success seemed to seal divine approval, employing the reasoning of Gamaliel in Acts 5:38-39.

IV. The Legacy of Finney

Edwin H. Rian, in *The Presbyterian Conflict*, observes that theological modernism was the child of New School theology and George Marsden points out that the "New School" was initially composed of Lyman Beecher and other New England Congregationalists who, under the Plan of Union, had embraced Presbyterianism and the Awakening. Eventually, however, the New England tradition clashed with the more orthodox Scots-Presbyterians and brought about the schism of 1837.[60] Samuel Hopkins emphasized moral government, but the Princetonians judged it to be within confessional bounds. It was Taylor who made the break, although it would prove to be his students who would actually reap the whirlwind. Throughout the 1820's, the Old Schoolers launched heresy trials for Beecher, Barnes, and others, but unsuccessfully, as the New Schoolers were able to secure a looser view of confessional subscription. Remarkably, Marsden argues that the popularity of Taylor's New Haven Divinity waned in the New School Presbyterian Church by the time it reunited with the Old School in 1869.

As W. Robert Godfrey has explained in a trenchant article, with the retirement of "Old School" theologian W.G.T. Shedd in 1890, Union Seminary's confessional Presbyterianism came to an end and in the following year, Charles Augustus Briggs became professor of biblical theology. In his inaugural address, Briggs championed German criticism and insisted that if Presbyterians and evangelicals generally would adapt themselves to the scientific advances and the modern world-view, they would hasten the dawn of the millennium. These evangelical Presbyterians wanted nothing more than to see the success of Christianity and appear to have been motivated by the noblest of zealous impulses. But to appeal to the modern world, certain accommodations had to be made.[61] Just as Taylor's New Haven Divinity felt the burden of making Calvinism relevant to an Enlightenment culture, and Finney sought to accommodate evangelical faith to the practical experience of the Jacksonian democracy, so the evangelicals at Union simply

[59] Ibid., p. 182-184.
[60] Ibid., p. 315, 162.
[61] W. Robert Godfrey, "Haven't We Seen The 'Megashift Before?", in *Modern Reformation* (January-February 1993), pp. 14-18.

wanted to advance the Christian cause and fortify Christian America's moral and political destiny.

Hegel's spirit of enlightened modernity and Romanticism, mediated through Harnack, permeated the period, with the secular dogma of historical progress virtually indistinguishable from Christian eschatology. Perhaps even more powerful than the New Haven theology was German idealism in general and the thought of G.F.W. Hegel in particular. Marsden mentions one Laurens P. Hickok (1790-1888), a New School professor at Auburn. Hickok was widely recognized outside of theological circles as a pioneer of American idealism. While Hickok warned against a transcendental pantheism, he did advance Hegel's philosophy. The New School's concern, however, seemed to have had more to do with "the practical results in Sunday balls and theatres," as their journal cautioned.[62] One cannot help but notice the parallels between the Joachamist vision of history as progress toward pure spirit, through seismic advances in human betterment, to which Hegel explicitly acknowledged an obvious debt, and the postmillennial moralism of the New School activists.

When wedded to the Romantic pietism of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), evangelicals, in he name of evangelicalism, reduced Christianity to feeling. When wedded to the thought of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89), evangelicals, in the name of evangelicalism, reduced Christianity to morality and the Kingdom of God to social advances. What all of these accommodations share in common is not only a desire to make Christianity relevant, but a Pelagianizing tendency. If Warfield was correct in asserting that Pelagianism is the religion of universal heathenism and the religion of the natural man, these developments, from Taylor to Finney to the liberal evangelicals of the late nineteenth century, constitute a common drift toward the accommodation of Christianity to natural theology. Even when Arminian revivalists championed healing, for instance, it was not conceived as a supernatural intervention, but as a scientific, natural effect of universal laws. Taylor and Finney had denied original sin, supernatural regeneration, a substitutionary atonement, justification by an imputed righteousness, and had substituted for this modernity's confidence in human potential, moral and social redemption, a moral influence and governmental concept of the atonement, and the collapse of justification into the notion of naturalistic perfectionism. But their theological descendants, aided by German pietists, would see the modern project to its ultimate destination in what we now regard as theological liberalism.

What must not be overlooked, however, is the fact that both fundamentalism and liberalism are heirs of this evangelical trend. The upheavals of the 1920's and '30's

[62] Marsden, "The New School Heritage and Presbyterian Fundamentalism," in *Pressing Toward the Mark*, Charles G. Dennison, ed. (Philadelphia: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), pp. 169-182.

between fundamentalists and modernists must not obscure the fact that both were indebted to the legacy of Taylor and Finney. Much as Beecher was offended by Finney's style, but eventually embraced the evangelist because of their common theological convictions, modern liberals and fundamentalists differed on substantial matters while they both nevertheless carried the Pelagian virus. This is why J. Gresham Machen found himself odd man out, not only in his own Presbyterian Church, but in the sea of fundamentalism, with its revivalistic, millennial, and moralistic orientation.

Even though it shares affinities with Enlightenment modernism (such as optimism concerning human nature, faith in progress, and an emphasis on morality), Marsden insists that fundamentalism is the true heir to the New Divinity: Just as New Haven was reacting against Unitarianism, fundamentalists were reacting against modernism, and everyone was reacting against Calvinism for different reasons. However, I would argue that both fundamentalism and modernism owed a debt to this "megashift." For different reasons, Taylor's sophisticated humanism fits with liberal sentiments, while Finney's Pelagianism paved the road for enthusiastic revivalism. For similar reasons, however, Finney was too self-confident and anti-intellectual to acknowledge his debt to Taylor, just as fundamentalism fails to see its inheritance from Enlightenment dogmas. If this is true, it comprises one of the strangest ironies in American religious history: Fundamentalism and Modernism are cousins with a common theological ancestor and a remarkably similar soteriological creed, aside from issues of biblical inerrancy and the historical veracity of Christian truth claims concerning Christ's person and work.

This point was not lost on B. B. Warfield who in 1920 responded to a proposal that would have Presbyterians accept a common "evangelical creed" as a basis for evangelistic cooperation in the most unmerciful terms. It is utterly reductionistic, something that a sacerdotalist or rationalist could sign in good conscience, he says:

> *There is nothing about justification by faith in this creed. And that means that all the gains obtained in that great religious movement which we call the Reformation are cast out of the window. ... There is nothing about the atonement in the blood of Christ in the creed. And that means that the whole gain of the long mediaeval search after truth is thrown summarily aside. Anselm goes out of the same window with the Reformation. There is nothing about sin and grace in this creed. So far as this creed tells us, there might be no such thing as sin in the world; and of course then no such thing as grace. ... Augustine shares the same fate of Anslem and the Reformers. It is just as true that the gains of the still earlier debates which occupied the first age of the Church's life, through which we attained to the understanding of the fundamental truths of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ are discarded by this creed also. There is no Trinity in this creed; no Deity of Christ—or of the Holy Spirit ... Are we ready to enter a union based on the elimination of*

> *these principles? Are we ready to say in effect that we will not insist, in our evangelistic activities, on any mention of such things as salvation by faith only, dependence for salvation on the blood of Christ alone, the necessity for salvation of the regeneration of the Holy Spirit?... Is this the kind of creed which twentieth-century Presbyterianism will find sufficient as a basis for co-operation in evangelistic activities? Then it can get along in its evangelistic activities without the gospel. For it is precisely the gospel that this creed neglects altogether. 'Fellowship' is a good word, and a great duty. But our fellowship, according to Paul, must be in 'the furtherance of the gospel.'*[63]

As surely as Romanticism produced Schleiermacher, it simultaneously created an idealistic and pietistic impulse in revivalism that led to a popular emotionalism that paralleled the urbane intuitionalism of the transcendentalists. Both tendencies tested truth by its pragmatic usefulness or its experiential and emotional cash-value, to paraphrase William James, and thereby shifted theology and apologetics from the objective to the subjective, from the external to the internal, from the public to the private, from the grand to the trivial, from the rationally defensible to the experientially satisfying.

Lest Finney and his antebellum associates be regarded as an aberration in the history of evangelicalism, it is good to remember that the entire revivalistic tradition, from Finney to Billy Graham, whatever subtle differences may exist, was united in its general theological and practical distinctives. Son of Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher (1813-87) was America's most prominent preacher and, in Milton J. Coalter, Jr.'s description,

> *preached a mixture of civil religion and Christianized Social Darwinism. He largely ignored the substance of his Calvinist upbringing to popularize a romantic view of God superintending a natural evolution toward ever greater heights of human unity, order, and freedom. He believed that the United States led the world as the pinnacle of human development. His liberal theology matched a social conservatism allowing for mild reforms based on the duty of the more fortunate to lift up the less advanced under God.*[64]

The postmillennialism, Romanticism, idealism, and Pelagianism of the New Haven tradition fit perfectly with Social Darwinism's Hegelian eschatology. Departures from orthodoxy could be justified by the dogma of progress, since everyone embraced it. Those who opposed innovations in faith or practice were constantly having to defend themselves against the horrific charge of refusing to cooperate with the inevitable progress of history. As Martin Marty relates, "Once the Puritan faith had centered on the supernatural; but Lyman Abbott saw [Henry Ward] Beecher making religion seem a

---

[63] B. B. Warfield, *The Shorter Writings, Volume I* (Philipsburg, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed), p. 387.
[64] Donald K. McKim, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1982.

natural experience, 'something to be enjoyed' for everyday use," and here he was saying nothing that Finney had not declared earlier.[65] Christianity was practical, and "testimonies" were now an important part of making that case.

Wheaton College's first president, Jonathan Blanchard (b. 1811) was deeply committed to the perfectionistic principles of Charles Finney. In fact, in an address for Oberlin College in 1839, titled, "A Perfect State of Society," Blanchard declared that when the laws of God become the laws of the land, the kingdom of God will come to the earth. It is "not so much ... the doctrines of Christ, as the form they will give society, when they have done their perfect work on mankind," he insisted, for "every true minister of Christ is a universal reformer, whose business it is, so far as possible, to reform all the evils which press on human concerns." Donald Dayton cites Blanchard's remark that what "John Baptist and the Saviour meant when they preached 'the kingdom of God' was 'a perfect state of society.'"[66] A fierce abolitionist and temperance man, Blanchard was committed to the idea of the kingdom and the Gospel in very this-worldly terms and the theology of perfectionism created an enormous amount of zeal in social, moral, and political activism.

D. L. Moody (1837-1899), heir to Finney's anti-intellectual and anti-theological sentiments as well as an Arminian in conviction, would add, "Whenever you find a man who follows Christ, that man you will find a successful one."[67] Under Moody's revivalistic ministry, the world of big business became the target group and Carnegie, Wanamaker, Dodge, and a host of other Wall Street names helped finance the campaigns. P. T. Barnum even produced the tents. According to Richard Hofstadter, revivalism "evolved a kind of crude pietistic pragmatism with a single essential tenet: their business was to save souls as quickly and as widely as possible. For this purpose, the elaborate theological equipment of an educated ministry was not only an unnecessary frill but, in all probability, a serious handicap; the only justification needed by the itinerant preacher for his limited stock of knowledge and ideas was that he got results, measurable in conversions. To this justification very little answer was possible."[68] Moody declared, "It makes no difference how you get a man to God, provided you get him there."[69] Sam Jones (1847-1906), mocking "the little Presbyterian preacher," cried, "Oh, that preachers would preach less

---

[65] Martin Marty, *Pilgrims In Their Own Land* (N. Y.: Penguin, 1984), p. 312. At the risk of exaggeration, the New School evidenced Romantic tendencies that could, in either a fundamentalistic or liberal direction, could easily disintegrate further into Gnosticism. Cf. Philip Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and the more recent work by Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992). The relationship between twentieth-century "Gnosticism" and Pelagianism and the relation of both to the New School is a subject that requires a great deal of further exploration.

[66] Donald W. Dayton, op. cit., pp. 7-14.

[67] Richard Hofstadter, op. cit., pp. 59 ff.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 115.

doctrine and more of Jesus Christ!" and yet, obviously doing theology without knowing it, in his own crude manner he displayed his debt to Taylorism, mediated through Finney. Of the substitutionary atonement, he stated, "It's a lie! It's a lie! God never was mad, nor did he ever shoot the javelin from his great hand at the heart and body of his Son."[70]

Later, an ex-baseball player-turned-evangelist, Billy Sunday, held dramatic revivals that included breaking baseball bats on the stage. By now, the pragmatic and consumeristic sentiments had deteriorated even further: "What I'm paid for my work makes it only about $2 a soul, and I get less proportionately for the number I convert than any living evangelist."[71] A true heir of Finney, Sunday, for whom prohibitionism was his greatest obsession, declared, "I believe there is no doctrine more dangerous than to convey the impression that a revival is something peculiar in itself and cannot be judged by the same rules of causes and effects as other things."[72]

In his classic study of perfectionism, Warfield explained the relationship of Finney to the evolution of the various "holiness" movements that were gaining ground in his day in Britain and America. In revivalism, the Word is substituted for the evangelist and there is an *ex opere operato* effect in his very person: "By a mere gaze, without a word spoken, Finney says he reduced a whole room-full of factory girls to hysteria. As the Lutheran says God in the word works a saving impression, Finney says God in the preacher works a saving impression. The evangelist has become a Sacrament."[73] Warfield also argued the connection, theologically, between Oberlin Perfectionism in America and the Keswick Convention in England ("Victorious Life Movement"):

> *Perhaps as the old Egyptian monarchs, in taking over the structures of their predecessors, endeavored to obliterate the signatures of those from whom they had inherited them, these later movements would be glad to have us forget the sources out of which they have sprung. But the names of the earlier Egyptian kings may still be read even in their defaced cartouches, so the name of Oberlin may still be read stamped on movements which do not acknowledge its parentage, but which have not been able to escape altogether from its impress.*[74]

Much of the Keswick Holiness movement's success in America was found not as much in Pentecostal or Wesleyan, but in New School Presbyterian circles. Warfield describes the Presbyterian Mr. Boardman: "'We have one process for acceptance with God,' he says;

---

[70] Cited by Tom Nettles, *A Better Way: Church Growth Through Reformation and Revival," in Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), p. 182.
[71] Hofstadter, p. 115.
[72] Cited by Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 114-115.
[73] Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 135.
[74] Ibid., p. 214.

'that is faith; and another for progress in holiness, that is works. After having found acceptance in Jesus by faith, we think to go on to perfection by strugglings and resolves, by fasting and prayers, not knowing the better way of taking Christ for our sanctification, just as we have already taken him for our justification." Thus, says Warfield, this "is not one indivisible salvation, but is separated into two distinct parts, received by two distinct acts of faith." "When we read it in its intended sense it is as pure a statement of the Wesleyan doctrine of the successive attainment of righteousness and holiness by separate acts of faith as Wesley himself could have penned."[75] Today, its leading popular representatives are still often Presbyterians (Bill Bright, Lloyd Ogilvie, the late Lewis Sperry Chafer). The implications are beyond the scope of this article, but well worth exploring, especially as it anticipates the so-called "lordship controversy" of recent years.

Marsden even notes the New School roots of American Dispensationalism. Samuel Cox, for instance even seems to have arrived at the scheme of seven dispensations prior to C.I. Scofield's famous efforts, but both were Presbyterians. "Even more direct continuity can be demonstrated by the participation of former New School men in the International Prophecy Conferences which marked the first stages of the organized movement that later became known as fundamentalism."[76] Could it not be the case that the Pelagianism that combined with postmillennialism created the Social Gospel, while the merging of Finney and premillennialism led to Dispensational Fundamentalism.

The Old School-New School division within fundamentalist ranks is clearly seen in the rift between J. Gresham Machen and "Old Princeton" Calvinists on the one hand, and Carl McIntire, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and prophetic revivalists on the other. One side was committed to historic Calvinism, the spiritual nature of the church, and Christian liberty; the latter insisted on loose subscription to fundamentals, moral and political crusades, and strict codes of personal conduct. By now, the activist impulse of the New School Presbyterians itself divided between those who supported more liberal causes and those who were more politically and socially conservative. Where originally "New School" meant civil rights for minorities and women as well as prohibition of alcohol and moral legislation, the Social Gospel split into two ideological tendencies, but retained their

---

[75] Ibid., pp. 226-228.

[76] George Marsden, "The New School Heritage and Presbyterian Fundamentalism," in *Pressing Toward The Mark*, op. cit., pp. 177-178. I am not taking issue with Marsden here, but simply widening the influence beyond fundamentalism. If Finney did not directly influence the drift of Presbyterianism toward modernism, he certainly was himself carried along by the same winds that eventually accomplished just that. The perfectionistic impulse, carried over into radical political and social movements, surely assisted in preparing the way for an acceptance of German idealism. That many of the pioneers of "modernism" in the Presbyterian church were simply representing themselves as champions of "evangelical" Christianity over rigorous confessionalism is demonstrated in *The Presbyterian Controversy* by Bradley J. Longfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

common debt to Finney and revivalism. Once more, therefore, we see how much more alike are Modernism and Fundamentalism than either is similar to Old School Calvinism. Neither version of New School thinking could suffer the burden of theological orthodoxy, as it stood in the way of the idea of a Christian America brought about by the enthusiasm and might of interdenominational cooperation and moral campaigns.

But more important than these theological symptoms is the heart of the soteriological "megashift" that has occurred more recently within evangelicalism. Some would argue that so-called "progressive" or "liberal" evangelicals today are simply the Old Liberals of yesteryear. While the theological affinities are certainly there, historically, we have seen that it is possible to be a fundamentalist (revivalistic, millennial, with a literalistic hermeneutic) and every bit as naturalistic or Pelagian in soteriology as any friend of Ritschl.

Finney's legacy is explicitly acknowledged and celebrated in contemporary evangelicalism. Dayton observes, "As late as the 1940s and the 1950s V. Raymond Edman, Wheaton's fourth president, called the Evangelical world back to Finney as 'the most widely known and most successful American evangelist.' Edman's book, *Finney Lives On*, carried an endorsement from Billy Graham." Harvard University Press considered Finney's *Revival Lectures* to be of such significance in shaping American culture that in 1960 they reissued the work in a critical edition.[77] Bethany House Publishers, Revell, Scripture Press, and a host of other evangelical publishers have helped revive an interest in Finney over recent decades and the leaders of the "Jesus Movement" of the 1960s and '70s reappropriated Finney's theology and style for a new generation. Keith Green, Jimmy Swaggart, and Youth With A Mission are among the individuals and groups that have actively promoted the revivalist's theology, while mainstream evangelicalism has continued to regard Finney in heroic terms even when not entirely aware of his theological convictions. In a recent interview, Jerry Falwell claimed Finney as "one of my greatest heroes,"[78] and yet he is also hailed by Christians from the "left."

In February 1990, *Christianity Today* ran a cover story on "The Evangelical Megashift," and a growing flank of evangelical scholars are making adjustments in evangelical theology that appear to be simply extensions of these earlier departures. The practical effects of Finney's legacy are ubiquitous throughout the evangelical empire of voluntary associations that bear his imprint. Evangelistic practices, "seeker-sensitive" approaches, church growth strategies that emphasize technique, political activism on the part of the church, nationalism, moralism, and a host of other interests are directly descended from

[77] Donald W. Dayton, op. cit., p. 15.
[78] Jerry Falwell, interview in *The Horse's Mouth* (September 1994) published by Christians United for Reformation (CURE), in Anaheim, California.

the anthropocentric theology at the heart of Finney's rejection of the Westminster Standards.