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A STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT

OF CHARLES G. PINNEY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Paul Rader
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Submitted to Prof. Robert E. Coleman, Ph.D.
Sollie E. McCreless Professor of Evangelism

Approved by the Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Divinity
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: CHARLES G. FINNEY,
EVANGELIST-THEOLOGIAN

In approaching the study of the life and thought of so unique and fascinating a figure as Charles G. Finney, it is well nigh impossible to resist assigning him a rank as regards his influence in his generation, his century, and the history of the Christian Church. Albert G. Barnes writes of him, "Charles Grandison Finney was a portent, one of the notable figures in the moral history of the nineteenth century, and one of the greatest of modern evangelists." The revivalism of this man of God set in motion currents of spiritual influence that made a transforming impression upon the moral character of the entire nation. His influence continues to be felt to this day. The very least that can be said concerning him is that he cannot be fairly ignored by any conscientious student of evangelicalism. One whose influence played such a large part in the history of the Christian movement during the last century, and did so because of his consuming passion for lost men and his firm reliance upon the faithfulness of God in honoring His Word, such a one

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deserves a thoughtful hearing even in this generation.

I. HIS SIGNIFICANCE AS A RELIGIOUS LEADER

Finney was a man of many parts--school teacher, lawyer, educator, writer, theologian, reformer. But in September of 1821, in the law office of Judge Benjamin Wright, under the mighty baptism of God's Holy Spirit, Finney became an evangelist. This God-ordained vocation became the controlling center of his life, determinative in all that he did thereafter. From the very first, one discerns the providential hand of God preparing this unique instrument for the work of evangelism. His social background, education, mental faculties, habits of thought, even his physical characteristics contributed to making him the mighty winner of souls that he became. He had a majestic and commanding presence. He was six feet, two inches in height and though his frame was stately and imposing he possessed a natural grace of movement. His eyes were expressive and penetrating.

William C. Cochran observed in a Memorial Address at Oberlin,

"His eyes were large and blue, at times mild as an April sky, and at others, cold and penetrating as polished steel. At times they beamed with love and sympathy, at other times they became scrutinizing and inscrutable. . . . When in the full tide of his eloquence, they swept his audience like search lights, fascinating, compelling attention, yet producing strange, uneasy feelings."  

He possessed what F. M. Davenport describes as "almost preternatural influence of suggestion" which he exercised over men's minds. "His power to compel individuals and audiences to his will and purposes was, it seems to me, the most extraordinary that appears in any great evangelist."3

From almost any standpoint, Finney must be considered one of the most effective evangelists in history. That he possessed the evangelists' genius of bringing men to decision, the records give abundant evidence. "The records reveal that in the year 1832 the Presbyterian churches alone received into membership 34,160 persons on confession of faith which they had made in the Finney meetings."4 During his first series of campaigns in England during 1850 and 1851 Finney preached at the Whitefield Tabernacle in London. After several weeks Finney felt that it was time to call for inquirers. Upon inquiring as to the availability of an inquiry room on the premises, the pastor, Dr. Campbell, suggested the infant school room seating approximately forty persons. To the amazement of the incredulous clergyman, Finney proposed to use the British School room, located down the street from the church several rods, which seated some sixteen hundred persons.

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On the night of his first invitation between fifteen and sixteen hundred persons crowded down the lane and into the school room for instruction on accepting Christ.\textsuperscript{5} Hundreds continued to respond during a nine months ministry there, and on some occasions as many as two thousand responded to his invitation.

The sweeping results of his revival in 1831 in Rochester, New York, is perhaps unsurpassed in the history of American revivalism.

The influence of this revival was felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. The great cities especially were moved. It was estimated that more than fifteen hundred towns and cities were blessed with revivals of religion and as many more felt the impulse of the movement. During the first five months fifty thousand were converted, and before the movement had spent its force more than one hundred thousand had been gathered into the churches of the nation.\textsuperscript{6}

"It has been estimated," writes Fred W. Hoffman, "that during his long ministry he was instrumental in leading nearly half a million souls to a saving faith in . . . Christ, in addition to the many thousands who, since his death, have been richly blessed in their spiritual experience through the reading of . . . his published works."\textsuperscript{7}


\textsuperscript{7}Fred W. Hoffman, \textit{Revival Times in America} (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1956), p. 52.
Amazing though these figures may be, far more significant is the way in which God used his servant as perhaps none other in modern times, to transform whole communities through the preaching of the gospel. After about a month of labors in Rome, New York, in 1825, the pastor of the Congregational Church, the Rev. Mr. Gillett, reported:

Worldly business was to a great extent suspended. Religion was a principal subject of conversation in our streets, stores, and even taverns. Merchants' and mechanics' shops were many of them closed in the evening, that all might attend the meeting. All classes of people were affected. Many who had regularly attended worship for twenty years, and lived through revivals unmoved, were now made to tremble and bow before the cross. Four lawyers, four physicians, all the merchants who were not professors before, and men of the first respectability in the place are hopeful converts . . . A marked reformation of morals is too apparent to be denied. The Sabbath is more strictly observed. Intemperance and profane swearing checked. More good feeling in families and neighborhoods prevails. The church is blessed with harmony.  

Forty years subsequent to Finney's ministry in Rochester, New York, Dr. Charles P. Bush remarked on the effect of that great awakening.

It is not too much to say that the whole character of the city was changed by that revival. Most of the leaders of society being converted, and exerting a controlling influence in social life, in business, and in all civil affairs, religion was enthroned as it has been in few other places . . . It always has 'the smell of a field which the Lord hath blest;' and those who know the place best ascribe much of all the good which has characterized it to

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8Beardsley, op. cit., p. 58.
the shaping and controlling influence of that first grand revival. Even the courts and the prisons bore witness to its blessed effects. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterwards.\textsuperscript{9}

Finney had an appeal to a remarkably broad range of persons from frontiersman to the sophisticated intelligentsia of New England. The scope of Finney's appeal was greatly responsible for the extent of his influence as a revivalist. Although he was especially influential in bringing the more wealthy and educated classes to Christ, thousands of laborers, housewives, and children found Christ through his preaching. In 1842 Finney was invited to undertake a second campaign in Rochester, New York, at the request of the lawyers of that city. As a result, nearly all of them were converted.\textsuperscript{10}

There has been some question raised as to the thoroughness of Finney's ministry in conserving the fruits of his labors. This was a grave concern to Finney, and one that strongly influenced him to give serious consideration to the doctrine of sanctification. However, from the first, his ministry was characterized by fruit that remained. A. M. Hills, in speaking of Finney's revivals at Utica and Rome, remarks that of five hundred conversions in one place, there


\textsuperscript{10}Finney, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 359 ff.
was not a case of apostasy after eight months. He concludes, "Probably more thorough conversions never took place under any preacher in the history of the Christian Church."\textsuperscript{11}

The glory of Finney's evangelism was that wherever he labored, God raised up soulwinners from among his converts that continued to multiply the impact of his revivals. From the summer of 1827 until the winter of 1828-29, Finney preached in Philadelphia. In the spring of 1828 the lumbermen who came down the Delaware with their rafts, upon hearing about the revival in Philadelphia, attended some of the meetings. A good number of these men were brought to Christ. When they returned to their lumber camps, they brought with them the message of salvation. In spite of the fact that there were no churches or ministers among them, a revival began that swept for eighty miles along the river. In two years five thousand had been converted solely through the witness of these ignorant lumbermen who had accepted Christ in Finney's meetings at Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1835, Finney accepted an invitation to become professor of Systematic Theology at Oberlin Collegiate Institute in Ohio. For the next forty years of his life, he was connected


\textsuperscript{12}Beardsley, op. cit., p. 87.
with that institution, as professor, and after 1851 as president. The influence of Finney as a Christian educator is not to be underestimated. The prospects at Oberlin upon Finney’s arrival were anything but promising. The institution was located in practically a wilderness. When Finney was invited to come to the institution by Rev. John Shipherd, it was an act of desperation. The institution was at the point of dissolving. By every human standard it was a foolish venture, but Finney felt the hand of God in the endeavor and agreed to go. Although there were only 101 in attendance in 1835 when Finney arrived, in the face of tremendous difficulties, by 1840 the enrollment had risen to 484, mostly through his influence. In 1851 when Professor Finney was made president of the college, the enrollment leaped within a year from 571 to 1020. It continued to remain above the 1000 mark except for a time during the Civil War. Professor Wright observes, "As already shown, the widespread and growing usefulness of Oberlin is preeminently due to Finney’s direct influence upon the community, and upon the successive generations of students who gathered there through the forty years of his connection with the institution."  


14 Beardsley, op. cit., p. 140.
Finney was not without a sense of commission in going to Oberlin. Cheesebro suggests that his primary interest was that young men should be taught how to save souls and conduct revivals.\footnote{Roy Allan Cheesebro, The Preaching of Charles G. Finney (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University Graduate School, 1948), p. 183.} Finney clearly states his purpose in coming to Oberlin.

But I had come to Oberlin, and resided here, for the sake of the students, to secure their conversion and sanctification; and it was only because there was so great a number of them here... that I had remained here from year to year.\footnote{Finney, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 473.}

Finney was convinced of the potential for evangelism at Oberlin. It was always for him, "God's College." In his commencement address of 1851, he reminded the class.

You are not only educated, but educated in God's College—a College reared under God, and for God, by the faith, the prayers, the toils and the sacrifices of God's people. You cannot but know that it has been the sole purpose of the founders and patrons of this College to educate here men and women for God and for God's cause.\footnote{Robert S. Fletcher, \textit{A History of Oberlin College}, vol. I (Chicago: Donelley and Sons, 1943), p. 208.}

In 1859 he wrote from England to Henry Cowles.

No one has written me of any special religious interest there. This oppresses me. I have no hope for Oberlin if their zeal for the conversion of souls and the sanctification of believers abates and subsides. It matters not at all to me how much of money or of students or of anything else they have. The more of these things the worse if the leaders fail to be intently...
aggressive in the direction of spiritual progress... What is to be done to hold the college to the point for which it was established?18

President Finney was not disappointed in his expectations. Oberlin became a center of revival fire. Hundreds of spirit-filled ministers, missionaries, and laymen went out from Oberlin to bless the world. Robert Samuel Fletcher reports, "Not from the fires built by Finney, students and colonists went out to nearby settlements, to the East, to the Far West, to the West Indies, and to Africa to kindle new flames."19

A consideration of the social impact of Finney's ministry follows logically that of his association with Oberlin. For his very association with that institution gives demonstration of his keen interest in the social implications of the gospel he preached. The emphasis of Finney's approach to the gospel made social concern inevitable. Whereas the Calvinism of his day made salvation the end of all human desire, Finney made salvation the beginning of religious experience instead of its end. Converts did not escape life, they began a new life "in the interest of God's Kingdom."20 Richard Niebuhr points out, "He believed... that

18Ibid., p. 209.
19Ibid., p. 213.
20Barnes, op. cit., p. 11.
insofar as men were reconciled to God's will his kingdom had come, and insofar as men were converted from self to God and his interests they brought forth fruits of righteousness in actual social life.\textsuperscript{21} He quotes Finney as speaking concerning the Christian, "As they supremely value the highest good of being, they will and must take a deep interest in whatever is promotive of that end. Hence their spirit is necessarily that of the reformer. For the universal reformation of the world they stand committed."\textsuperscript{22}

Finney never succumbed to the temptation of becoming a mere "social gospeler." "The keynote of Finney's influence upon the antislavery movement was his preaching of immediate repentance and immediate restitution."\textsuperscript{23} The same may be said of every social reform he encouraged. Reform must always be a by-product. The Gospel was to be central.

Theodore Weld, converted under Finney's preaching at Utica, New York, felt that his father in the gospel had not quite fulfilled his obligation to the cause of abolition. In a letter to Weld, McLoughlin points out,

Finney was so excessively optimistic that he said in 1836 that revivalism could peacefully spread abolition across 'the whole land in 2 years.' If only, he pleaded with Weld. ...'the publick mind can be engrossed with the subject of salvation and make abolition an appendage just as we made temperance an appendage of revival in Rochester' the whole problem would be solved. 'Then


\textsuperscript{22}Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{23}bid., p. 156.
100,000 were converted in one year, every one of which was a temperance man. The same w'd be the case in abolition."

It is not without significance that Timothy Smith observes, "Charles G. Finney probably won as many converts to the cause (anti-slavery) as William Lloyd Garrison, even though he shunned the role of a political agitator for that of a winner of souls... Among these were Weld, Arthur Tappan, first president of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and Joshua Leavitt, editor first of The Evangelist, and then of The Emancipator."25

Oberlin College was not only a center of abolitionism, it was a pioneer in the cause of Women's Rights. It was the first institution in this country to open its doors on an equal basis to men and women. It was the first college to grant a bachelor of arts degree to women upon completion of the full classical course.

Finney's second wife was active in conducting woman's meetings for prayer and instruction during his second tour of England and in subsequent labors in Boston. Participation


In speaking and praying by women was encouraged. There is little doubt that this practice gave an initial impulse to the cause of woman suffrage.\textsuperscript{26} Kenneth Scott Latourette develops the association of Finney with the movement. He points out that Elizabeth Cady Stanton was profoundly influenced by Finney, and married one of his converts.\textsuperscript{27}

A substantial thesis could be written on the social impact of the Finney revivals. Indeed, one might be written on his influence in the cause of Abolitionism in the United States during the last century.\textsuperscript{28}

The abiding influence of Finney is due largely to his ability and productiveness as a writer. If he had written nothing except the \textit{Revival Lectures}, he would have established himself as an author of permanent significance in the evangelical movement. The \textit{Revival Lectures} have not only borne a formative influence upon thousands of individual Christian workers with regard to revivals, but they have been the direct cause of precipitating unusual movements of the Spirit for more than one hundred years. Their acceptance


and wide-spread usefulness was almost immediate, and continue to the present time.

As early as 1835, a certain Aaron Williams forwarding his first report from his new appointment in the Congregational Church at Pontiac, Michigan, comments concerning the influence of the Lectures.

On Monday I visited the 'Mt. Morris Settlement'. . . They are a most interesting people, as are also those at Grand Blanc. They came fresh from the New York revivals, and still retain much of the spirit. Both churches hold 'reading meetings' on the Sabbath. They are now reading Finney's 'Lectures on Revivals,' and it might be gratifying to Mr. F. to know that his thrilling appeals are heard and felt with little less interest away here in the wilds of Michigan than in Chatham St. Chapel itself. . . .

A bibliography of Finney's published works includes at least fourteen substantial volumes including two volumes of Systematic Theology. Besides these, Finney published numerous smaller booklets, tracts, and pamphlets. From the commencement of his ministry at Oberlin, the Oberlin Evangelist, followed by the Oberlin Review, became his larger voice in proclaiming the truth of the gospel. He contributed scores of articles and letters to both publications from 1838 until early in the 1870's.

Unfortunately, only three of his works are in print presently. The Lectures on Revivals of Religion and Memoirs

of Charles G. Finney are still being published by the Fleming H. Revell Co. Finney's Guide to the Saviour or Conditions of Attaining to and Abiding in Entire Holiness of Heart and Life, first published in 1849, has been reprinted under the editorship of William E. Allen, in England, with the title Sanctification.

The foregoing brief introduction to the broad scope of Finney's influence in the work of the Kingdom seeks to provide a background understanding of the lasting worth of his ministry against which will be projected a study of his systematic theology concerning especially the doctrine of sanctification. When a man of Finney's accomplishments and influence turns theologian, his mature understanding of Christian doctrine deserves a careful hearing.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS THEOLOGY

Finney's point of view in all his theological positions was eminently practical. It always related the truths of Christian doctrine to the supreme task of saving the lost and establishing them in the way of holiness. He was a man of single purpose. "But one great thing ministers need, and that is singleness of eye." he declared.\(^\text{30}\) To win souls was

\(^{30}\text{Finney, op. cit., p. 88.}\)
his commission and consuming purpose. It was determinative in all that he thought, did, or preached. The maintaining of his intellectual respectability was of no concern. He had no desire to court the favor of the more influential theological schools. At the same time he was not motivated by any desire to become a reformer in theology. Finney needed a theology that worked--a theology that got results in the work of evangelism. His theology was not merely the theology of an evangelist, but as perhaps none other since Apostolic times, his was a theology of evangelism. President James H. Fairchild, who succeeded Finney as president of Oberlin College makes the following significant statement concerning Finney's theology.

He came to the study of the Bible and the doctrines of the gospel with the same freedom of judgment and of rational instinct with which he had apprehended and embraced the principles of law, and looked for a similar self-evident truthfulness. ... The strong conviction, beginning with his conversion, and abiding with him to the end, that he must look to Divine rather than to human guidance, naturally disposed him to mark out a path for himself; ... The mission to which he felt himself appointed was that of saving men; and he rejected the old forms of doctrine because they were a hindrance and not a help in his work. He needed doctrines which he could preach, and which would move the consciences of men. ... On his knees, before his open Bible, sustained by the prayers and sympathy of one good elder, he wrought out his theological system -- not that he might become a reformer in theology, but that he might qualify himself as 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

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31 Reminiscences, pp. 78-80.
In the providence of God, Finney came to the study of theology unhampered by the theological prejudices of his times. Had he subjected himself to the stultifying preachments of the Old School we may never have heard of him. He had no one's favor to curry, no presuppositions to uphold, no prejudices to hinder him. His background in the study of law had trained him in independence of thought. A. M. Hills observes,

He got a theology forged on the anvil of prayer, drawn from the Bible, the fountain of truth, with the Holy Ghost for his theological Instructor, as he knelt above the sacred page before God. It made Finney an independent, reverent, Spirit-taught, Bible-filled giant in theology. It prepared a mailed warrior for the pulpit, able to hew down the Agagis and Anaks of sin, and to slay right and left the enemies of God.32

Finney possessed a logical pattern of thinking that was largely responsible for his great effectiveness in convincing the minds and moving the wills of the more educated classes. He had a singular ability to reason through a situation and shut up his listeners to the inevitable conclusions of his inescapable logic. Even his intrepid critic, Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton admitted that once his basic premises were granted, his conclusions could not be escaped. He termed his logic "relentless."33 The

32 Hills, op. cit., p. 35.
33 Ibid., p. 39.
theological conclusions of a Spirit-filled theologian with a practical, logical bent of mind are of singular importance. Especially is it so when that theologian has been blessed with such unusual effectiveness, not only in bringing men to a decision for Christ, but in establishing them in a holiness that continues to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The significance of a study of Charles G. Finney's doctrine of sanctification is grounded in these considerations.

The doctrine of sanctification represents Finney's most mature thought. Finney tells specifically when he first gave consideration to the possibility of sanctification as effecting holiness of life in a work of grace subsequent to conversion, in an article in the Oberlin Evangelist, in 1839. "The question in this shape had never come fairly and fully before my mind as a subject of distinct consideration till the last winter of my residence in New York."34 Although Finney had from the first proclaimed the necessity of holiness of life, and also the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he never gave consistent formulation to his views until after he came to Oberlin in 1835.

Finney's teaching with regard to the doctrine of sanctification is significant, too, because of his influence with

34Charles G. Finney, "The Promises"—no. 5 (2 Peter 1:4), The Oberlin Evangelist, July 17, 1839, pp. 121-124.
this regard upon Methodism and the Holiness Movement in general. It was the preaching of Finney and the Oberlin School that kept alive concern for the doctrine of sanctification at a time when Methodism was largely neglecting it.\footnote{Merrill F. Gaddis, \textit{Christian Perfectionism in America} (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1989), p. 310.} Merrill E. Gaddis states that Oberlin became, in a real sense, the successor to the Methodist Episcopal Church in the proclamation of Christian Perfection. "Finney was regarded as a kind of reincarnation of Wesley by members of the holiness parties and small Methodistic sects which began to take form in this period, clamoring for a restoration of primitive Methodism."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 376.}

It is not surprising that the Wesleyan Methodist perfectionists in 1843, the Oneida perfectionists in 1848, and the Free Methodist perfectionists in 1860 were organized in what Gaddis describes as "the burnt-over district of the perfectionist, Finney."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 317.}

The extensive influence of the Oberlin school with its outspoken advocacy of sanctification especially through the ministry of Finney and Asa Mahan, tended to stamp the doctrine with their particular interpretation even in Methodist circles.
Finney and Mahan, though opposed at this point (sanctification as an instantaneous work), by their Presbyterian and Congregational confreres, were outspoken advocates of Christian perfection in a period when it was neglected in many sectors of American Methodism. They came, therefore, to be considered as champions of the doctrine among Methodist groups similarly interested in its promotion. Their Reformed interpretation tended to become the standard view even in these quarters.  

Finney became a voice for the Holiness Movement during the latter part of his ministry. Although he was not totally Wesleyan in his view, his advocacy of the possibility of living without sin through the sanctifying work of Christ, kept the matter vivid in the minds of God's people and resulted in a great revival of interest in the doctrine during the last half of the nineteenth century. The Holiness Movement in the United States must forever acknowledge its indebtedness to the ministry of Charles G. Finney. Few men paid more dearly for their faithful proclamation of what they conceived to be the whole truth of God.

Although Finney had great influence upon the Wesleyan groups with regard to the doctrine of sanctification, Warfield connects him historically with the development of the Higher Life Movement as seen in the Keswick Conferences of England.

especially through Asa Mahan. "If Oberlin Perfectionism is dead, it has found its grave not in the abyss of non-existence, but in the Higher Life Movement, the Keswick Movement, the Victorious Life Movement, and other kindred forms of perfectionist teaching."39

In consideration, then, of the stature of Charles G. Finney as an evangelist, educator, social reformer, author, and theologian, in consideration of his distinctive theology of evangelism, and of his influence upon both the Wesleyan Holiness Movement and other perfectionist movements finding their rootage in the Reformed tradition, it is purposed to engage in a study of his doctrine of sanctification in life and teaching.

III. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

An attempt has been made to capture the major thrust of Finney's thought with regard to sanctification. There are certain problems involved in undertaking this study. Finney's doctrine of sanctification showed definite development throughout his life. As a result there are certain areas of ambiguity if not outright contradiction in his works. However, the major emphasis of his teaching was to the greatest

extent consistent. Although Finney possessed the evangelist's genius of dogmatic and confident preaching, in those areas where his thought was still in a process of development, he did not claim absolute consistency. In the preface to his Systematic Theology first published in 1846 Finney gives an illuminating statement concerning the development of his views.

True Christian consistency does not consist in stereotyping our opinions and views, and in refusing to make any improvement lest we should be guilty of change... I hold myself sacredly bound, not to defend these positions at all events, but on the contrary, to subject every one of them to the most thorough discussion, and to hold and treat them as I would the opinions of any one else... True Christian consistency implies progress in knowledge and holiness, and such changes in theory and in practice as are demanded by increasing light.

On the strictly fundamental questions in theology, my views have not, for many years, undergone any change, except as I have a clearer apprehension of them than formerly. 40

Beardsley says of him that it was vain to bring against his more enlightened view some former argument or statement of his own. "He would smilingly reply to any such suggestion, 'Well, I don't agree with Finney on that point.' It was his aim to be right rather than consistent." 41 Within the limitations imposed by taking into consideration the development of


41 Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, p. 142.
Finney's thought, it is thought possible to get at the basic content of his teaching as seen in his life and thought.

The plan of this thesis has been to treat first Finney's personal experiences as related to the development of his thought. In Chapter Three the theological presuppositions of his doctrine of sanctification have been reviewed. Chapter Four has sought to present the heart of Finney's theological system with regard to the doctrine of sanctification. Chapter Five has been concerned with "Results and Reactions" to Finney's preaching of Christian holiness. The final chapter has presented some closing observations, summary, and conclusions.

This study has limited itself to a consideration of Finney's doctrine of sanctification as understood to involve a definite work of God in the heart of man, subsequent to conversion. In the development of his thought, 'sanctification' becomes a very broad term. In the earlier years of his ministry and indeed throughout his ministry in one sense, it meant obedience to God, or referred to those aspects of religious experience that result in conformity to the will of God. In this sense, it has been seen, Finney believed sanctification to be a concomitant if not a condition of justification. Mankind is to be saved from their sins, not in their sins. A brief discussion regarding this aspect of Finney's thought has been developed in connection with the
chapter presenting a theological consideration of his doctrine of sanctification. But only in an attempt to clear the ground for an understanding of his teaching concerning entire or 'permanent sanctification' in the more Wesleyan aspects of that term. The author freely admits to Wesleyan persuasion concerning the doctrine under consideration. While this predisposition may have posed difficulties and limited the usefulness of the study, it is hoped that an approach from a Wesleyan background has, indeed, been a factor in whatever unique value this study may possess.

IV. PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROBLEM

Perhaps a word should be appended regarding the work that has been done in the field. Several biographies written for popular consumption with a definitely evangelical and warm devotional spirit have been published within the last ten or fifteen years. Charles G. Finney, He Prayed Down Revivals by Basil Miller, published by Zondervan in 1941; Man of Like Passions: A Dramatic Biography of Charles G. Finney by Richard E. Day, published by Zondervan in 1942; and Finney Lives On by President V. Raymond Edman of Wheaton, published by Fleming H. Revell in 1951, are dependent almost entirely upon Finney's Memoirs and George F. Wright's definitive work for their material. The last of these also contains excerpts from Finney's Lectures on Revivals, and Lectures to Professing Christians. Perhaps the standard biography of Finney
is that of George P. Wright, professor at Oberlin during Finney's administration. The volume is not only a first-hand account of the man and his work, but is one of the few biographies that gives any adequate treatment of his theology. It was published by the Riverside Press in 1893. The most valuable recent biography is Frank G. Beardsley's, A Mighty Winner of Souls. Charles G. Finney: A Study in Evangelism, published by the American Tract Society, 1937. It contains a good deal of material that is the result of independent research in primary sources.

Two unpublished Ph.D. dissertations have been the most helpful secondary sources in the preparation of this study. Perhaps the most thorough study of Finney available is The Preaching of Charles G. Finney, by Roy Alan Cheesbro. Submitted to the faculty at Yale University in 1948, it is based upon extensive research in primary sources, including especially correspondence regarding Finney. It gives quite full treatment to Finney's theology, and an especially helpful presentation of his thought regarding sanctification.

Merrill E. Gaddis' Christian Perfectionism in America, available on micro-film, was submitted to the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1929. It was especially helpful regarding Finney's influence on the Perfectionist movement in American history. The work, in placing Finney in the historical sequence of perfectionists, is helpful in developing a
study of the influences on Finney's thought. The bibliographies in both these dissertations have proven indispensible, especially that of Cheesebro.

Two more general works on the history of revivalism, while representing careful scholarship, are most inadequate in their appreciation of the supernatural element in Finney's ministry: Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, and William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism, published in 1958.
In the public records of Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut, there is reference to Josiah Finney as one of the earliest settlers. The organization of the local Congregational Church was effected at his residence in 1756. The wife of Josiah was Sarah Curtiss, a sister of Major Eleazer Curtiss of Revolutionary fame. Their first child, Sylvester, born March 15, 1759, became a soldier in the Revolutionary army. In 1779 he married Rebecca Rice of Kent. The seventh child of this couple, born in Warren, August 29, 1792, reflected the literary fashion of his time in receiving the baptismal name of 'Charles Grandison,' after one of the characters in Richardson's novels.¹

When Charles was about two, his family, following the prevalent tide of emigration, moved to the wilderness of Central New York, to Hanover in Oneida County. They remained here, amid the privations of pioneer life common to those days, until Charles was sixteen years old. Wright records,

It was the days of the stage-coach and post-horse... The country was covered with a dense forest in which clearings were made by slow and painful effort. There were but

¹Wright, op. cit., pp. 1-2.
few churches and fewer ministers; so that Finney in his boyhood heard very little preaching, and that mostly by uneducated and ignorant men.\(^2\)

About 1808 the family moved to Henderson, Jefferson County, on the shore of Lake Ontario. After completing such studies as could be taken in the rural schools, young Finney attended, for two years, Hamilton Oneida Institute, at Clinton, New York, only a few miles from his father's farm in Oneida County.\(^3\)

The next four years Finney taught at Henderson, two months in summer, and three months in the winter. In 1812, Finney, after abandoning a former intention to join the Navy, went to Warren, Connecticut to attend academy for two years. He supported himself by working on his uncle's farm in summer and conducting a singing school in winter. He had intended to take a full course at Yale, but his teacher, a Yale graduate, persuaded him that it would be a waste of time. He assured him that with the habits of study which he had acquired, he would be able in two years to complete privately the four years work required for graduation. As a result, Finney spent the next two years teaching in New Jersey, returning to Warren from time to time to report progress to his teacher. Although

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 3.

\(^3\)Beardsley, *A Mighty Winner of Souls*, p. 12.
not a college graduate, he acquired a working knowledge of the ancient languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

After an absence of four years, he returned to New York State. Due to the illness of his mother, and the opportunities of his father, he was persuaded to relinquish his plans of joining his former teacher in the establishment of an academy in the South. After deliberating at length as to his future, he finally entered the office of Judge Benjamin Wright, the leading attorney in that section of the state, to study for the legal profession. Thus he came to Adams, Jefferson County, New York, in 1818. At Adams he was invited to take over the direction of the choir at the Presbyterian Church. In this capacity he came under the ministry of the Rev. George W. Gale, a Princeton graduate, and a Calvinist of the Old School. Two years later, Finney was admitted to the bar, and began a highly successful practice in association with Judge Wright.

Referring to the time of his arrival at Adams in 1818, Finney comments on his religious background.

Up to this time I had never enjoyed what might be called religious privileges. I had never lived in a praying community, except during the periods when I was attending the high school in New England; and the religion

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in that place was of a type not at all calculated to arrest my attention. . . I was almost as ignorant as a heathen. I had been brought up mostly in the woods. I had very little regard to the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth.

Merrill E. Gaddis develops the thesis that Finney's frontier background had a formative influence upon the development of his thought.

It may be said that his life was the incarnation of frontier reaction against Calvinistic determinism and imperfectionism. . . This revolt brought him into continual disagreement with his pastor, tutor. . . So complete was Finney's reaction against Calvinism that it virtually made a semi-Pelagian out of him in his thought of human ability. The fact that his home was not one dominated by religious traditions made it possible for the liberating influences of frontier life to have right of way in his development.

It is at least certain that Finney's background developed in him intellectual independence. The very fact that the great bulk of his higher education was gained in private study trained him to think for himself. The frontier spirit was enough a part of his nature so that he had little concern for the negative opinions of others when once convinced of the truth of his deductions.

It is important to recognize that Finney came to the subject of his own personal salvation independent of preconceived notions. As will be seen, the religion that he had

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7Gaddis, op. cit., pp. 313-315.
come in contact with he rejected as inadequate. The only framework upon which he built his theology was that constituted by his knowledge of Scripture, and his own personal experience of the grace of God. This is basic to an understanding of the development of Finney's thought.

One other factor in Finney's early life should be pointed out as bearing a formative influence upon his later thought, that is, his legal training. Finney developed keen powers of analysis and logical explication that he later lay under tribute to his preaching ministry. He was persuaded, as a result of his study of law, that truth must be reasonable. If it was indeed truth, it would commend itself to man's logical faculties.

II. CONVERSION

In giving the account of his conversion in the "Memoirs," Finney sums up in a single sentence several of those influences that were instrumental in bringing him to repentance and faith in Christ. He writes, "But as I read my Bible and attended the prayer meetings, heard Mr. Gale preach, and conversed with him, with the elders of the church, and with others from time to time, I became very restless." In studying

law Finney had noticed the frequent references to the Mosaic Institutes, and so bought a Bible out of curiosity. After some time in study of the Word of God, Finney records, "My mind became quite settled that whatever mystification there might be either in my own or in my pastor's mind, or in the mind of the church, the Bible was, nevertheless, the true word of God." ⁹

Although Finney affirms that the lack of faith on the part of those attending the prayer meetings at the church was a "sad stumbling-block" to him, yet the very fact that they were faithful in prayer stimulated his interest and inquiry into the condition of his own soul. Mr. Gale, pastor of the local church, while a pious and faithful clergyman, seemed to make little positive contribution to Finney's understanding of Christian truth. Being of the Old School, his conclusions did not seem reasonable to the young lawyer. However, Gale made it a point to visit often with Finney. Those interviews, which Finney reports failed to satisfy his mind with respect to truth, did serve to stimulate his own mind to inquiry.

After two or three years, Finney writes, "I was brought face to face with the question whether I would accept Christ as presented in the Gospel, or pursue a worldly course of life." The Spirit of God was mightily dealing with his heart. "At

⁹Ibid., p. 11.
this period, my mind, as I have since known, was so much impressed by the Holy Spirit, that I could not long leave this question unsettled; nor could I long hesitate between the two courses of life presented to me."\textsuperscript{10} On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821 Finney determined to settle the question. He gave himself to diligent study of the Word and prayer. It was Wednesday morning before Finney, oppressed by a consciousness of his own sin and obligation to God, went to a nearby woods to pray. His pride and evident fear of man only served to deepen his conviction. At the point of desperation, the Spirit began to bring to his mind the words of Scripture.

"They did not seem so much to fall into my intellect as into my heart, to be put within the grasp of the voluntary powers of my mind; and I seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man."\textsuperscript{11} The burden of sin was lifted, and Finney made his way back to the village, as yet unaware of his acceptance with God.

After helping Judge Wright for most of the day in moving to another location, at dark, Finney was left alone in the offices. Here he had a vision of Christ and an experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that merits a rather full

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 17.
report in his own words. It was the turning point in his whole life. In large measure, all that Finney ever did afterwards had its source in this transforming encounter with the Spirit of God.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in... it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears.

After remaining in this state for some time Finney's mind calmed, and he returned to the front office where he discovered the fire had nearly burned out. He continues.

But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me... the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, 'I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.'

In spite of the intensity of this experience, a passing thought of doubt so troubled his mind that he retired without feeling sure that his peace was made with God. When he awoke in the morning the baptism of the previous night was renewed.
I arose upon my knees in the bed and wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. It seemed as if this morning's baptism was accompanied with a gentle reproof, and the Spirit seemed to say to me, 'Will you doubt?'...I cried, 'No! I will not doubt; I cannot doubt,' He then cleared the subject up so much to my mind that it was in fact impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul.

In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience...My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned.12

It cannot be doubted that Finney was at this time gloriously born again of the spirit of God. He himself testifies, "I felt myself justified by faith."13 But was there more than the experience of justification involved in Finney's experience? Was he, in fact, baptized with the Holy Spirit, at this early time? Was he sanctified at the time of his conversion?

Finney himself seems to have equated this experience with the witness of the Spirit to his justification. He describes the whole experience as "this experience of justification." It should be noted that he refers here to the "mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit." As will be seen later, Finney taught a second definite experience involving the baptism by the Holy Spirit that should be sought by all Christians. His writings imply that he considered this anointing at the time

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12 Ibid., pp. 20-23.
13 Loc. cit.
of his conversion as just that baptism. The problem arises, however, in the fact that Finney did not seek this work of the Spirit. He had no knowledge that such an experience was possible to believers. The anointing of the Spirit came upon him unexpected and unsolicited. Finney's later teaching emphasised the claiming of the baptism of the Spirit by faith. Believers were to seek the baptism of the Spirit as a special gift of God, to be received upon the fulfillment of definite conditions.14

A. W. Hills concludes that Finney's baptism with the Spirit was a unique and sovereign act of God.

In this instance God seems to have stepped beyond the bounds of His ordinary method of conferring the great gift. Finney was the instrument God wanted, and He used His sovereign right to deal with him spiritually after an unusual manner, and equip him at once for matchless service.15

Finney himself may have similarly explained the experience.

It is reasonably certain that Finney did not consider this experience his sanctification except in a general sense. He does declare, "so far as I could see I was in a state in which I did not sin."16 But this was no more than he expected


15 Hills, op. cit., p. 21.

16 Finney, op. cit., p. 23.
in the conversion experience of every believer. He taught a yet higher state of grace that brought with it a continuance and establishment in this state of holiness. The baptism of the Spirit was usually to be a concomitant or seal of this experience. At this point, however, Finney is not always consistent. He often preached the necessity of the Spirit's baptism without any mention of attaining thereby entire sanctification. There is little doubt that while for Finney the experience of the Spirit's anointing at the time of his conversion was certainly a witness to his acceptance with God, it involved an establishing and equipping for service. One may be sure, at least, that whatever its doctrinal or theoretical significance, it had this effect, as the succeeding record of Finney's ministry gives abundant evidence.

It must be further inquired as to what influence Finney's experience of conversion had upon his later thought. It was at this time that Finney settled the matter of his confidence in the Scriptures. From this confidence he never wavered. His experience of the grace of God confirmed his conviction that the Bible was indeed the very Word of God. Further, the definite nature of his conversion and the witness of the Spirit to his justification led him to believe in and teach what might

17 Cheesbro, op. cit., p. 214.

be termed a 'Know So' salvation. He believed it the privilege of every Christian to know that his sins were forgiven and that he had been accepted with God. When Finney emerged from that experience he affirmed that it was indeed impossible for him to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of his soul and that his sins had been forgiven. This assurance he believed to be the birthright of every believer.

In the light of his own experience conversion came to involve for Finney a radical change of moral character. God did not justify sinners. That is, justification must be concomitant with regeneration, an operation that set men on a plane of holy living. As was noted, Finney felt that he was in a state in which he did not sin after his conversion. His own experience certainly lay back of the fact that his theology left no place for wilful sin in the Christian life.

But this much must be understood and admitted, that to overcome sin is the rule with every one who is born of God, and that sin is only the exception; that the regenerate habitually live without sin and fall into sin only at intervals, so few and far between, that in strong language it may be said in truth they do not sin.19

Finally, after his transforming introduction to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Finney continued to evidence a constant dependence upon the Spirit's operation in the work of evangelism. He himself had been acquainted with the conviction,

19 Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 317.
reproof, instruction, regeneration, baptism and assurance of the Holy Spirit in his conversion. It is not unusual that the accounts of his early ministry are filled with references to the effective working of the Spirit of God. Of the first day after his conversion he writes concerning those to whom he witnessed that, "The Spirit of God made lasting impressions upon every one of them...a few words, spoken to an individual, would stick in his heart like an arrow." So it is seen, that Finney's conversion experience seems to have influenced his later thought in at least four areas. It established his confidence in the Scriptures as the very word of God. It led him to preach that every believer might know that he is accepted of God. It determined his setting holiness as the standard of the Christian life, from the beginning. It influenced him to consistently lay strong emphasis upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

III. EARLY MINISTRY

In the account of Finney's earliest ministry one notices constant reference to the Holy Spirit as the persuading, directing, and transforming force. While preaching at a German settlement near Evans Mills, his first appointment under the Female Missionary Society, he records that his 'pointed

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20 Finney, Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, p. 29.
remarks' were made effective by "the power of the Holy Ghost."
"The Sword of the Lord slew them on the right hand and on the left."  
While preaching at DeKalb in 1825 a certain elder prayed at the communion table confessing his sins. "The Holy Ghost fell upon him immediately, and filled him as full as he could hold. . . There was a spontaneous movement by the Holy Ghost in convicting and converting sinners. . . Great pressure of the Holy Spirit (was) upon the minds of Christians."  

The major lines along which his theology was later developed were laid down early in his evangelistic ministry. They were not the philosophical speculations of the arm-chair theologian but rather the working gospel of an evangelist in the heat of the battle. Fortunately, Finney recorded the doctrinal emphasis of his preaching at Gouvernor in 1825 just four years after his conversion. The doctrines preached, he affirms, were those that he preached everywhere. The listing is most enlightening as it provides a concise statement of the principle points in his theology. 

The total moral, voluntary depravity of unregenerate man; the necessity of a radical change of heart, through the truth, by the agency of the Holy Ghost; the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; his vicarious atonement, equal to the wants of all mankind; the gift,

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divinity and agency of the Holy Ghost; repentance, faith, justification by faith, sanctification by faith; persistence in holiness as a condition of salvation. . .23

At least two of these points are of special significance for this study: the gift of the Holy Ghost, and sanctification by faith. If this listing is to be trusted, and is not an unconscious projection of the later development of his theology, Finney was teaching sanctification as a definite work of God in the heart received by faith within four years of his conversion. Unfortunately, we have no access to any further exposition of his early understanding of the doctrine of sanctification. It was not until he went to Oberlin in 1835 that he began to elaborate systematic views on the subject.

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF OBERLIN

A brief summary of the locations of Finney's efforts during the first twelve years of his ministry has been included in this thesis as Appendix A. It was primarily from these first years of intensive evangelistic effort, that Finney gained his renown as a revivalist. The tremendous impact of his revivals at Rome and Utica, at Philadelphia, Troy, Rochester, Boston, and New York is unsurpassed in the history of revivalism. In 1832, because of his own health that made continuance in intensive revivalism impossible, and in consideration of his

23Ibid., p. 134.
growing family, Finney accepted the pastorate of the Second Free Presbyterian Church located in the Chatham Street Theater in New York City. His ministry there was so unusually blessed of the Spirit of God that by 1833 it was necessary to construct what became known as the Broadway Tabernacle especially for Finney. He resigned the pastorate of the Second Free Church and became pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle which was organized as a Congregational church.

However, within a year it was necessary for Finney to take a trip to the Mediterranean in order to recover his health. After six months he returned to the Tabernacle and began preaching his Revival Lectures, published in the *New York Evangelist*, and later collected in the volume of *Revival Lectures*. About this time Finney was invited to go to Oberlin Collegiate Institute as professor of Systematic Theology. On the condition that he might return to Broadway Tabernacle five or six months out of the year, Finney accepted the position. He arrived with his family at Oberlin in the summer of 1835.

There were several reasons why Finney abandoned the security of a prospering pastorate in the nation's largest city for the uncertain future of laboring in an unknown college on the edge of the frontier. The first was the challenge of training young men for a Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry. Some fifty students had been expelled from Lane Seminary in Cincinnati because of their stand on abolition. They
agreed to come to Oberlin if Finney would become the professor of theology. Cheesebro writes that Finney's primary interest "was that young men should be taught how to save souls and conduct revivals. And this he thought should be done in their seminary training." A second factor in Finney's changing his base of operations was his health, which had continually worsened. The welfare of his family was a final consideration that influenced his decision. Finney's residence in Oberlin proved to be a major factor in the development of his doctrine of sanctification. He did not go there devoid of interest in the possibilities of holiness of heart and life. He later stated that he intended by coming to Oberlin to secure the conversion and sanctification of the students.

When Finney first arrived in Oberlin, lacking a suitable hall for preaching services, he brought with him a large circular tent. It is not without significance that at the top of the center pole was a blue streamer on which was printed in bold white letters, "Holiness Unto The Lord." Those words were destined to become, in a fresh and conclusive sense, the watchword of Finney's ministry in the years that followed.

The very atmosphere at Oberlin was conducive to the

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24 Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 183.
study of Christian Perfection and an exploration of the higher possibilities of grace. James H. Fairchild wrote, "There was only here and there a sinner to be converted; hence the religious activity naturally took the direction of the elevation of the standard of religious experience." President Mahan had shown considerable interest in the doctrine of sanctification. Under the preaching of Finney he came into what Finney himself described as "manifestly an entirely new form of Christian experience."

The first practical discussion of the question as to what degree of holiness Christians might hope to attain, was begun in the summer of 1836 by a group of students who planned to become missionaries. About a dozen at that time entered into a solemn covenant to do the will of God with all their hearts. In the autumn, a few days after President Mahan entered into his "new form of Christian experience", the question was raised again by one of the Lane rebels, Sereno W. Streeter. "When we look to Christ for sanctification, what degree of sanctification may we expect from Him? May we look to him to be sanctified wholly, or not?"

26Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 191.
28Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 193. Finney adds to the question, "Sanctification in such a sense that Christians could have unbroken peace, and not come into condemnation, or have the feeling of condemnation or a consciousness of sin." Finney, op. cit., p. 351.
Finney comments, "What occurred at this meeting brought the question of sanctification promptly before us, as a practical question." While no definite answer seems to have been immediately forthcoming, Fletcher records the response of President Mahan.

President Mahan was especially impressed by the enquiry and, after much thought and prayer, he propounded to the people of Oberlin the doctrine of 'Christian Perfection' or 'Sanctification'. Christ, he replied to the young man, will give you a complete victory over temptation as He gives pardon for sins committed. Christ, if you let Him, will sanctify you in this life and help you to live sinlessly and attain to 'Christian Perfection' before death.

Finney affirms that at that time, "We had no theories on the subject, no philosophy to maintain, but simply took it up as a Bible question . . . nor did we attempt to explain its philosophy until years afterward." Although Finney did not experience any unusual working of the Spirit at this time, it is from this occasion that we must date his intensified concern with the idea of sanctification.

In the spring of 1836 Finney had begun his "Lectures to Professing Christians" at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York. His mind had been deeply troubled at the indications of declining spirituality and increasing conformity to the

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29 Finney, op. cit., p. 351.
30 Fletcher, op. cit., p. 224.
31 Finney, op. cit., p. 251.
standards of the world. The first eleven sermons in the 
Lectures to Professing Christians, delivered in the spring 
of 1836, indicate his grave concern for the state of reli-
gion. Sermon III dealt with "Doubtful Actions." Sermon V 
describes "True Saints," Sermon VIII decries "Conformity to 
the World." Finney was persuaded that something was neces-
sary to establish his converts in holiness of life.

After I had been settled two or three years in the 
city of New York, and had labored, almost exclusively, 
for the conversion of sinners, I was fully convinced, 
that converts would die—that the standard of piety would 
never be elevated—that revivals would become more and 
more superficial, and finally cease, unless something 
effectual was done to elevate the standard of holiness 
in the Church.32

But when he returned to the Broadway Tabernacle in the 
Fall of 1836, there was a new ring of confidence and gladness 
in his lectures. It seemed that he had found the solution for 
the ills of the Church. Sermon XVII treated "Sanctification 
by Faith." Sermons XIX and XX were statements of his conclu-
sions regarding the doctrine of "Christian Perfection."

Another factor tended to drive Finney to a study of 
the truth of Christian Perfection at about this same time. 
Strong abolitionist views of Finney and of the school had 
aroused enmity of many Ohioans. The school was largely de-
pendent for its support upon the heavy endowment of Finney's 
wealthy eastern friends. When the Panic of 1837 descended

32 Charles G. Finney, Second letter "To the Christian 
Readers of the Oberlin Evangelist", The Oberlin Evangelist, 
this source of income was almost completely cut off. Oberlin was near the closing of its doors as the income continued to dwindle and the debts increased. Poverty gripped the school. Gaddis records that "Finney's family at times practically faced starvation. Out of the heart-searchings of this period his systematic thinking on Christian perfection arose."33

After arriving at the doctrine of sanctification by faith, Finney was so convinced of its soundness and of its ability to meet the pressing needs of the Church, that he said he felt "as strongly, and unequivocally pressed by the Spirit of God, to labor for the sanctification of the Church, as I once did for the conversion of sinners."34 In a letter to the Oberlin Evangelist, January 1, 1839, Finney registered his desire to impart a "second benefit" to the churches where he had formerly labored.35 This did not mean that he felt that he should abandon completely his former emphasis on conversion in behalf of the "second benefit." His preaching message had simply expanded to include the objective of leading the church to a higher level of Christian living.

33 Gaddis, op. cit., p. 320.
34 Finney, loc. cit.
After some five years as part-time pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, Finney resigned his association with the New York congregation and thereafter spent the long winter vacation in the evangelistic field. In 1841 he preached in Boston, and the following year at the invitation of the lawyers of the city, Finney labored once again in Rochester, New York. In the fall of 1843 he was again invited to Boston.

While laboring in Boston at the Marlborough Chapel during that winter, Finney writes, "The Lord gave my own soul a very thorough overhauling, and a fresh baptism of his Spirit." He underwent a crisis operation of the Holy Spirit that made a lasting impression upon the whole level of his spiritual life. If it is to be believed that Finney had not experienced a sanctifying baptism of the Spirit of God in the Wesleyan sense up to this time, it is certain that he lay hold of that experience during these days of spiritual "overhauling." A. M. Hills commented on the significance of this experience. "To those of us who are acquainted with the literature of holiness, it is perfectly evident that this experience which Finney passed through in Boston was a sanctifying baptism with the Holy Ghost." Although it is impossible to dramatically affirm that Finney here entered into that higher grace of which

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37 Hills, op. cit., p. 155.
he had been preaching for some seven years, throughout the narration of the events of that epochal renovation of the Spirit, Finney gives clues that indicate his persuasion that he had entered into a state of entire sanctification.

In the autobiography some twelve pages are devoted to a careful recording of his spiritual exercises during this winter and the effect of that fresh anointing. He begins by telling that his mind had been greatly drawn out in prayer for a long time. "But this winter," he records, "my mind was exceedingly exercised on the question of personal holiness." Often during this intense season of soul searching he would spend as many as four hours at a time in prayer, rising at four in the morning, and continuing until breakfast. His days were spent, so far as he could get time, in searching the Scriptures. He read nothing else, all that winter, but the Bible, a great deal of which seemed new to him.

About this time, he writes, "I had a great struggle to consecrate myself to God, in a higher sense than I had ever before seen to be my duty, or conceived as possible." After a period of agonizing he came to a place of total surrender. "My confidence in God was perfect, my acceptance of his will was perfect, and my mind was as calm as heaven."^38

^38Finney, op. cit., p. 373.

^39Ibid., p. 373.

^40Ibid., p. 377.
One cannot help noticing the emphasis on perfect confidence and perfect acceptance. He continues, "My prayer that had been so fervent, and so protracted during so long a period, seemed all to run out into, 'Thy will be done.' This emphasis upon total surrender to the will of God in its deepest implications was to become a major emphasis in his teaching regarding sanctification. In fact, to some extent, Finney later defined sanctification as just such a state of absolute and continued acceptance of the whole will of God.  

The results of this total consecration in its most profound significance are especially meaningful as they are continually reflected in his later teaching on sanctification. He writes, "It seemed as if my desires were all met. What I had been praying for, for myself, I had received in a way that I least expected. Holiness to the Lord seemed to be inscribed on all the exercises of my mind." The question about which his mind had been so deeply exercised, as already mentioned, and as reflected in the concluding statement was "personal holiness." This truth had been a major theme in his thinking, writing and preaching for some seven years. His heart had been drawn out in seeking after higher grace. Can it be thought that at the climax of such a season of soul struggle when he

40Ibid., p. 377.
41Charles G. Finney, Guide to the Saviour (Oberlin: James M. Pitch, 1849) p. 201.
testifies to his desires being all met, that he does not refer to entrance into an experience of abiding sanctification of heart? It was indeed what he had been praying for.

It seemed to him as if his soul was wedded to Christ in a sense in which he had never any thought or conception before. He found the language of the Canticles as natural as his breath. However, he observes that while Solomon wrote them after being reclaimed from backsliding, his experience was not one of restoration. "I not only had all the freshness of my first love, but a vast accession to it." It was for Finney a totally new experience in Christ.

Indeed the Lord lifted me so much above anything that I had experienced before, and taught me so much of the meaning of the Bible, of Christ's relations, and power, and willingness, that I often found myself saying to him, 'I had not known or conceived that any such thing was true.' I then realized what is meant by the saying, that he 'Is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.' . . . I had in fact oftentimes experienced inexpressible joys, and very deep communion with God; but all this had fallen so into the shade, under my enlarged experience, that frequently I would tell the Lord that I had never before had any conception of the wonderful things revealed in his blessed Gospel, and the wonderful grace there is in Christ Jesus.

In a summary statement, Finney places emphasis upon two points of special significance: complete deliverance and freedom, and the abiding effect of this experience upon his spiritual life.

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43 Ibid., p. 387.
44 Ibid., pp. 379 - 380.
I have felt since then a religious freedom, a religious buoyancy and delight in God, and in his word, a steadiness of faith, a Christian liberty and overflowing love, that I had only experienced, I may say, occasionally before. I do not mean that such exercises had been rare to me before; for they had been frequent and often repeated, but never abiding as they have been since. My bondage seemed to be, at that time, entirely broken; and since then, I have had the freedom of a child with a loving parent. It seems to me that I can find God within me, in such a sense, that I can rest upon him and be quiet, lay my heart in his hand, and nestle down in his perfect will, and have no carelessness or anxiety.45

It is not to be thought that Finney's personal experience at this time predetermined his teachings with regard to sanctification. In fact, the broad outlines of his thinking had already largely taken shape, and been expressed in his Lectures to Professing Christians in 1837 and his Views of Sanctification in 1840. Nor can it be properly thought that his teachings as previously formulated determined the nature of his experience. There must be acknowledged a certain interaction of factors. His experience of sanctification certainly validated and confirmed much that he had been teaching, and encouraged the development of his thought within the basic framework that he had adopted before 1843.

There has been considerable question as to whether Finney ever testified to the experience of sanctification. Cheesebro pronounces unequivocally that Finney never claimed the experience.

Finney makes no claim that he himself has attained to perfect sanctification. He said at Oberlin that he would crawl on his hands and knees all the way to the Atlantic Ocean to see a person who had. But he does think that some have attained the state and has reason to believe that the number may be large.46

The question is hardly settled by this quotation. It would be interesting to know in what context this remark was made. The major emphasis of his writings would indicate that the term "perfect sanctification" here refers to an angelic or Adamic perfection not to be attained by men until glorification. The concluding statement seems more typical of his teaching. However, it is true that Finney was cautious about testifying to having attained to Christian perfection, even though he championed the message of sanctification until the end of his long life. Gaddis quotes Mrs. Finney as saying, "Mr. Finney sometimes tells me that I may be perfect, but that it will not answer for him, as it would ruin his influence."47

It should first be noted that Finney's testimony to the work of the Spirit in his heart during the winter of 1843 which has just been considered was published in his Autobiography. As has been seen, Finney was careful to point out those factors in his experience that coincided with his teaching with regard to sanctification. However, there was good

46Cheesabro, op. cit., p. 200.
47Gaddis, op. cit., p. 364.
reason why Finney was cautious about testifying to having attained to that state of Christian perfection that he consistently taught as possible to every believer. No sooner had the Oberlin men begun to proclaim the doctrine of Christian Perfection than they were identified with the antinomian and "free love" perfectionism of John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida community. In order to avoid this unpleasant association, Finney early abandoned the use of the term "Christian Perfection." President Wahan had fallen under considerable criticism for what were considered to be unguarded statements concerning his being devoid of any consciousness of sin. While Finney never discouraged others from testifying to their experience of sanctification, no doubt he thought it wisest under the circumstances to refrain from making any claims that might be misinterpreted and ultimately might prove detrimental to his ministry.

Finney has often received a great deal of undeserved criticism as to the practical, every-day demonstration of his Christian experience. He has been pictured as the austere, unrelenting prophet devoid of any interest in the amenities of life, and oblivious to family responsibilities. Let it be remembered that it was partly in consideration of his family

48 A more complete statement regarding reactions to the teaching of Sanctification will be given in a subsequent chapter.

49 Charles G. Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians, p. 358.
that Finney accepted the pastorate of the Second Free Presbyterian Church in New York City, and later accepted the call to Oberlin. Cochran records a testimony to Finney's life in the home.

In 1848, General J. D. Cox, then a student at Oberlin College and a frequent visitor at the Finney house, wrote home: 'He lives what he preaches and there is nothing like austerity about him. In his family he is all pleasantness -- sings and plays with his children and is as one with them... He is passionately fond of music and we can at any time make up a choir in the family.'

Though seemingly austere, he was kindly and sympathetic by nature and generous to a fault. When a kind-hearted woman informed him that Mr. Spencer, a missionary to the Ojibway Indians, had no overcoat, he immediately sent him the best overcoat that he had, one costing in the neighborhood of fifty dollars.

Finney's theological conclusions are of all the more significance when it is realized that he was the possessor of the experience described in his teachings, and that this experience evidenced itself not only in the unique effectiveness of his ministry, but in love out of a pure heart demonstrated in the associations and concerns of his daily life.

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50 Cochran, op. cit., p. 20.
51 Beardsley, op. cit., p. 189.
CHAPTER III

THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE
DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

This study has limited itself to a study of the doctrine of sanctification in the life and thought of Charles G. Finney. In doing so it has understood sanctification to refer to that aspect of his teaching dealing with the attainment of purity of heart and motive, involving the enduement of power for service, and resulting in consistency of moral conduct. But in order to attain a clear understanding of his thought regarding this doctrine it is necessary to examine some of the theological presuppositions that lay back of his understanding. To be remiss in attaining an understanding of the foundation truths of his theology is not only to misunderstand Finney, but to miss the point of his theology. Let it be remembered that his theology is always preeminently practical. Behind every departure from, or reinterpretation of orthodox theology is some practical consideration. It is important to study Finney's theology as a theology of evangelism. It will be necessary therefore, to deal briefly with 1) the doctrine of "the simplicity of moral action"; 2) his understanding of depravity; 3) the requirements of moral law; 4) the nature of the Spirit's operation upon the human heart in regeneration and sanctification.
1. THE SIMPLICITY OF MORAL ACTION

In his *Studies on Perfectionism*, B. B. Warfield comes to the conclusion that the characteristic feature of Oberlin Perfectionism is that it is the product of the conception known as "the simplicity of moral action."¹ This doctrine was first introduced at Oberlin in 1841 by William Cochran, a member of the theological class of 1842. The view is that there is a metaphysical impossibility for the will to be divided between two contradictory moral attitudes of sin and holiness at the same time.² Thus it is impossible for a sinner to do any good work. Finney himself explains:

It is not intended, that they may not perform many outward actions, and have many inward feelings, that are such as the regenerate perform and experience; and such too as are accounted virtue by those who place virtue in the outward action. But it is intended, that virtue does not consist either in involuntary feeling or in outward action, and that it consists alone in entire consecration of heart and life to God and the good of being, and that no unregenerate sinner previous to regeneration, is or can be, for one moment, in this state.³

Since the sinner's ultimate intention is selfish and sinful, the view holds that whatever good or moral deeds he may do, unless there is a change in ultimate intention are only sinful. In conversion, the sinner's ultimate intention is


²Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 205.

changed. Insofar as he maintains that intention or choice of the good of being he is wholly a Christian. He may depart from that intention, but he then becomes wholly a sinner.

Thus it is impossible to be half holy. A man is either holy or not. He may fluctuate between holiness and sinfulness, but when he is holy, he is entirely holy. The point of this teaching was to emphasize the necessity of thorough repentance and renunciation of all sin as a concomitant of, and in a real sense a condition of true saving faith. Thus Warfield quotes Finney as saying in an early edition of his Systematic Theology:

It certainly cannot be true that God accepts and justifies the sinner in his sins. I may safely challenge the world for either reason or scripture to support the doctrine of justification in sin, in any degree of present rebellion against God. The Bible everywhere represents justified persons as sanctified, and always expressly or impliedly, conditionates justification upon sanctification, in the sense of present obedience to God.

It will be noted that by 1841 Finney had already published his Views on Sanctification. His theological presentation of the doctrine had already taken written form before this concept was introduced into Oberlin thought. While Finney accepted aspects of the view, it was neither determinative nor

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4 Warfield, op. cit., p. 145.
disruptive to the main thrust of his theology of sanctification. He did, however, rework his presentation of the doctrine of sanctification in the light of this teaching, and incorporated it in his Systematic Theology. The incorporation of the doctrine involved mainly a reinterpretation of terminology. According to the view, holiness cannot be imperfect in degree. Thus the converted man, in this sense, is entirely holy or sanctified. But holiness can be imperfect in constancy. The task of the Christian becomes then, not to seek after holiness, which he already possesses, but to attain a state where fluctuation ceases and he is established in holiness. That state is not 'entire sanctification' which has been true of the Christian at intervals, all along, but 'permanent sanctification.' "That is the goal of all Christian progress—to cease from falling and remain steadily what all Christians ought to be, and indeed what all Christians are—whenever they are Christians." 6 Warfield summarizes:

"Entire sanctification" no longer stands as the end of the saving process, as the final goal towards which the Christian's heart yearns. That having become the characteristic of all believers from the moment of conversion, the term "sanctification" as the designation of one stage of salvation . . . has lost its content. As it must add something to what Christians already possess, and as all

6 Warfield, op. cit., p. 140.
Christians--whenever they are Christians--possess "entire sanctification", "sanctification" comes to mean "permanent sanctification."7

It is necessary therefore, to keep in mind, that in his later writings, Finney often refers to "permanent sanctification" in the sense that the Wesleyan Arminian would understand the term "entire sanctification." However, this is not always consistent in Finney. He often will use the term "entire sanctification" to refer to the work of grace in the heart that establishes the Christian unblamable in holiness, or in the state of "permanent sanctification." This is one reason why it is difficult to fairly represent Finney's theology by mere reference to random quotations. Finney's doctrine of sanctification must be understood in the context of his total theology.

II. DEPRAVITY

In his first chapter on Sanctification in the Systematic Theology, Finney begins by setting forth those concepts already discussed that are basic to his view. The sixth deals with the matter of depravity.

Moral depravity, or sin, consists in selfishness, and not at all in the constitution of men; that selfishness does not consist in the involuntary appetites, passions, and propensities, but that it consists alone in the committal of the will to the gratification of the propensities.8

7Ibid., p. 142.
8Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 403.
What is the locus of sin? The answer to this query is the keystone to an understanding of Finney's view of sanctification, and especially why and where he departs from the Wesleyan position. In order to answer it one must understand what he conceives to be depravity in man, moral and physical.

Finney rejects the view that man is constitutionally sinful, that is, that he inherited from Adam a physical and mental constitution that is in itself sinful.

He writes with deep feeling regarding the view.

The darkness, and confusion, and utter nonsense, of that view of depravity, which exhibits it, as something lying back, and the cause of all actual transgression. Something created in the sinner, and born with him. Some physical pollution, transmitted from Adam, through the agency of God or the devil, which is in itself sinful, and deserving the wrath of God, previous to the exercise of voluntary agency on the part of the sinner. This is absurd and impossible.9

He outlines definite reasons for rejecting the traditional position. First, the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness makes all sin, original and actual, a mere calamity, and not a crime. It becomes difficult if not impossible for those who really believe the doctrine to urge immediate repentance and submission upon the sinner. "It is a contradiction to affirm, that a man can heartily believe in the doctrine in question, and yet truly and heartily blame sinners for not doing what is naturally impossible to them."10


10Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 251.
Finney the dogma leads inevitably to the doctrine of natural inability or the view that man cannot repent unless the grace of God affords him special ability to do so.

Now in what light must the gospel be regarded, that calls upon man to repent of constitutional depravity under pain of eternal death; and to complete the absurdity, and insult, informs him at the same time, that he has no power to repent. To suspend salvation upon impossible conditions; at once insults his understanding and mocks his hopes. Is this the gospel of the blessed God? Impossible! It is a libel upon Almighty God.\(^\text{11}\)

Finney further charges that the view has long been a stronghold of Universalism. The Universalists who relentlessly inveigh against the idea of eternal punishment, reason that it would be unjust of God to send people to hell for an inherited condition for which men are not responsible.\(^\text{12}\) Finally, he holds that it virtually charges all the sin in the world upon God.\(^\text{13}\)

Finney makes a careful distinction between moral depravity and physical depravity. Physical depravity may be predicated of all the involuntary states of the intellect and of the sensibility. That is, the actings and states of the intellect may become disordered, depraved, deranged, or fallen from the state of integrity and healthiness. This, as a matter

\(^{11}\)Finney, Sermons on Important Subjects, "Tradition of the Elders," p. 82.

\(^{12}\)Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 252.

\(^{13}\)Finney, Sermons on Important Subjects, p. 139.
of fact, is the common experience of men.

The appetites and passions, the desires and cravings, the antipathies and repellencies of the feelings fall into great disorder and anarchy. Numerous artificial appetites are generated, and the whole sensibility becomes a wilderness, a chaos of conflicting and clamorous desires, emotions and passions.  

But this physical depravity, whether of body or mind, can have no moral character in itself because it is involuntary. In its nature it is "disease--not sin", "calamity, but not crime." This condition comes to man as a result of the sin of Adam and the race, but it has no moral quality and does not incur the judgment or condemnation of God.

Moral depravity is sin. Sin consists in choice and subsequent violation of moral law. It consists in the choice of self-indulgence or self-gratification as an end. "Moral depravity then, strictly speaking, can only be predicated of selfish ultimate intention." Thus, all sin consists in selfishness, or in the choice of self-gratification as a final end. Moral depravity involves a voluntary committal of the will to wrong ultimate end. It is sinfulness, not of nature but of voluntary state. It sustains to the outward life, the relation of cause. It is, then, not a sinful nature but a sinful heart.

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14 Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 230.
15 Ibid., p. 231.
16 Loc. cit.
It is important to observe that having established this distinction, Finney affirms that, "Subsequent to the commencement of moral agency, and previous to regeneration, the moral depravity of mankind is universal."\(^{17}\) If this be granted, how is the universal and total moral depravity of man to be accounted for? Finney explains that the physically disordered constitution of men with the deranged sensibilities act as a powerful impulse to the will from the moment of birth. The will becomes committed to the gratification of feeling and appetite when first the idea of moral obligation is developed. This committed state of the will has no moral character until the idea of moral obligation is developed. At this time, the committal of the will to self-indulgence must be abandoned, or it becomes selfishness, or moral depravity. The selfish choice at this crisis of life is the wicked heart—the propensity to sin—that subsequently causes what is generally termed actual transgression.\(^{18}\)

But what has Adam and the fall of man to do with this scheme? Warfield summarizes Finney's view. "What Adam has to do with it is this—because Adam sinned . . . the physical nature inherited by babies is to a certain extent disordered,

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 233.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., pp. 253-255.
and this makes their impulse to self-gratification perhaps somewhat more clamant than otherwise it would have been." Finney would also add the factor of temptation and objects that arouse the passions and propensities that surround the person as a result of the sin of men. So there are two factors that come as a result of Adam's sin and influence the depravity of man: 1) deteriorated and disordered mental and physical nature; 2) objects and situations that are the occasion to temptation.  

It is important to Finney's whole system that man come to this situation with freedom to choose. Finney would contend vigorously that the fact that all men choose wrongly at this point, does not mean that they did not have freedom to choose rightly. The whole point of this system is to establish that depravity is voluntary. Man must see himself as responsible for his sinful state.  

Finney ultimately comes out at the same place as do the traditional theologians, albeit by a circuitous theological route. He admits what is commonly called a "sinful nature" in all men. The deteriorated, deranged, disordered state of man's mind, sensibility, body and passions, as a result of sin, is granted. But this condition has no moral character.

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19Warfield, op. cit., p. 182.  

20It is at this point that Finney was repeatedly accused of Semi-Pelagianism, if not outright Pelagianism. Cf. Warfield, op. cit., p. 189.
So he locates moral depravity a step ahead of the traditionalist, at the point of surrendering to the natural appetites. Sin is to be located in the ultimate decision of the will to gratify the senses. It is ultimately selfishness. Most important to Finney, it is volitional.

The one crucial question that Finney does not seem to answer too clearly is this. How can man be any more free to choose when he has inherited this condition and is surrounded by these temptations, and is committed to yielding to the appetites before the development of reason, than in the traditional view of the depravity of the human heart?

By means of this explanation Finney has at least accomplished several important objectives, even if all the questions have not been answered. His position does not put man under the condemnation of God before he actually chooses the wrong. Thus man is condemned not because of Adam's sin, but because he chose, himself, to sin. True, man has a corrupt and deteriorated state to contend with that seems to predetermine his decision, but at least, God does not judge him for this condition, but for his decision to yield to his appetites in the face of reason and conscience. Sin, then, becomes in Finney's scheme, no longer a calamity but a crime. A crime for which man is ultimately responsible. It can only be regretted that in his formative years, Finney did not come in contact with the Wesleyan Arminian theology, which accomplishes the same ends with its doctrine of 'preventing' or
prevenient grace, and the 'free gift of righteousness.'

What then is to be understood of the "carnal mind?" In a sermon on Romans 8:7 Finney delineates what it is not, and what it is. 1) It is not meant, that any part of the substance of the soul or body, is enmity against God. 2) It is not meant, that there is anything in the constitution or substance of body or mind, that is opposed to God. The mind is not saturated or soaked with enmity. 3) It is not meant that there are appetites or propensities that are constitutional, which are enmity against God.

The proper translation of the text is, the minding of the flesh is enmity against God. It is a voluntary state of mind. It is that state of supreme selfishness, in which all men are, previous to their conversion to God. It is a state of mind; in which probably, they are not born, but into which they appear to fall, very early after their birth. The gratification of their appetites, is made by them the supreme object of desire and pursuit, and becomes the law of their lives; or that law in their members, that wars against the law of their minds, of which the apostle speaks. . . . In other words, it is not any part of the mind, or body, but a choice or preference of the mind. It is, a minding of the flesh. It is, preferring self-gratification, before obedience to God.

There is little wonder that men cried out in anguish and fell into comas of conviction under such preaching. All their lives they had been taught that they were not responsible for the sinfulness of their hearts, that if God wanted to save


them He would convert them without their cooperation. Finney convinced men that they alone were responsible for their sinful state. The condemnation of God upon them for their sin was completely just. They were under obligation to repent immediately.

The principle import of this doctrine with regard to Finney's view of entire sanctification is that the work of the Spirit in sanctification must concern itself not with physical depravity, but primarily with moral depravity.

III. THE REQUIREMENT OF MORAL LAW

In defining 'entire sanctification' in his Views on Sanctification, Finney holds that it consists in the consecration of the whole being to God. That is, it is that state of devotedness to God and his service that is required by moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right and no more than is right. He concludes, "Nothing more or less can possibly be Perfection or entire Sanctification, than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them."23 Sanctification, in this definition of Finney, is obedience to moral law. To misunderstand the demands of moral law, then, is to misunderstand the whole concept of sanctification.

The law itself is obvious enough to Finney. It is epitomized by Christ in Matthew 22:37-40.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The question that needs to be settled is in regard to what is, and what is not implied in perfect obedience to this law. In order to eliminate any ambiguity in this area, Finney outlines sixteen principles by which law is to be understood, with special reference to the moral law of God.

1. Whatever is inconsistent with natural justice is not and cannot be law.
2. Whatever is inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is contrary to natural justice.
3. That which requires more than man has natural ability to perform, is inconsistent with his nature and relations and therefore is inconsistent with natural justice, and of course is not law.
4. Law then must always be so understood and interpreted as to consist with the nature of the subjects, and with their relations to each other and to the lawgiver.
5. Law must be interpreted as to cover the whole ground of natural right or justice.
6. Law must be so interpreted as not to require any thing more than is consistent with natural justice.
7. Laws are never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess.
8. Law is never to be so interpreted as to require that which is naturally impossible on account of our circumstances.
9. Law is never to be so interpreted as to make one requirement inconsistent with another.
10. A law requiring perpetual benevolence must be so construed as to consist with, and require all the appropriate and essential modifications of this principle under every circumstance; such as justice, mercy, anger at sin and sinners, and a special and complacent regard to
those who are virtuous.

11. Law must be so interpreted as that its claims shall always be restricted to the voluntary powers.

12. In morals, actual knowledge is indispensable to obligation.

13. Moral laws are to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical laws.

14. Law is to be so interpreted as to recognize all the attributes and circumstances of both body and soul.

15. Law is to be so interpreted as to restrict its obligation to the actions, and not to extend it to the nature, or constitution of moral beings.

16. It should be always understood that the obedience of the heart to any law, implies, and includes, general faith or confidence in the lawgiver.  

This view of moral law lies back of Finney's careful distinction between 'physical depravity' and 'moral depravity.' It is fundamental to his synergistic approach to the work of redemption in the human heart. It is a necessary presupposition to his whole argument for Christian Perfection. It is essentially the Wesleyan view of law, and leads inevitably to the Wesleyan view of the possibility of Christian Perfection in this life. It determines his understanding of the operation of the Spirit upon the heart of man in regeneration.

IV. THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
ON THE HUMAN HEART

Having established that the moral depravity of man consists, not in the appetites, passions, or sensibilities,
but in selfish ultimate choice, Finney eliminates the necessity for what he terms "physical regeneration." Physical regeneration is logically monergistic for Finney. It must hold that if men are ever converted it will be because the Spirit of God, by effecting a change in their physical constitution or sensibilities, converts them. The view tends to depreciate, if not negate, human responsibility in conversion and salvation. Finney argues vigorously for a synergistic understanding of the factors in conversion. "The subject is active in regeneration." he affirms. It is not only within his ability to repent and "make himself a new heart," it is his immediate obligation.

For Finney, the operation of the Spirit in regeneration is not that of constitutional or physical transformation. No such change is involved in the whole process. "Regeneration ... must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention or preference; a change from selfishness to benevolence." There are usually three factors in the conversion of the individual. There is the work of the Holy Spirit, the decision and response of the subject, and usually the influence of one or more other persons.

26 Ibid., p. 287.
27 Loc. cit.
The work accomplished is a change of choice, in respect to an end or the end of life. The sinner whose choice is changed, must of course act. The end to be chosen must be clearly and forcibly presented; this is the work of the third person, and of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{28}

The work of the Spirit in regeneration, then, is to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul. The truth is brought to the attention of the subject by the Holy Spirit so as to induce a change of ultimate choice. The work of the Spirit upon the heart in regeneration is not that of physical or constitutional transformation, but of "moral suasion."

In his own day, Finney was roundly criticized for this view. George Duffield of Detroit, who had succeeded him as pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, wrote of this view in his theology.

So then, according to this view of the matter, there is no change whatever produced in the nature, the inclination or bias and sensitiveness of the sensibilities—the taste or relish, by whatever name it may be called, in reference to sin and holiness, the world and God—that will prove permanent, and exert a determining influence on the will.\textsuperscript{29}

But Finney would not concede that these factors determine the activity of the will. It is ultimate intention that determines the will's decisions. The will is self-determining. It alone sustains to the outward actions the relation

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 288.

of cause. It is the ultimate intention of the will that
determines the standard of life. It is this ultimate inten-
tion, and choice that must be changed through the inducement
of the Holy Spirit in illumining the mind with truth. The
instrumentalities of the Spirit in inducing regeneration are
means of presenting the truth. "Mercies, judgments, men,
measures, and in short all those things that conduce to en-
lightening the mind, are instrumentalities employed in ef-
flecting it."30

It is obvious that this position would determine his
explanation of the work of the Spirit in sanctification as
well. It should not be thought that Finney holds that Chris-
tian experience has nothing of the supernatural about it, and
that it ignores the divine side of the work of redemption.
The mind is not enlightened, convicted or induced to repent
without the work of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the plan
of salvation has its ground in the propitiatory work of Christ
upon the cross. The Word itself is a supernatural revelation
of the mind of God, and the supernatural instrument of the
Spirit in illumining the mind. As in the Wesleyan Arminian
position, repentance is man's response to the invitation of
the gospel. Faith involves man's acceptance of the merits
of the finished work of Christ. Finney and Wesley part ways
at the point of the work of the Spirit in the actual effecting
of regeneration, but both come out with the same experience.

30Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 289.
CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN THE

THOUGHT OF CHARLES G. FINNEY

Having laid the foundation of the preceding chapters it is now possible to enter upon a consideration of the doctrine of sanctification as taught by Charles G. Finney. The experience as both necessary and possible in this life will first be discussed. Sanctification as inhering in right ultimate intention will be seen to be central in his thought. Finney's treatment of the sensibilities as involving counter-development and/or cleansing will then be discussed. A consideration of the practical and ethical implications of the experience will follow. After a further treatment of his understanding of the experience as attained instantaneously and by faith, and the conditions for attaining the blessing, an attempt will be made to show the relation of Finney's approach to the Wesleyan interpretation.

I. NEED AND ATTAINABILITY

Unless the necessity and practicability of the experience of sanctification can be established, any consideration of the subject is purely hypothetical. It would have little relevance to a theologian of evangelism. Finney was keenly aware of this, and so lay strong emphasis upon the need for
attaining the experience, and especially upon the fact that it is, indeed, attainable in this life.

The need for sanctification is seen first in the lack of piety in the churches. It was this consideration that played a large part in Finney's early interest in the doctrine. In his Lectures to Professing Christians, treating "Conformity to the World", he laments the sinking level of spirituality in the church.

Brethren, I confess, I am filled with pain in view of the conduct of the church. Where are the proper results of the glorious revivals we have had? . . . . One holy church, that are really crucified to the world, and the world to them, would do more to recommend Christianity than all the churches in the country, living as they now do.

His solution to the problem is to establish the churches on a new level of holy living.

0, if I had strength of body to go through the churches again, instead of preaching to convert sinners, I would preach to bring up the churches to the gospel standard of holy living. Of what use is it to convert sinners, and make them such Christians as these?

Finney records in the Memoirs that in looking at the state of the Christian Church, as it had been revealed to him in his revival labors, he was led to inquire earnestly whether there was not something higher and more enduring than the Christian Church was aware of; "whether there were not promises, and means provided in the Gospel, for the establishment

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1Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians, pp. 152-153.
of Christians in altogether a higher form of Christian life." He soon became convinced "that an altogether higher and more stable form of Christian life was attainable, and was the privilege of all Christians."3

The lack of personal victory among Christians indicates the necessity of attaining holiness of heart and life. He writes, "The same is true of multitudes of anxious Christians... They ask why am I overcome by sin? Why can I not get above its power?" Deliverance is to be found in the purification of the heart by faith.4

Sanctification is necessary if converts are to be established in the Christian life. Finney holds that unless converts be instructed in entire sanctification, "their backsliding is inevitable. You might as well expect to roll back the water of Niagara with your hand, as to stay the tide of their corruption without a deep, and thorough, and experimental acquaintance with their Saviour."5 Finney was convinced that unless something effectual could be done to elevate the standard of holiness in the Church, converts would die.6

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3Loc. cit.

4Finney, Views on Sanctification, pp. 175-176.

5Ibid., p. 200.

With special regard to Sanctification as involving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, the experience is necessary not only for purity, but for empowerment for service. Speaking of the pentecostal experience of the early disciples, he writes of its indispensability to an effective ministry.

But the baptism itself was a divine purifying, an anointing bestowing on them a divine illumination, filling them with faith, and love, with peace and power; so that their words were made sharp in the hearts of God’s enemies, quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword. This is an indispensable qualification of a successful ministry.7

This experience is necessary because man requires holiness of himself. Man is so constituted that it is impossible that he should not require this of himself. "Hence," writes Finney, "there must always be a war in his own bosom unless he yields to this demand. He knows he ought to, and therefore, by a necessity as strong as his own nature, he must become holy, or fail of peace and conscious self-approval."8

More significant, the experience of sanctification is a necessity because God requires holiness of man. He requires men to be holy because He cannot make us happy unless we will become holy. God has made us in His own image. We are like

Him in the attributes of intellect, sensibility, and free-will. "Therefore, for the same reasons that make him require holiness of himself, he must require it of us."9

Finally, the establishment in holiness through the experience of sanctification is necessary because provision has been made for its attainment. Finney inquires of the extent of the provision of Christ for deliverance from sin in his sermon "On Being Holy."

Yet what is Christ if not a Saviour? A Saviour from what, if not from sin?

Is it not expressly said, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins'? What is Christ to do? Does he save people in their sins? Shall he not rather save them from their sins, and 'sanctify them wholly,' . . . 10

Finney holds that full provision for the attainment of continual holiness of life is made in the work of Christ and His relations to the soul of the Christian. The great design of the gospel is not only to save men from the punishment of sin, but to deliver them from its bondage.

Oh, if they only realized that the whole frame-work of the gospel is designed to break the power of sin, and fill men on earth with all the fullness of God, how soon there would be one steady blaze of love in the hearts of God's people all over the world!11

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9Loc. cit.
10Ibid., p. 338.
11Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians, p. 362.
Then if the work of Christ is in any sense adequate, the necessity of attaining sanctification or holiness of heart and life, implies the possibility of doing so.

Finney found it necessary to give extensive treatment to the possibility of Christian perfection in this life. Of the six chapters given to the subject of sanctification in his *Systematic Theology*, the better part of four of them is given to establishing the practicability of perfection in this life, and answering objections to the doctrine. A large portion of these discussions is concerned with an answering of supposed Scriptural objections to the possibility of sanctification. The limitations of this study prohibit a detailed study of Finney's very thorough treatment of these Scriptural objections.

In his first message on Christian Perfection in the *Lectures to Professing Christians*, Finney presents a demonstration of the attainability of perfect sanctification in this life that is typical of his treatment of the subject:

1) Sanctification is possible in this life because it is commanded. God does not require the impossible. "It is always to be understood that when God requires anything of men, that they possess the requisite faculties to do it."  

2) That there is a natural ability to be perfect is a simple matter

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of fact. This point he establishes by reference to the actual demands of the moral law as previously discussed, and by clarifying what is meant by Christian Perfection. Christian Perfection is not the same natural perfections that God has. It is not perfection of knowledge. It is not freedom from temptation, either from our constitution or from things about us. It is not freedom from the Christian warfare. It is not the infinite moral perfection which God has. It is perfect obedience to the law of God.\textsuperscript{13} 3) Sanctification is possible because God wills it. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." (I Thessalonians 4:3) 4) All the promises and prophesies of God, that respect the sanctification of believers in this world, are to be understood of course, of their perfect sanctification. "What is sanctification, but holiness? ... When God requires holiness, are we to understand that of partial holiness? Surely not."\textsuperscript{14} 5) He points out that perfect sanctification is the great blessing promised throughout the Bible. He produces a galaxy of Scripture to establish this point: II Peter 1:4, Ezekial 36:25, Jeremiah 33:8, Zechariah 13:1, Titus 2:13, Romans 11:26, I John 1:9, and I Thessalonians 5:23.

6) The perfect sanctification of believers is the very object for which the Holy Spirit is promised. To quote the

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 339-340.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 348.
passages that show this, Finney feels would take too much
time. The whole tenor of the Scripture respecting the work
of the Holy Spirit proves it.

The whole array of gospel means through which the
Holy Spirit works, is aimed at this, and adapted to
the end of sanctifying the church. All the commands
to be holy, all the promises, all the prophesies, all
ordinances, all the providences, the blessings and the
judgments, all the duties of religion, are the means
which the Holy Ghost is to employ for sanctifying the
church. 15

7) If it is not practicable duty to be perfectly holy
in this world, then it must follow that the devil has so com-
pletely accomplished his design in corrupting mankind, that
Jesus Christ has failed in his purpose to destroy the works
of the devil, and has no way to sanctify his people but by
taking them out of the world. 8) Thus if perfect sanctifi-
cation is not attainable in this world, it must be either
from a want of motives in the gospel, or a want of sufficient
power in the Spirit of God.

Finney stands unequivocally and consistently for the
possibility and the obligation of living without sin in this
life. Finney sees death in the Scriptures as an enemy, not
a saviour. Though the language of the church may be that at
death the saint will enter into a life of unalterable holiness
-- that he shall then, and not till then, be entirely sanctified,

15 Ibid., p. 352.
this is not the language of Scripture. "The language of inspiration is, that because he is sanctified, death shall be an entrance into a state of eternal glory."  

Finney reasons in the Systematic Theology that ministers are certainly bound to set up some definite standard of Christian living. To allow anything but a standard of perfection is to grant an indulgence to sin. Such a concession to sin must certainly undermine all morality. If holiness of heart attained by entire sanctification is not possible, what is the correct standard? "If Christians are not expected to be wholly conformed to the will of God in this life, how much is expected of them?"  

The standard must be absolute conformity to the whole will of God.

II. SANCTIFICATION AS RIGHT ULTIMATE INTENTION

It is typical of Finney to limit his subject and anticipate needless objections by outlining first what a thing is not, and then to describe what it is. With regard to a definition of sanctification he consistently adheres to this procedure. In his Views on Sanctification he discusses thirty-five points concerning what sanctification is not. As there is

16 Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 417.

17 Ibid., p. 421.
some overlapping and occasional redundancy, only the main points need be mentioned. For Finney, entire sanctification does not imply any change in the substance of the soul or body. If God's requirements are in accord with natural justice, they cannot require any change in the powers themselves, but simply the right use of them. It does not imply the annihilation of constitutional traits of character, such as enthusiasm or impetuosity, or of constitutional appetites or susceptibilities, or of natural affection or resentment. It does not necessitate any unhealthy degree of excitement of the mind.

Sanctification does not result in a state of continual calmness of mind. Nor does it imply a state of constant sweetness of mind without any indignation or holy anger at sin or sinners. It does not imply that the possessor of this blessing will love or hate all men alike, irrespective of their value, circumstances, and relations. It does not imply perfect knowledge on any subject, or freedom from mistake. Nor does it involve the knowledge of the exact relative value of different interests. Sanctification does not imply a degree of perfection of faith, love, knowledge or service that might have been possible had the possessor never sinned. It does not necessitate the answering of all of our prayers.

The experience of sanctification does not imply the impossibility of future sin. It will however imply that the
sanctified soul will not sin. Watchfulness, prayer, and effort are always needed. So far from implying that the sanctified man is no longer dependent on the grace of Christ, it implies the exact opposite. The experience does not imply the consummation of the Christian warfare, that is, the conflict of the mind with temptation. It does not imply that there is no more growth in grace after sanctification. It does not imply any exemption from sorrow. The experience is not inconsistent with living in human society or engaging in the affairs of this world. It certainly does not imply moroseness of temper and manners.\(^1\)

If none of these things are descriptive of sanctification or implied in the experience, what then is sanctification as Finney understands it? Sanctification is a term descriptive of a phenomenon of the will. It refers to a voluntary state of mind. The term represents not only an act of the will but an ultimate act or choice, or an executive act of the volition determining the standing, ultimate intention of the will. The Greek hagiasmos expresses a state or attitude of voluntary consecration to God, a standing and controlling preference of mind, a continuous committal of the will to the highest well-being of God and of the universe.

"Sanctification consists in the will's devoting or consecrating itself and the whole being, all we are and have,

\(^{1}\)Finney, *Views on Sanctification*, pp. 15-44.
so far as powers, susceptibilities, possessions are under the control of the will, to the service of God, or, which is the same thing, to the highest interests of God and of being. Sanctification, then, is nothing more nor less than entire obedience, for the time being, to the moral law. ¹⁹

Finney defines "Entire Sanctification" as consisting in "being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God."²⁰ It is in this sense that Finney uses the term with regard to the attainment of Christian perfection.

It is important to realize that the consecration here referred to is of such depth that it will not be induced or perpetuated except by the operation of the Holy Spirit.²¹ Although the emphasis in the above definition is almost entirely upon the volitional act of man, subsequent discussion will demonstrate that this entire consecration is actualized by Christ through the Holy Spirit, instantaneously, in response to faith. Wright comments, "The real gist of this doctrine consisted in magnifying at the same time the duty of entire consecration to God and the grace of Christ as an aid to the attainment of that standard of duty."²²

¹⁹Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 405.
²⁰Loc. cit.
²¹Finney, Guide to the Saviour, p. 142.
²²Wright, op. cit., p. 164.
It will be noted that in all of this the primary emphasis is upon the will. It is at this point that A. M. Hills criticizes Finney's view.

Here, again, are the two fundamental and fatal mistakes of his system. So far as it relates to sanctification: he makes it consist in a devotion of the will to God -- a thing that is always secured by conversion and regeneration -- while the Scripture makes it consist in the CLEANSING of the whole being, precisely as the Methodist Church teaches. 2) He makes 'consecration' synonymous with 'sanctification.' But consecration is only one of several conditions of sanctification; not the thing itself.23

Hills here evidences the common misunderstanding of Finney's terminology, and fails to evaluate his position in the light of his total theology. What Hills says of Finney's view of sanctification is true. But it is not true of Finney's doctrine of 'entire or permanent sanctification' which is the subject under consideration. That sanctification as a devotion of the will to God is secured by conversion, Finney would readily admit. Did not Wesley himself teach that regeneration was sanctification begun? As has been noted, Finney understands entire sanctification to consist in being established, confirmed, and preserved in the state of absolute and entire consecration. To say that Finney equates consecration and sanctification does violence to his use of the terms. Even in Finney's view, consecration, as Hills here uses the term, is indeed a condition of sanctification. The willful

23Hills, op. cit., p. 223.
commitment of the whole being to God, accompanied by faith in Christ, results in the establishment of the heart in absolute consecration involving ultimate intention. This is not 'sanctification', but 'entire sanctification' in Finney's thought.

III. THE 'SENSIBILITY' -- COUNTERDEVELOPMENT AND/OR CLEANSING

It will be remembered that Finney speaks of the sensibility, or feeling department of the mind, as being sadly and physically depraved. As a result of sin there is a disordering of the appetites and passions, the desires and cravings. Besides all this, artificial appetites are generated. "The whole sensibility becomes a wilderness, a chaos of conflicting and clamorous desires, emotions and passions." This condition is described as 'physical depravity', as opposed to moral depravity. This condition has no moral quality. The appetites, passions, and propensities, depraved though they may be, are not to be considered sin. Sin consists in wrong choice. They are not sinful, though they are the occasions of sin. Finney comments, "When these lusts or appetites are spoken of as the 'passions of sin,' or as 'sinful lusts or passions,' it is not because they are sinful in themselves,

\textsuperscript{24}Finney, \textit{Systematic Theology}, p. 230.
but because they are the occasions of sin." The source of sin, then, is not the corruption of the sensibilities. The source of sin is the perversion of the will resulting in the choice of wrong ultimate intention, which in turn allows it to consent to the satisfying of the appetites.

Sanctification, as has been already seen, is the establishing of the will in a state of absolute consecration to God. This consecration involves a state of choice, or a standing and controlling preference of the mind, a continued committal of the will to the highest well being of God and the universe. It has been pointed out that this state of complete consecration cannot be attained except by the work of Christ through the Spirit appropriated by faith. Thus Finney exhorts his New York congregation to take right hold of Christ, by faith, for sanctification, just as they did for justification. Resolutions and works, fastings and prayers, endeavors and activities are all to no avail.

It is all work, work, work, when it should be by faith in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and SANCTIFICATION, and redemption. When they go and take right hold of the strength of God, they will be sanctified. Faith will bring Christ right into the soul, and fill it with the same Spirit that breathes through Himself. It is faith that must sanctify; it is faith that purifies the heart.26

25Ibid., p. 246.

26Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians, p. 363.
Faith, then, is the instrument or condition of our sanctification. The efficient agent that induces a state of present and permanent sanctification, is Christ. Faith simply receives Christ as king, to live and reign in the soul. Christ, in the exercise of his different offices and appropriated in his different relations by faith, secures the sanctification of the soul. But how is this accomplished? Finney replies, "This He does by divine discoveries to the soul of His divine perfections and fulness."27 The influence of Christ upon the heart in the accomplishing of sanctification is not physical, but that of moral persuasion. Finney summarizes:

The truth is, beyond all question, that sanctification is by faith as opposed to works. That is, faith receives Christ in all his offices and in all the fulness of his relations to the soul; and Christ when received, works in the soul . . . not by a physical, but by a moral and persuasive working. Observe, he influences the will. This must be by a moral influence, if its actings are intelligent and free, as they must be to be holy. That is, if he influences the will to obey God, it must be by a divine moral persuasion.28

The effect of this working of Christ in the soul in the accomplishing of immediate sanctification is to so reveal himself as to completely ravish and engross the affections. So that "we would sooner cut our own throats or suffer others

27 Finney, Guide to the Saviour, p. 33.
28 Ibid., p. 203.
to cut them than to sin against him."29 Such an experience of Christ is, of course, naturally impossible. But, inquires Finney, "Is not the Holy Spirit able, and willing, and ready to thus reveal him upon condition of asking it in faith? Surely he is."30

This initial work of establishment in sanctification is accomplished by an act of faith that lays hold upon Christ as the soul's Sanctification. It is instantaneous. It brings with it immediate deliverance from the bondage of sin. In the sense that the soul lays hold of Christ by faith as Deliverer from the bondage of sin, and is immediately set free and established in holiness through the purifying of the ultimate intention of the will, the heart is cleansed instantaneously from sin.31 Sanctification, then, brings immediate deliverance from the bondage of sin, and immediate establishment in holiness. Thus Finney exhorts believers to at once purify their hearts by faith.

The same is true of multitudes of anxious Christians, who are inquiring what they shall do to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil... They put forth efforts in this direction, and in that direction, and patch up their righteousness on one side, while they make a rent in the other side. Thus they spend years, in running around in a circle, and making dams of sand across the

29Ibid., p. 48.
30Loc. cit.
31Finney marshalls the following Scripture in support of cleansing from all sin through the blood of Christ: Hebrews 9:14, I Peter 1:19, I Peter 1:2, Revelation 1:5.
current of their own corruptions. Instead of at once purifying their hearts by faith, they are engaged in trying to arrest the overflowing of their bitter waters.32

In order to settle and confirm the soul in sanctification some provision must be made for the control and ultimate redemption of the sensibilities. This is achieved by a "counterdevelopment of the sensibilities."

One great thing that needs to be done to confirm and settle the will in the attitude of entire consecration to God, is to bring about a counterdevelopment of the sensibility, so that it will not draw the will away from God. It needs to be mortified . . . (a) powerful . . . revelation of Christ to the soul."33

Unless the sensibilities are thus counterbalanced by the revelation of Christ to the Christian, they will continue to be an occasion to sin. Finney goes so far as to say that this lapsed department of our nature must be recovered, sanctified, or completely restored to harmony with the consecrated will and enlightened intelligence or we are never fitted for heaven.34

The process of counterdevelopment must be further explicated. When temptations arise in the sanctified will through the depraved condition of the physical sensibilities, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the soul in exactly that relation that will completely meet the need of the heart.

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32Finney, Views on Sanctification, pp. 175 - 176. Underlining added.
33Finney, Guide to the Saviour, p. 38.
34Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 220.
For example, one may be tempted to despair by Satan's suggestion that our sins have been too great to be forgiven. In this case the soul needs a revelation of Christ as its atonement and justification. Another time the soul may be tempted to despair of its sanctification because of the temptations of the physical propensities. It then must have a revelation of Christ as its Sanctification. Again, in the time of discouragement because of the number and strength of its enemies, the soul needs a revelation of Christ as Mighty God, and as its strong tower.\textsuperscript{35}

By these revelations to the soul, the Lord Jesus captures the attention and devotion of the will. The work of Christ in the particular relation needed is appropriated by faith, and the will is confirmed in obedience. Finney writes, "When the Holy Spirit has revealed to us the necessity, and Christ as exactly suited to fully meet that necessity, and urged his acceptance in that relation until we have appropriated him by faith, a great work is done."\textsuperscript{36}

This process, then, constitutes the counterdevelopment of the sensibilities. Christ, revealed to the soul as constantly and perfectly adequate to every need commands the love, devotion and allegiance of the heart. In the light of the revelation of the spiritual reality of Christ to the soul, the

\textsuperscript{35}Finney, \textit{Systematic Theology}, p. 447. For a more complete listing of the relations of Christ to the soul, see Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{36}Finney, \textit{Guide to the Saviour}, p. 52.
cravings of lust, appetite, and passion are viewed in their proper perspective. Christ is seen to satisfy every need so much more wonderfully on the spiritual level, than might a surrender to temptations in the physical nature. The sensibilities lose their appeal to the soul thus enamored with the glories of Christ. They cease to draw the soul from God, and indeed, are thus eventually recovered, redeemed, and sanctified.

IV. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

Cheesebro points out that it was in 1839 and 1840, largely under the influence of Asa Mahan and John Morgan at Oberlin, that Finney gave fuller consideration to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Whereas he had all along fervently believed in the work and personal influence of the Spirit, he now came to realize that believers should seek 'the baptism of the Holy Ghost' as a special gift, subsequent to their conversion. The baptism is to be obtained after believing and is 'the secret of the stability of the Christian character.  

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is seen by Finney to impart three principle gifts to Christians: Holiness, Power, and Stability. While it may not be correct to say that Finney always refers to sanctification when he speaks of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, it is always true that the sanctification

37 Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 211.
of the believer will involve a baptism of the Holy Ghost. Finney relates the baptism of the Spirit to his doctrine of sanctification in a lecture on "Death to Sin" based on the text Romans 6:7. Finney points out that the dominion of sin over the heart has been established over so long a period that holiness can never be attained by one's own efforts. "Our powers are too much enslaved by its protracted indulgence. Sin has too long been our master, to be at once put down by any unaided efforts of our own." Then how is death to sin to be realized in the life? Finney answers, that it is effected by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit does not imply the bestowment of miraculous gifts ... or ... great excitement. But it does imply such a degree of divine influence as will purify the heart ... Spiritual baptism is the purifying of the heart by the Holy Spirit ... If one would enter into this death to sin, he must be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

While Finney most consistently teaches the need of an initial and crisis baptism of the Spirit, he holds that subsequent baptisms of the Spirit are necessary for occasional confirmation and refreshment. He suggests, "New trials may call for fresh baptisms of the Spirit." If selfishness could cause the fall of holy Adam, how much more likely is it to occur in those who have so long been dominated by selfishness.

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39 Loc. cit.
"Renewed temptation calls for fresh and more powerful baptisms of the Holy Spirit. Be not satisfied then with one anointing. But look day by day for deeper draughts of the water of life."\textsuperscript{40}

The second gift imparted in the baptism of the Spirit is power. The expression "enduement of power from on high" is a favorite with Finney. He sees this enduement as especially necessary to an effective ministry. It is calculated to make a Christian wise and efficient in bringing souls to Christ. This enduement is the one essential, even indispensable qualification for a minister's usefulness in the world.\textsuperscript{41} Finney is greatly grieved that there is a constant tendency to substitute culture, human learning, or eloquence for this Divine enduement.\textsuperscript{42}

Christ does not require us to make brick without straw. To whom He gives the commission He also gives the admonition and the promise. If the commission is heartily accepted, if the promise is believed, if the admonition to wait upon the Lord till our strength is renewed be complied with, we shall receive the enduement.\textsuperscript{43}

In his tract on "Power from on High", Finney is careful to demonstrate that the baptism of the Spirit is a blessing

\textsuperscript{40}Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{41}Hills, op. cit., p. 190.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 189.

\textsuperscript{43}Finney, The Enduement of Power From on High, p. 9.
received subsequent to conversion. He points out that there is a great difference between the peace and the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

The disciples were Christians before the Day of Pentecost, and as such, had a measure of the Holy Spirit . . . They had the peace which Christ had given them, but not the power which He had promised. This may be true of all Christians, and right here is, I think, the great mistake of the Church, and of the ministry. They rest in conversion, and do not seek until they obtain this enduement of power from on high.44

This enduement with power is not something into which people can gradually grow, by forming habits of persuasion and conversation. "It is a gift -- an anointing, instantaneously received, and that may be enlarged or diminished as the possessor of it uses it more or less faithfully and intensely for the purpose for which it was given."45

The third blessing that Finney associates with the baptism of the Spirit is stability. The anointing or sealing baptism of the Spirit in connection with the experience of sanctification, establishes the soul in permanent sanctification. It is by this anointing, the reception of the earnest of our inheritance, that salvation is rendered sure.46


46It should be pointed out that Finney rejected the perseverance of the saints as commonly understood by the Calvinistic theologians. In a sermon on "Salvation Always Conditional" he states that no one act of faith, nor any other exercise can render salvation from sin or hell unconditionally certain.
Now, it is of the last importance that converts should be taught not to rest short of this permanent sanctification, this sealing, this being established in Christ by the special anointing of the Holy Ghost . . . . The baptism or sealing of the Holy Spirit, subdues the power of the desires, and strengthens and confirms the will in resisting the impulse of desire, and in abiding permanently in a state of making the whole being an offering to God. 47

V. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SANCTIFICATION

It is typical of Finney to lay strong emphasis upon the practical implications of his teaching. Sanctification must find expression in the life of man. It is not a self-centered experience. It involves the subsequent attitude of its possessor towards God, the Kingdom, the World, and oneself. In his Views on Sanctification Finney lists twelve such implications of the doctrine of sanctification. 1) "Love is the sum of all that is implied in entire sanctification." This love, as exercised towards God is characterized by its being a love of the heart or will, by benevolence, or goodwill, by esteem, by gratitude, by disinterestedness, and by the fact that it is in every instance supreme. As exercised

To possess a knowledge of unconditional salvation would break the power of moral government and insure a fall. (Oberlin Evangelist (December 16, 1840), p. 202.) Cheesebro summarizes Finney's position in this area. "On the question of the perseverance of the saints, the truth is that the saints will be saved because they persevere, not simply because they are saints." (Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 221.)

47 Quoted in Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 215.
towards one's fellow men, it is characterized by benevolence, esteem, equality, and impartiality.

2) Entire Sanctification implies entire conformity of heart and life to all the known will of God. 3) It implies such a perfect confidence in Christ as to be willing that all events should be at His sovereign disposal, thus eliminating undue anxiety. 4) This blessing implies a supreme disposition to glorify and serve God -- that His is the ruling principle of one's life -- that one lives for no lower or other end than this -- that all other things that one desires are esteemed as a means to this end.

5) Entire sanctification implies such a degree of energy in the principle of love, as directly or indirectly to control every design and every voluntary action. 6) It implies an abiding sense of the presence of God. 7) It implies a deep and uninterrupted communion with God. 8) It implies a greater dread of offending God than of any other evil. 9) It implies the subjugation of all our appetites and passions to the will of God. 10) It implies the strictest employment of our time in the acquisition of knowledge, and a consecration of what we already know to the service of God.

11) Entire Sanctification implies the complete annihilation of selfishness under all its forms, and a practical and hearty recognition of the rights and interests of one's
neighbor. This blessing prohibits all supreme self-love, all excessive self-love, all apathy and indifference in regard to the well being of one's fellow men. It requires the practical recognition of the fact, that all men are brethren. It requires one to exercise as tender a regard to one's neighbor's reputation, interest, and well-being, in all respects, as to one's own. 12) Entire Sanctification implies a willingness to exercise self-denial, even unto death, for the glory of God and good of man, did they require it.48

VI. RELATION TO THE WesleyAN VIEW OF SANCTIFICATION

A brief consideration of the relation of Finney's doctrine of sanctification to that of the Wesleyan position will serve as a concise review and summary of the materials in this chapter. Unfortunately, the deviations of Finney from the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification have been more often pointed up than those areas of substantial agreement. The conclusions of Finney have too often received a blanket dismissal by Wesleyans as Calvinistic, or Keswickian, or associated with some other school, and therefore irrelevant. It is surprising to note how many areas there are in which both the Wesleyans and Finney concur.

48 Finney, Views on Sanctification, pp. 45 ff.
There is agreement at the point of the necessity of attaining an experience of entire sanctification resulting in Christian perfection. Both schools would agree that this experience plays, to some extent, a determinative role with regard to final salvation. Such a state is necessary if temptation is to be consistently and finally overcome. Both would affirm that impurity will not be tolerated in heaven. Both would recognize that God commands holiness of life in Christians.

In the view of these schools, sanctification is regarded as distinct from and subsequent to conversion. In fact, conversion is viewed as a prerequisite of entire sanctification. While they would admit that there is an element of sanctification in regeneration and conversion, entire sanctification is to be sought subsequently as a distinct work of grace in the heart.

With regard to the possibility of attaining to Christian perfection in this life, both schools are in positive agreement. It is possible, and indeed the obligation of every Christian, to live without sin. But in saying this, both the Wesleyans and Finney would be careful to make a distinction in the respective elements of Purity and Maturity as they relate to Christian perfection. Further, they would be careful to distinguish between sins of volition, and sins caused by infirmity, if indeed these may be called sins. There is consistent
insistence that this state is intended for and realizable in this life. Death does not cleanse the heart from sin.

Both schools stand in agreement with regard to the conditions or steps of entering into entire sanctification. Any appropriation of the provisions of the gospel for one's sanctification must be preceded by an intense realization of one's need. This sense of desperate need must be accompanied by a total and final consecration of the whole being, body, soul, and spirit, to God. The final step, and actual condition, for entering into this experience is seen to be faith.

Finney and the Wesleyans understand the possibility and attainment of sanctification to be grounded in the work of Christ. It is to be received by faith and is therefore a work of grace -- a second work of grace. This experience is to be instantaneously realized in response to faith. It is accompanied by, and effected by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps most important is the fact that the same results in experience are expected in the two schools. The experience of the entirely sanctified is typified by perfect love. There is realized an immediate and total release from the power of sin. Consequently, the sanctified man lives in complete and continued conformity to the whole will of God.

Distinctions between the two views are in every case the result of doctrinal presuppositions. It will be recalled that Finney's doctrinal presuppositions with regard to sanctification lay in the area of the concept of the simplicity of
moral action, the nature and moral significance of depravity, the demands of the moral law, and the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. These presuppositions are clearly reflected in the distinctions between the two views.

The Wesleyan regards moral depravity as consisting in the depraved condition of the human heart, involving evil propensities, cravings, and perversion of the appetites. Though inherited as a result of the fall, this condition is regarded as sinful. The depraved heart of man is seen to be the locus of sin. It is the flesh, the carnal man which is not subject to the law of God, the old man, "the sin which dwelleth in me." Sin consists not only in volitional acts, but in the inherited condition of the heart. All of this Finney rejects, as has been seen. To him, all sin must involve volition if it is to be, indeed, sin. Morality implies volition and free will. Moral depravity consists, not in the inherited depravity of the appetites, affections, and propensities, but in the choice governing the ultimate intention of the will. The locus of sin is not the carnal mind, or the flesh, or the old man, but the choice of the will. It follows, that whereas, in the Wesleyan interpretation, the operation of the Spirit involves a change of nature and a cleansing of the sinful propensities, the operation of the Spirit in Finney's approach is that of moral persuasion inducing a change of the
ultimate intention of the will, and confirming it in that choice.

Wesleyans must reject Finney's notion of the counter-development of the sensibilities. The sensibilities as involving passions, cravings, and propensities toward evil, are not to be controlled, or counterdeveloped and only later redeemed as in Finney, but they are cleansed, if not annihilated in the work of entire sanctification.

There is little doubt that if Finney had begun with the Wesleyan presuppositions with regard to depravity, the free gift of grace, prevenient grace, and the nature of the Spirit's operation in the heart, he would have been consistently in agreement with the Wesleyan view of entire sanctification. But it is more important to observe that in regard to the attainability of the experience of entire sanctification, the prerequisites of attainment, the conditions of attainment, and the results of entering into this experience, both the Wesleyans and Finney are in substantial, if not absolute agreement.
CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND REACTIONS TO CHARLES G. FINNEY'S
DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

As the understanding of the Oberlin men concerning the doctrine of sanctification took form, they began to broadcast their views, especially through the pages of the Oberlin Evangelist. President Asa Mahan, Prof. John Morgan, Prof. Cowles, and Prof. Finney made extensive contributions to its columns, expounding the doctrine of entire sanctification. President Mahan, and of course, Finney himself, had gained extensive renown as evangelists. As they propagated their understanding of sanctification in connection with their evangelistic labors, the influence of the "Oberlin school" began to be extensively felt. Finney wielded, perhaps, the widest influence of all the Oberlin men, not only because his phenomenal effectiveness as an evangelist had secured for him the sympathetic attention of a great host of Christian leaders, but because of his extensive literary activity. In 1840 he published his Views on Sanctification, in 1847 his Systematic Theology, and in 1849 his Guide to the Saviour. Oberlin College sent out scores of convinced apologists for its doctrinal views into the ministry both at home and abroad. It was inevitable that the combined influence of these approaches to the Christian public should precipitate both significant results and reaction.
I. RESULTS

It is of importance to this study to inquire as to the nature and extent of the response Finney's preaching concerning entire sanctification received. After what we have considered Finney's own attainment of sanctification in the winter of 1843, he records, "I spent nearly all the remaining part of the winter, till I was obliged to return home, in instructing the people in regard to the fulness there is in Christ." But he found his preaching to be above the heads of the majority of the people. They did not understand him.

The people of the churches generally were in no state to receive my views of sanctification; and although there were individuals in nearly all the churches who were deeply interested and greatly blessed, yet as a general thing, the testimony that I bore was unintelligible to them. However, his witness and instruction was not totally ineffective. He reports that there were indeed, a goodly number that did understand his teaching. "They were wonderfully blessed in their souls, and made more progress in the divine life, as I have reason to believe, than in all their lives before."

Although there is convincing evidence in the Memoirs of Finney's faithfulness in teaching entire sanctification, there is a conspicuous absence of reference to persons being sanctified under his ministry.

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2 Loc. cit.
3 Loc. cit.
There may be at least two reasons for this. Whereas Wesley might insist that seekers should not be satisfied with their experience until they are as sure of their sanctification as they were of their justification, Finney places little emphasis on the matter of assurance with regard to sanctification. His teaching does not, by any means, preclude assurance. It does, in fact, provide for it. But, by and large, Finney does not press the matter. He goes so far as to suggest that a man may be sanctified without being convinced that he has attained that state. Then, Finney placed little emphasis upon testimony concerning the attainment of Christian perfection. As far as is known, Finney himself did not make any explicit statement concerning his own experience. As has been noted, he did not discourage others from testifying, but he himself probably thought it wisest in consideration of possible misunderstanding by his critics, to demonstrate the fruits of the blessing, without making positive statements of testimony. In view of these considerations, it is not surprising that one finds little reference to definite sanctification under Finney's ministry.

The first, and only reference in his autobiography relating the details of an individual's sanctification occurs in connection with the record of his meetings at Syracuse in 1852-1853. The woman was the Christian wife of an unconverted merchant. Finney describes her as a lady of great refinement, and
beauty of character and person.

She attended our meetings, and became very much convinced for a deeper work of grace in her soul . . . . I had a few moments' conversation with her, and directed her attention especially to the necessity of thorough and universal consecration of herself and of all to Christ. I told her that when she had done this, she must believe for the sealing of the Holy Spirit. She had heard the doctrine of sanctification preached, and it had greatly interested her; and her inquiry was how she should obtain it . . . . In the afternoon she returned as full of the Holy Spirit, to all human appearance, as she could be.  

A few days later her husband called on Finney. He reported that after his wife's conversion he had thought her to be almost or quite perfect. But now she had manifestly passed through a greater change than ever. "There is such a spirit in her, such a change, such an energy in her religion, and such a fulness of joy and peace and love!"  

It is not to be thought that Finney's works are devoid of any reference to definite results from his teaching of sanctification. He closes one of his lectures on sanctification in the Systematic Theology, by indicating that before he had begun to instruct converts with regard to sanctification, they would frequently fall back into their former state.  

I seldom saw, and can now understand that I had no reason to expect to see, under the instructions which I then gave, such a state of religious principle, such a steady and confirmed walking with God among Christians, as I have seen since the change in my views and instructions.  

5Ibid., pp. 422-423.  
6Ibid., p. 424.  
7Finney, Systematic Theology, p. 423.
One further reference should be pointed out as witnessing extensive response to Finney's preaching, and as demonstrating the effect of the experience upon the lives of its possessors.

The proclamation of it (the doctrine of entire sanctification) is now regarded by multitudes as 'good tidings of great joy.' From every quarter, we get the glad-some intelligence, that souls are entering into the deep rest and peace of the gospel, that they are awaking to a life of faith and love -- and that instead of sinking down into Antinomianism, they are eminently more benevolent, active, holy, and useful than ever before -- that they are eminently more prayerful, watchful, diligent, meek, sober-minded and heavenly in all their lives.\(^8\)

As might well be expected, Finney achieved his greatest effectiveness in preaching the experience and grace of sanctification at Oberlin. It was there that the initial impulse was received to give serious consideration to the subject. At times, the concern of the students to enter into the fulness of the blessing seemed so intense that they outran their instructors in their zeal for the experience. As a result of the preaching of Finney and his colleagues, Warfield records, "The majority of the students, perhaps also the majority of the inhabitants, were more or less deeply moved by the propaganda: many definitely adopted the new teaching and endeavored both to live it themselves and to communicate it to others."\(^9\)

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\(^8\)Finney, *Views on Sanctification*, p. 203.

II. REACTIONS

The reactions to Finney's presentation of the doctrine of sanctification are far simpler to trace than the results. The natural man has never taken easily to an insistence upon the possibility and obligation of attaining Christian perfection. It was so in the case of Finney, his colleagues, and the whole Oberlin community. They received criticism, resistance, and bitter opposition from almost every quarter. It was a "baptism of fire."

The reaction that was most deeply distressing to Finney was that which came from his friends, converts, and associates. New York friends remonstrated with Finney, or else felt embarrassed over what they had heard about him. A. A. Norton, a close friend, wrote to Finney in March of 1839 expressing his inability to accept what he had heard to be his position. "When Oberlin Perfectionism is spoken of I have often exclaimed 'it is not so. Mr. F. is not a perfectionist'... you must excuse us, if in every point we do not agree with you."10

Such a respectful and affectionate evidence of concern at the development of his theology, while to some extent distracting, was hardly a cause of heartache. But Finney was deeply grieved when some of the pastors, in association with

10A. A. Norton to Mrs. Finney, March 11, 1839 (Finney MSS), quoted in Cheesebro, op. cit., 224.
whom he had his greatest revivals, repudiated and opposed his teaching. He felt that he was being wounded in the house of his friends. Warfield points out that S. C. Aiken, who had been a pastor at Utica, New York during Finney's great revival there and one of his chief supporters during the whole course of his revival campaigns in Central New York, was a signatory of the able refutation of Oberlin Perfectionism put out by the Presbytery of Cleveland in 1841.

In that same year, the Presbytery of Troy, New York took up the matter of Christian perfection and the Oberlin teachings in general. They drew up a statement denouncing both. The stated clerk to the "Action of the Troy Presbytery" of June 1841 was none other than N. S. S. Beman. It was in cooperation with Beman that Finney had labored with such unique effectiveness at Troy in 1826. Cheesebro notes, "As Finney read the denunciation of the Oberlin views and beheld Beman's name he almost involuntarily exclaimed, 'Et Tu Brute!'"

On his last trip to Boston, his former friend Edward N. Kirk, distressed at the influence of Finney's teaching with regard to sanctification, wrote to him. "I did not request you to come to Boston to labor, and am entirely unable to regard myself as responsible for the results of your labors . . . .

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11 Warfield, op. cit., p. 209.

12 Cheesebro, op. cit., p. 225.
We may talk this over in heaven. In this world I am persuaded it would do no good.\textsuperscript{13}

With his emphasis upon human ability and his rejection of the austerities of the Old School Calvinism, Finney had been identified with the New School. However, as reports began to circulate concerning his new teaching, he began to be considered with suspicion even by his brethren in the New School. Representatives of the New School felt that they were under serious criticism enough, without taking a chance of being identified with Perfectionism. In 1837 the \textit{Quarterly Christian Spectator} expressed concern over Finney's doctrinal advances.

On the subject of Christian Perfection, we think Mr. Finney is not always sufficiently guarded, and though we do not believe he means anything more than we should fully admit -- the possibility and duty of obedience to God in all things commanded -- yet we fear he may be liable to misconstruction and injure the consciences of many weak, but pious persons.\textsuperscript{14}

George Duffield, succeeded Finney as pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York. He later went to Detroit, and became known as a leading exponent of the New School Presbyterianism. After the publication of Finney's \textit{Systematic Theology}, Duffield wrote a "Warning Against Error" concerning it. The

\textsuperscript{13}Kirk to Finney, March 1, 1858 (Finney MSS), quoted in Cheesebro, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 225.

\textsuperscript{14}Quoted in Cheesebro, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 225.
"Warning" had a widespread and detrimental influence against Finney's teaching. It was adopted by the Presbytery of Detroit and subsequently by the Synod of Michigan in October, 1847. This action resulted in serious discrimination against Oberlin men.\footnote{Ibid., p. 226.}

Finney published a "Reply to Duffield's 'Warning Against Error'" in the Oberlin Quarterly Review, and later included it as an appendix in the 1851 edition of his Systematic Theology. Finney contended that in seeking to escape his conclusions, Duffield had conceded the absurdities of the Old School position.

In January of 1849, a lengthy critical discussion of Finney's theology by Duffield, appeared in the Biblical Repository and Classical Review. After a voluminous refutation of Finney's theological tenets, Duffield concludes by deprecating not only his doctrines, but his method of preaching and means in revivals. He then launches a violent and respectfully vituperative judgment upon the effect of Finney's theology.

The very names of revivals and spiritual religion, as well as the religious profession of multitudes, have been rendered a taunt and a reproach. We attribute the present dearth of Divine influences, and the absence of the true spirit of revival to the influence of this man-exalting and God-dishonoring philosophy, which has attempted to naturalize religion, if we may so speak, denied the very office and grieved the blessed Spirit of God. Its prevalence will prove but the pioneer of mere natural religion.
to foster Deism, Unitarianism, and Infidelity. 

Finney's theology led to his being abandoned by most of his former Presbyterian and Congregational colleagues. Many of them associated his 'Oberlin Perfectionism' with the 'antinomian' or 'free love' perfectionism of the eccentric John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida community. Noyes had studied under Nathaniel Taylor, principle voice of the New School movement, at Yale. He specifically stated that the Oneida perfectionism grew out of the new divinity. In order to avoid this odious association, Lyman Beecher, George Duffield, and others felt it necessary to be particularly vehement in their repudiation of all perfectionists, including Finney. Actually this did little to relieve the situation, as the Old School Presbyterians were convinced that the evils of perfectionism were the inevitable and logical results of new school theology, and they continued to go out of their way to lump Beecher with Finney, and Finney with Noyes. Finney, of course, was no more sympathetic with Noyes' extreme views than Beecher. He denied any spiritual kinship with 'antinomian perfectionism' and insisted that perfectionism as he defined it did not mean that converted men, even after sanctification, were entitled to follow their impulses and dispense with the ordinary rules of morality.


Finney's position was such that he fell under the criticism both of his associates in the New School, and as well might be expected, of the Old School Presbyterians, whose views he had opposed since the commencement of his ministry. In 1847, the redoubtable Charles Hodge of Princeton took up his pen to review the second volume of Finney's *Systematic Theology*. Speaking concerning the general nature of the work, he writes, "It is eminently logical, rationalistic, reckless, and confident. Conclusions at war with the common faith of Christians, are not only avowed without hesitation, but 'sheer nonsense,' 'stark nonsense,' . . . are the terms applied to doctrines which have ever held their place in the faith of God's people and which will maintain their position undisturbed, long after this work is buried in oblivion." 18

Hodge insists that though Finney's logic is relentless, and to admit his premises is to admit his conclusions, it is exactly this fact that is his fault. He charges that Finney builds his logical tower on contested ground. He assumes as postulates what few of his readers would concede.

Hodge was a man of tremendous influence, especially among the Old School Presbyterians, and his review of Finney's work was the occasion of renewed and intense attacks upon his

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position. Finney thought it advisable to answer Hodge's criticisms in the Oberlin Quarterly Review. Although he conceded no principle points of his position, Finney did make some adjustments and explanations in the subsequent editions of his Systematic Theology. As far as George F. Wright could discover, for the next twenty years after the appearance of his criticism of Finney's position, Hodge never read another word of Finney. When Hodge published his own systematic theology in the 1860's he transcribed the body of his criticism of Finney written twenty years before, and gave no indication of being aware of Finney's replies or adjustments in his subsequent writings.

When the attacks upon Finney by the Calvinistic imperfectionists seemed to be jeopardizing the very doctrine of Christian perfection, the more pietistic Methodists began to lay aside their hostility for the semi-Pelagianism of Finney's theology, and supported him against the antinomian perfectionists on the one hand, and the Calvinistic imperfectionists on the other. The Methodists, who at first had reacted against Finney's approach, now in the early 40's became more appreciative. In more mature judgment, they recognized that both

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21 Gaddis, op. cit., p. 374.
systems sought the same ends, and attempted to consolidate their forces against imperfectionism and antinomianism. However, they were not entirely uncritical of what they conceived to be inadequacies in the Oberlin position.²²

Not only did Finney himself undergo continual criticism, but the Oberlin schools, faculty and students, endured bitter opposition. In 1844 a convention of Plan of Union churches was held at Cleveland to devise a means of hedging in "this fountain of evil and protect the saints from its pestiferous malaria."²³ The actual purpose of the meeting was to discuss the subject of Western education, and the support of the Western colleges. The call had been so worded that the Oberlin delegation expected to take part in the proceedings, but when they arrived, proceedings were on foot to shut them out and all who sympathized with them. Lyman Beecher was the leading spirit of that assembly. While Finney was refused a seat as a delegate, he attended some of the sessions, and reports that the Oberlin doctrines were described as "worse than Catholicism." Finney states concerning the object of the convention that it was intended "to hedge in Oberlin on every side, and crush us, by a public sentiment that would refuse us all support."²⁴

²³Sweet, The Congregationalists, p. 20.
The effect of such measures was to arouse discrimination against Oberlin ministers and missionaries. Many students after graduation from Oberlin found it difficult to become ordained and obtain churches. "Thus the Huron Presbytery in 1840 refused to examine or license James H. and E. H. Fairchild because they would not declare that they did not believe 'In the doctrines taught at Oberlin and in their way of doing things.' "25 Beardsley observes that when some of the early students wished to go as missionaries to the Indians in the Northwest, they asked the American Board (Congregational) to commission them. But they were flatly refused. "We cannot. You are good men, and we wish you well, but it will not do."26

During the years of this "baptism of fire," Oberlin continued to prosper. The school grew in numbers and influence. When sources of support were cut off by the opposition, new resources were made available. Finney records, "I must say, for the honor of the grace of God, that none of the opposition that we met with ruffled our spirits here, or disturbed us, in such a sense as to provoke us into a spirit of controversy or ill feeling."27 He continues, making reference to the continued blessing of God upon the Oberlin institutions.

26 Beardsley, op. cit., p. 136.
27 Finney, op. cit., p. 348.
During these years of smoke and dust, of misapprehension and opposition from without, the Lord was blessing us richly within. We not only prospered in our own souls here, as a church, but we had a continuous revival, or were, in what might properly be regarded as a revival state. Our students were converted by scores; and the Lord overshadowed us continually with the cloud of his mercy. Gales of divine influence swept over us from year to year, producing abundantly the fruits of the Spirit: 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'

It was no small apologetic for the truth of his conclusions concerning the experience of sanctification that Finney and his associates at Oberlin were enabled to maintain a charitable spirit throughout the heat of those days of reaction. It is sobering to realize that all of the reaction discussed above sprang up from within the church. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

(II Timothy 3:12)
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter has attempted to concisely summarize the results of this study. Suggestions concerning areas that merit further research has been indicated in the hope of stimulating continued interest in the subject.

I. SUMMARY

An attempt was first made to establish the significance of Finney as a religious thinker. Does he merit a hearing? Having considered the impact of his evangelistic ministry upon his generation, and its outreach in social concern, it became obvious that the thought of a man of his influence was of unique importance to the student of evangelical truth. It was pointed out that Finney's distinctive contribution to Christian thought was his theology of evangelism. His teachings were always pre-eminentely workable. His theology was seen to be important because it represents the fruit of unusual logical powers approaching the study of religious truth independent of the presuppositions and prejudices of the day. His teaching concerning sanctification becomes especially important because it represents his most mature thought on a subject which he conceived to be central in the Christian Faith. It was further pointed out that Finney's doctrine of sanctification is of historical significance in that it kept alive the Scriptural doctrine
of Christian perfection when the Methodist Church had largely neglected it.

Further study dealt with the personal spiritual experiences of Finney as they affected the development of his thought. It was seen that out of his conversion came, among other things, an unshakeable confidence in the truth of the Scriptures as Divine revelation. There came an emphasis upon experiential religion and the witness of the Spirit. Finney's acquaintance with the work of the Spirit in conversion also led him to constant dependence upon the Spirit's ministry in his evangelistic labors.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost experienced by Finney almost immediately subsequent to his conversion was viewed as both a sealing or witness of the Holy Spirit to his conversion, and an enduement of power for service. If Finney was ever sanctified, however, it was not immediately subsequent to his conversion, but all indications seem to suggest that he experienced the work of the Spirit in this regard during the Winter of 1843. Finney's intense interest in the doctrine was dated from the time of his arrival at Oberlin in 1835.

Further study led to the conclusion that Finney's doctrine of sanctification was the inevitable product of his theological presuppositions. It should again be observed, that Finney differed from Wesley with regard to sanctification only insofar as a difference in their theological presuppositions
predetermined deviation. The first presupposition was seen to be the concept of simplicity of moral action. It was seen that the principle effect of this teaching upon Finney's thought is to necessitate a change in terminology, particularly with regard to the terms sanctification, entire sanctification, and permanent sanctification. As the idea was presented to him after his theology had taken more or less substantial form, it was seen not to be determinative of his thought.

Finney's understanding of depravity, however, constituted a basic premise of which all his subsequent theology is a logical development. It was seen that he insists on a distinction between 'moral depravity,' and 'physical depravity.' Finney rejected constitutional depravity because he felt it made logically inevitable natural inability. Finney was determined to maintain the freedom of the will. To him, the doctrines of total moral depravity and inherited depravity undercut that truth. Had he known of the Wesleyan Arminian doctrines concerning prevenient grace and the free gift of righteousness that accomplish essentially the same ends, he might well have been a Wesleyan Arminian. Between the age of accountability and conversion all men are depraved and under divine condemnation for both Finney and the Wesleyan Arminians. In bringing him to that place, Finney strives to retain the freedom of the human will and moral responsibility by denying the moral quality of physical or constitutional depravity,
an object achieved by the Wesleyan Arminian doctrine of the free gift of righteousness and prevenient grace.

Finney's total theology was seen to demand his understanding of the obligations of moral law as binding upon men. Obligation was seen to be commensurate with human ability. Since Finney's understanding of depravity locates sin in the will and not in the natural constitution, it was found that he held the operation of the Spirit in conversion and in sanctification to be upon the will and not upon the nature or constitution of man.

Proceeding to a study of Finney's actual approach to the doctrine of entire sanctification, it was found that he maintains that it is possible for man to live in a state of Christian perfection or absolute conformity to the will of God. Furthermore, it was found that he held that Christians stand in desperate need of this experience and, indeed, are under obligation to seek this state of grace until it is found. The need for stability, the demand of the individual upon himself, the command of God, and the full provisions of the Gospel were presented as convincing reasons for seeking and claiming this grace.

The establishment of the will in its choice of the good of being as its controlling ultimate intention was found to be the actual work accomplished in entire sanctification. This effect was seen to involve not only man's total consecration,
but a work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart in response to faith, that establishes the will in its consecration, and in a real sense makes that consecration possible. In all of this, the operation of the Spirit of God upon the human heart was seen to be that of 'moral suasion.'

The sensibilities or depraved physical appetites and propensities are dealt with by 'counterdevelopment,' not annihilation, or constitutional eradication. It was seen, that Finney taught that as the Spirit of God reveals Christ in his different relations the heart, the soul is awakened to its spiritual relations and possibilities. The soul becomes 'enamored' with Christ. The flesh loses more and more its appeal. While always an occasion for temptation, not having moral character, the sensibilities are not dealt with directly, but are controlled and absolutely subjected to the higher loyalties of the soul. Ultimately they are disciplined, redeemed, sanctified, and at glorification transfigured. Finney would have it clearly understood that the locus of sin is not in the sensibilities or depraved condition of man, but in the depravity of the will.

In the teaching of Finney, it was discovered that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, an experience effected subsequent to conversion, involves three basic blessings: Cleansing, Power, and Stability. Finney was seen definitely to relate the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the attainment of entire
sanctification. It is never clear, however, that the baptism of the Spirit always involves the perfect sanctification of the heart. Although his teaching was seen to stress the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a definite crisis experience, Finney also taught the need of repeated fresh anoinings for subsequent challenges in the Christian's life.

Further study revealed that the Wesleyan Arminian view of sanctification and that of Charles G. Finney are in substantial agreement. Differences find their basis in Finney's presuppositions concerning depravity, moral law, and the operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. Finney and the Wesleyans were found to agree that it is possible for men to live without sin in this life. It is the obligation of every Christian to seek the grace of sanctification. Sanctification is viewed as distinct from and subsequent to conversion. The conditions of attaining entire sanctification were seen to be a sense of need, total consecration, and faith in Christ. Sanctification for both Finney and the Wesleyans was seen to be a second definite work of grace, wrought in the heart through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit in response to faith. It was found that the most significant agreement is at the point of the expression of this heart condition in the life.

The final chapter pointed up some clues as to the nature and extent of the response evoked by Finney's preaching of the doctrine of entire sanctification. It was seen that reaction
to his teaching is much simpler to outline than the response to his proclamation of entire sanctification.

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Unexplored areas of investigation should be pointed up in order to stimulate interest in further research. A profitable study might be undertaken with regard to the influence of Pelagius, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Nathaniel Taylor, and others, upon his thought. There is a need for further explanation of Finney's teaching concerning the counterdevelopment of the sensibilities. The area of Finney's defense of free will, human ability, and human responsibility for moral depravity poses some stimulating problems. Finally, consideration might be given to Finney's influence upon the thought of other Christian theologians.

III. CONCLUSION

The total impact of Finney's ministry is being recorded in heaven alone. No man set himself to a more careful study of the doctrine of sanctification. No man ever gave himself more earnestly to the task of proclaiming the full possibilities of grace to the Church. The last forty years of his long life were devoted primarily to the work of seeking to accomplish the sanctification of the churches. This study and proclamation involved a continual and sometimes, heroic defense of what he
conceived to be the central truth of Christian revelation. His compelling passion to spread these good tidings is epitomized in the concluding statements of his *Views on Sanctification*.

I have done what I could, and thank my Heavenly Father that I have been spared to say so much in defence of the great, leading central truth of revelation—THE ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

And now, blessed and beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Lord 'let me beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' 'And may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved BLAMELESS unto the coming of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.'

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A. WORKS OF CHARLES G. FINNEY


Views on Sanctification. Oberlin: James Steele, 1840.

B. BOOKS


C. PERIODICALS


_____. "Reply to Dr. Hodge," Oberlin Quarterly Review, III (August 1847), pp. 23-81.

_____. "The Promises" --no. 5 (II Peter 1:4), The Oberlin Evangelist, July 17, 1839, pp. 121-124.


_____. "To the Editor of The Oberlin Evangelist," The Oberlin Evangelist, January 1, 1839, p. 9.


D. UNPUBLISHED WORKS


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY

OF CHARLES G. FINNEY

1792 August 29, born in Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut.

1808 Began teaching at Henderson, New York.

1812 Attended academy at Warren, Connecticut.

1818 Entered law office of Judge Benjamin Wright at Adams, New York, to study for the legal profession.

1820 Was admitted to the bar, and began practise in association with Judge Wright.

1821 October 10, was converted.

1822 Spring, placed under the care of Rev. George W. Gale to study for the ministry.

1823 December, licensed to preach.

1824 March, commenced labors at Evans Mills and Antwerp under the Female Missionary Society.

July 1, was ordained to the ministry.


1825 Perch Haven, Brownville, LeRayville.
Spring, Gouvernour and DeKalb.
Fall, Western, Rome.

1826 Winter, Utica.
Summer, Auburn.
Winter 1826 - 27, Troy.

1827 New Lebanon; Wilmington, Delaware; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.


1829 Reading, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Columbia, New York, New York City.
1830  Summer, accepted pastorate of Third Presbyterian in Rochester, N. Y.

1831  Auburn (Second series), Buffalo; Providence, Rhode Island; Boston, Mass.

1832  April, accepted pastorate of Second Free Presbyterian Church in the Chatham Street Theater.

1833  Broadway Tabernacle erected.

1834  Trip to the Mediterranean to recover his health.

1835  Returned to Broadway Tabernacle, and began the Revival Lectures.
      Summer, accepted call to Oberlin Collegiate Institute as professor of Christian Theology.
      Winter, returned to Broadway Tabernacle, and commenced Lectures to Professing Christians.

1836  First gave serious attention to doctrine of sanctification.
      Winter, completed Lectures to Professing Christians at Broadway Tabernacle, including two sermons on Christian Perfection.

1841  Winter 1841-42, Boston.

1842  Second series at Rochester at invitation of the lawyers.
      Lectures on Moral Obligation.

1843  Winter, Boston. Spiritual "overhauling" (Sanctified).

1846  Published two volumes of Systematic Theology.

1849 - 1851  First trip to England. Whitefield Tabernacle.

1851  Elected president of Oberlin College.


1852  Winter 1852-53, Syracuse.


1855  Rochester, New York (third series).

1856  Winter 1856-57, Boston, Park St. Church.

1858  Boston.
1858-59 Second trip to England.

1860-72 Pastor of First Congregational Church, Oberlin.

1875 July, finished last course of lectures. August 16, died at 83 years of age.

APPENDIX B

RELATIONS OF CHRIST TO THE SOUL

These relations are suggested in Charles G. Finney's Guide to the Saviour, reprinted under the editorship of William E. Allen, as Sanctification.

p. 23 "The light and grace which we need, and which is is the office of the Holy Spirit to supply, respects mainly the following things:

(1) Knowledge of ourselves, our past sins, their nature, aggravation, guilt, and desert of dire damnation.

(2) Knowledge of our spiritual helplessness or weakness, in consequence of:

(i) The physical depravity or morbid development of our natures.

(ii) The strength of selfish habit.

(iii) The power of temptation from the world, the flesh, and Satan.

(3) The need of the light of the Holy Spirit to teach us the character of God, the nature of His government, the purity of His law, the necessity and fact of atonement.

(4) The need of being taught of Christ in all His offices and relations, governmental, spiritual and mixed.

(5) The need of the revelation of Christ to our souls in all these relations, and in such power as to induce in us that appropriating faith, without which Christ is not, and cannot be, our salvation.

(6) The need to know Christ, for example, in such relations as the following:

1. King
2. Mediator
3. Advocate
4. Redeemer
5. Justification
6. Judge
7. Repairer of the Breach
8. Propitiation for Our Sins
9. Surety of a Better Covenant
10. Substitute
11. Risen for Our Justification
12. Man of Sorrows
13. Healer
14. Made Sin for Us
15. Governor
16. Head Over All Things to the Church
17. The All-Powerful One
18. Prince of Peace
19. Captain of Salvation
20. Our Passover
21. Wisdom
22. Sanctification
23. Redemption of the Soul
24. Prophet
25. High Priest
26. The Bread of Life
27. Fountain of the Water of Life
28. The True God
29. Our Life
30. All in All
31. The Resurrection and the Life
32. Bridegroom
33. Our Shepherd
34. The Door
35. The Way
36. The Truth
37. The True Light
38. Christ Within Us
39. Our Strength
40. The Keeper of the Soul
41. Friend
42. Elder Brother
43. The True Vine
44. The Fountain
45. Jesus
46. Wonderful
47. Counsellor
48. Mighty God
49. Our Shield
50. Our Portion
51. Hope
52. Salvation
53. The Rock of Our Salvation
54. Strength of Our Heart