

## FINNEY'S MEMOIRS

In 1866, Charles G. Finney began to write his memoirs, which he worked on for the last three years of his life. His goal was to describe revival in such a way that it would produce a new revival for his present generation. Although many were professing to be Christians he felt that too few were experiencing the fullness of their faith. Also, as an elder statesman, he lamented the number of evangelists who were relying on their ability to persuade people to surrender to God, rather than relying on the power of God. He hoped his descriptions of a real move of God would expose their shallow efforts by comparison.



REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY.

*C. G. Finney*

### THE REASON FOR WRITING HIS MEMOIRS

Finney once wrote of his revival work in the Oberlin Evangelist, saying, "Indeed, I should doubt if the world has ever witnessed more pure, more powerful, more lasting and desirable in their results than those that have occurred in this country during the past forty or fifty years. If my health will allow, I hope to write some account of the revivals that have occurred under my observation, and since I have been in this ministry, for the purpose, if possible, of disabusing the minds of those who have prejudiced against those revivals by false reports."

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### HE WROTE A DIFFERENT BOOK THAN HE TOLD

As he wrote, reminisced, and dictated parts of the story to his family, he seemed to come alive from the old memories that were being stirred. He told many stories about his early days, causing his family to often laugh at some of the misadventures of a young evangelist in the midst of a mighty move of God and the odd effects it had on some of the dear country folks who were

caught up in it. The members of his family were all surprised as they read the finished manuscript after his death, when they discovered that none of these stories made their way into the final pages. In fact, he wrote very little about himself, including his initial reactions and personal experiences. In fact, it was an entirely different book that what they had heard during the writing process.

One of the things that had become obvious to those who read his autobiography, was that Finney wanted to give his side of the story behind some of the early conflict that occurred between him and the other leaders of the Presbyterian church. He gave a considerable amount of space to the “new measures” he introduced, which was the wedge that caused the eventual split between the “Old School and New School” movements in the church.

### BURN THE BOOK

On his deathbed in 1875, Finney asked his wife to retrieve the manuscript from the attic and to burn it. He said he was concerned for the feelings of those whose relatives were mentioned in the narrative, because he described their spiritual conditions so honestly. She refused to do as she had been asked. After Finney’s death, the family donated his work to Oberlin College in the hopes that the revenues would contribute to the ongoing work of the school. In January 1876, Finney’s memoirs were received with much interest and continue to serve as an inspiration for those who long for pure revival, which can only come from the Hand of the Lord.

Blessings, Penn Clark

### INTRODUCTION

It has pleased God in some measure to connect my name and labors with an extensive movement of the church of Christ, regarded by some as a new era in its progress, especially in relation to revivals of religion. As this movement involved, to a considerable extent, the development of views of Christian doctrine which had not been common, and was brought about by changes in the means of carrying forward the work of evangelization, it was very natural that some misapprehension should prevail in regard to these modified statements of doctrine, and the use of these measures; and consequently that, to some extent, even good men should call in question the wisdom of these measures and the soundness of these theological statements; and that ungodly men should be irritated, and for a time should strenuously oppose these great movements.

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

I have been particularly importuned, for a number of years, by the friends of those revivals with which my name and labors have been connected, to write a history of them. As so much misapprehension has prevailed respecting them, it is thought that the truth of history demands a

statement from myself of the doctrines that were preached, so far as I was concerned; of the measures used, and of the results of preaching those doctrines and the use of those measures. My mind seems instinctively to recoil from saying so much of myself as I shall be obliged to do, if I speak honestly of those revivals and of my relation to them. For this reason I have declined, up to this time, to undertake such a work. Of late the trustees of Oberlin College have laid the matter before me, and urged me to undertake it. They, together with numerous other friends in this country and in England, have urged that it was due to the cause of Christ, that a better understanding should exist in the church than has

hitherto existed, in regard especially to the revivals that occurred in central New York and elsewhere, from 1821 and onward for several years, because those revivals have been most misrepresented and opposed.

I approach the subject, I must say, with reluctance, for many reasons. I have kept no diary, and consequently must depend on my memory. It is true, that my memory is naturally very tenacious, and the events that I have witnessed in revivals of religion have made a very deep impression on my mind; and I remember, with great distinctness, many more than I shall have time to communicate. Everyone who has witnessed powerful revivals of religion is aware that many cases of conviction and conversion are daily occurring, of the greatest interest to the people in the midst of whom they occur. Where all the facts and circumstances are known, a thrilling effect is often produced; and such cases are frequently so numerous that if all the highly interesting facts of even one extended revival, in a single locality, should be narrated, it would fill a large volume.

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

I shall also endeavor to give such an account of the doctrines which were preached, and of the measures which were used, and shall mention such facts, in general, as will enable the church hereafter, partially at least, to estimate the power and purity of those great works of God. But I hesitate to write a narrative of those revivals, because I have often been surprised to find how much my own remembrance of facts differs from the recollection of other persons who were in the midst of those scenes. Of course I must state the facts as I remember them. A great many of those events have been often referred to by myself in preaching, as illustrative of the truths that I was presenting to the people. I have been so often reminded of them, and have so often referred to them in all the years of my ministry, that I cannot but have strong confidence that I remember them substantially as they occurred. If I shall in any case misstate the facts, or if in any case my recollections shall differ widely from those of others, I trust that the church will believe that my statements are in entire accordance with my present remembrance of those facts. I am now (1867-68) seventy-five years old. Of course, I remember things

that transpired many years ago more definitely than those of recent occurrence. In regard to the doctrines preached, so far as I was concerned, and the means used to promote the revivals, I think I cannot be mistaken.

To give any intelligible account of the part which I was called to act in those scenes, it is necessary that I should give a little history of the manner in which I came to adopt the doctrinal views which I have long held and preached, and which have been regarded by many persons as objectionable.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION**

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

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

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

### **MOVE TO HENDERSON, NEW YORK**

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

### **BACK TO FAMILY ROOTS**

When about twenty years old I returned to Connecticut and from thence went to New Jersey, near New York City, and engaged in teaching. I taught and studied as best I could; and twice returned to New England and attended a high school for a season. While attending the high school I meditated going to Yale College. My preceptor was a graduate of Yale, but he advised

me not to go. He said it would be a loss of time, as I could easily accomplish the whole curriculum of study pursued at that institution, in two years; whereas it would cost me four years to graduate. He presented such considerations as prevailed with me, and as it resulted, I failed to pursue my school education any farther at that time. However, afterward I acquired some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But I was never a classical scholar, and never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticizing our English translation of the Bible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### A SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE IN ADAMS, NEW YORK

At Adams, for the first time, I sat stately, for a length of time, under an educated ministry. Rev. George W. Gale, from Princeton, New Jersey, became, soon after I went there, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in that place. His preaching was of the old school type; that is, it was thoroughly Calvinistic; and whenever he came out with the doctrines, which he seldom did, he would preach what has been called hyper-Calvinism. He was, of course, regarded as highly orthodox; but I was not able to gain very much instruction from his preaching. As I sometimes told him, he seemed to me to begin in the middle of his discourse, and to assume many things, which to my mind needed to be proved. He seemed to take it for granted that his hearers were theologians, and therefore that he might assume all the great and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. But I must say that I was rather perplexed than edified by his preaching.

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

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

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

In conversing with him and asking him questions, I perceived that his own mind was, as I thought, mystified; and that he did not accurately define to himself what he meant by many of the important terms that he used. Indeed I found it impossible to attach any meaning to many of the terms which he used with great formality and frequency. What did he mean by repentance? Was it a mere feeling of sorrow for sin? Was it altogether a passive state of mind, or did it involve a voluntary element? If it was a change of mind, in what respect was it a change of mind? What did he mean by the term regeneration? What did such language mean when applied to a spiritual change? What did he mean by faith? Was it merely an intellectual state? Was it merely a conviction, or persuasion, that the things stated in the Gospel were true? What did he mean by sanctification? Did it involve any physical change in the subject, or any physical

influence on the part of God? I could not tell, nor did he seem to me to know himself, in what sense he used these and similar terms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

On one occasion, when I was in one of the prayer meetings, I was asked if I did not desire that they should pray for me! I told them, no; because I did not see that God answered their prayers. I said, "I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see

that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for a revival of religion ever since I have been in Adams, and yet you have it not. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness." I recollect having used this expression at that time: "You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayers. But here you are praying on, and complaining still." I was quite in earnest in what I said, and not a little irritable, I think, in consequence of my being brought so continually face to face with religious truth; which was a new state of things to me.

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

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

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

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **CONVERSION TO CHRIST**

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

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had supposed that I had not much regard for the opinions of others, whether they thought this or that in regard to myself; and I had in fact been quite singular in attending prayer meetings, and in the degree of attention that I had paid to religion, while in Adams. In this respect I had not been so singular as to lead the church at times to think that I must be an anxious inquirer. But I found, when I came to face the question, that I

was very unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper my prayer, after having stopped the key hole to the door, lest someone should discover that I was engaged in prayer. Before that time I had my Bible lying on the table with the law books; and it never had occurred to me to be ashamed of being found reading it, any more than I should be ashamed of being found reading any of my other books.

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

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

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

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

Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that His work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ. Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the inward voice seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that position I cannot say. But after this distinct

revelation had stood for some little time before my mind, the question seemed to be put, "Will you accept it now, today?" I replied, "Yes; I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt."

### ENTERING THE WOODS

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

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

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

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

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

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that

place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

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

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

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

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

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

Then I remembered what I had said to God while I was on my knees, that I had said I would take Him at his word; and indeed I recollect a good many things that I had said, and concluded that it was no wonder that the Spirit had left me; that for such a sinner as I was to take hold of God's

Word in that way, was presumption if not blasphemy. I concluded that in my excitement I had grieved the Holy Spirit, and perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

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

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

#### IN THE OFFICE

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

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

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

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fireplace, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire Wright, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my whole soul

out to God.” The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

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

### WAVES OF LIQUID LOVE

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

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

### BEGINNING TO TESTIFY

How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir—for I was the leader of the choir—came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this state of loud weeping, and said to me, “Mr. Finney, what ails you?” I could make him no answer for some time. He then said, “Are you in pain?” I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, “No, but so happy that I cannot live.”

He turned and left the office, and in a few minutes returned with one of the elders of the church, whose shop was nearly across the way from our office. This elder was a very serious man; and in my presence had been very watchful, and I had scarcely ever seen him laugh. When he came in, I

was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt, and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything, he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.

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

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

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

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

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

When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that this sunlight made upon me. Instantly the baptism that I had received the night before, returned upon me in the same manner. I arose upon my knees in the bed and wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. It seemed as if this morning's baptism was accompanied with a gentle reproof, and the Spirit seemed to say to me, "Will you

doubt? Will you doubt?" I cried, "No! I will not doubt; I cannot doubt." He then cleared the subject up so much to my mind that it was in fact impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul.

In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience. That doctrine had never taken any such possession of my mind, that I had ever viewed it distinctly as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Indeed, I did not know at all what it meant in the proper sense. But I could now see and understand what was meant by the passage, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I could see that the moment I believed, while up in the woods, all sense of condemnation had entirely dropped out of my mind; and that from that moment I could not feel a sense of guilt or condemnation by any effort that I could make. My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned.

This was just the revelation that I needed. I felt myself justified by faith; and, so far as I could see, I was in a state in which I did not sin. Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God. Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of this experience of justification.

### **CHAPTER 3.**

#### **BEGINNING OF HIS WORK**

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

#### **A RETAINER FROM THE LORD**

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

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

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

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

### THE FIRST CONTEST

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

### THE CONVICTION SPREADS

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

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

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

"FINNEY'S CRAZY!"

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

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

However, with one consent the people seemed to rush to the place of worship. I went there myself. The minister was there, and nearly all the principal people in the village. No one seemed ready to open the meeting; but the house was packed to its utmost capacity. I did not wait for

anybody, but arose and began by saying that I then knew that religion was from God. I went on and told such parts of my experience as it seemed important for me to tell. This Mr. Cable, who had promised his wife that if I was converted he would believe in religion, was present. Mr. Munson, the old lawyer, was also present. What the Lord enabled me to say seemed to take a wonderful hold upon the people. Mr. Cable got up, pressed through the crowd, and went home, leaving his hat. Mr. Munson also left and went home, saying I was crazy. "He is in earnest," said he, "there is no mistake; but he is deranged, that is clear."

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

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

#### FIRST FRUITS

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

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

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

#### WITNESS AT HOME

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

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

#### PRAYER MEETING IN HENDERSON

I remained in that neighborhood, I think, for two or three days, and conversed more or less with such people as I could meet with. I believe it was the next Monday night, they had a monthly concert of prayer in that town. There were there a Baptist church that had a minister, and a small Congregational church without a minister. The town was very much of a moral waste, however; and at this time religion was at a very low ebb.

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

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

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

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

#### THE CONVERSION OF SQUIRE WRIGHT

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

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

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

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

But one afternoon I was sitting in our office, and two of the elders of the church with me; when the young man that I had met at the shoemaker's shop, came hastily into the office, and exclaimed as he came, "Squire Wright is converted!" and proceeded to say: "I went up into the woods to pray, and heard someone over in the valley shouting very loud. I went up to the brow of the hill, where I could look down, and I saw Squire W pacing to and fro, and singing as loud as he could sing; and every few moments he would stop and clap his hands with his full strength, and shout, 'I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!' Then he would march and sing again; and then stop, and shout, and clap his hands." While the young man was telling us this, behold, Squire Wright appeared in sight, coming over the hill. As he came down to the foot of the hill we observed that he met Father Tucker, as we all called him, an aged Methodist brother. He rushed up to him, and took him right up in his arms. After setting him down, and conversing a moment, he came rapidly toward the office. When he came in, he was in a profuse perspiration—he was a

heavy man, and he cried out, "I've got it! I've got it!" clapped his hands with all his might, and fell upon his knees and began to give thanks to God. He then gave us an account of what had been passing in his mind, and why he had not obtained a hope before. He said as soon as he gave up that point and went into the woods, his mind was relieved; and when he knelt down to pray, the Spirit of God came upon him and filled him with such unspeakable joy that it resulted in the scene which the young man witnessed. Of course from that time Squire Wright took a decided stand for God.

### SEEING THE GLORY OF GOD

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

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

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

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

### LEARNING TO PRAY

I used to have, when I was a young Christian, many seasons of communing with God which cannot be described in words. And not unfrequently those seasons would end in an impression by my mind like this: "Go, see that thou tell no man." I did not understand this at the time, and

several times I paid no attention to this injunction; but tried to tell my Christian brethren what communications the Lord had made to me, or rather what seasons of communion I had with Him. But I soon found that it would not do to tell my brethren what was passing between the Lord and my soul. They could not understand it. They would look surprised, and sometimes, I thought, incredulous; and I soon learned to keep quiet in regard to those divine manifestations, and say but little about them.

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

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

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

### THE TRAVAIL OF YOUR SOUL

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

I stayed a considerable time in the church, in this state of mind, but got no relief. I returned to the office; but could not sit still. I could only walk the room and agonize. I returned to the meeting

house again, and went through the same process of struggling. For a long time I tried to get my prayer before the Lord; but somehow words could not express it. I could only groan and weep, without being able to express what I wanted in words. I returned to the office again, and still found I was unable to rest; and I returned a third time to the meeting house. At this time the Lord gave me power to prevail. I was enabled to roll the burden upon Him; and I obtained the assurance in my own mind that the woman would not die, and indeed that she would never die in her sins.

I returned to the office. My mind was perfectly quiet; and I soon left and retired to rest. Early the next morning the husband of this woman came into the office. I inquired how his wife was. He, smiling said, "She's alive, and to all appearance better this morning." I replied, "Brother W, she will not die with this sickness; you may rely upon it. And she will never die in her sins." I do not know how I was made sure of this; but it was in some way made plain to me, so that I had no doubt that she would recover. She did recover, and soon after obtained a hope in Christ.

At first I did not understand what this exercise of mind that I had passed through, was. But shortly after in relating it to a Christian brother he said to me, "Why, that was the travail of your soul." A few minutes conversation, and pointing me to certain scriptures, gave me to understand what it was.

#### WITNESSING TO HIS LANDLORD

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

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

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

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

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

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **RESISTANCE IN ADAMS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### A CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTRY

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

### THE FIRST THEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

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

He held also that the influences of the Spirit of God on the minds of men were physical, acting directly upon the substance of the soul; that men were passive in regeneration; and in short he held all those doctrines that logically flow from the fact of a nature sinful in itself.

These doctrines I could not receive. I could not receive his views on the subject of atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will, or any of the kindred doctrines. But of these views he was quite tenacious; and he seemed sometimes not a little impatient because I did not receive them without question.

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

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

### ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE NIGHT

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

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

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

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

## LICENSED TO PREACH

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

When they had examined me, they voted unanimously to license me to preach. Unexpectedly to myself they asked me if I received the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church. I had not examined it—that is, the large work containing the catechism and confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine, so far as I understood it. But I spoke in a way that plainly implied, I think, that I did not pretend to know much about it. However, I answered honestly, as I understood it at the time. They heard the trial sermons which I had written, on texts which had been given me by the presbytery; and went through with all the ordinary details of such an examination.

## MEETING DANIEL NASH

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

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

## CONTROVERSY WITH MY THEOLOGICAL TEACHER

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

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

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

I had been used to the close and logical reasonings of the judges, as I found them reported in our law works; but when I went to Mr. Gale's old school library, I found almost nothing proved to my satisfaction. I am sure it was not because I was opposed to the truth, but I was dissatisfied because the positions of these theological authors were unsound and not satisfactorily sustained. They often seemed to me to state one thing and prove another, and frequently fell short of logically proving anything.

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

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

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

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **PREACHING AS A MISSIONARY**

Having had no regular training for the ministry I did not expect or desire to labor in large towns or cities, or minister to cultivated congregations. I intended to go into the new settlements and preach in schoolhouses, and barns, and groves, as best I could. Accordingly, soon after being licensed to preach, for the sake of being introduced to the region where I proposed to labor, I took a commission, for six months, from a female missionary society located in Oneida County. I went into the northern part of Jefferson County, and began my labors at Evans Mills, in the town of Le Ray.

At this place I found two churches, a small Congregational church without a minister, and a Baptist church with a minister. I presented my credentials to the deacons of the church. They were very glad to see me, and I soon began my labors. They had no meeting house; but the two churches worshipped alternately in a large stone schoolhouse, large enough, I believe, to accommodate all the children in the village. The Baptists occupied the house one Sabbath, and the Congregationalists the next; so that I could have the house but every other Sabbath, but could use it evenings as often as I pleased. I therefore divided my Sabbaths between Evans Mills and Antwerp, a village some sixteen or eighteen miles still farther north.

### STARTING AT EVANS MILLS

I will relate first some facts that occurred at Evans Mills, during that season; and then give a brief narrative of the occurrences at Antwerp. But as I preached alternately in these two places, these facts were occurring from week to week in one or the other of these localities. I began, as I said, to preach in the stone schoolhouse at Evans Mills. The people were very much interested, and thronged the place to hear me preach. They extolled my preaching; and the little Congregational Church became very much interested, and hopeful that they should be built up, and that there would be a revival. More or less convictions occurred under every sermon that I preached; but still no general conviction appeared upon the public mind.

I was very much dissatisfied with this state of things; and at one of my evening services, after having preached there two or three Sabbaths, and several evenings in the week, I told the people at the close of my sermon, that I had come there to secure the salvation of their souls; that my preaching, I knew, was highly complimented by them; but that, after all, I did not come there to please them but to bring them to repentance; that it mattered not to me how well they were pleased with my preaching, if after all they rejected my Master; that something was wrong, either in me or in them; that the kind of interest they manifested in my preaching was doing them no good; and that I could not spend my time with them unless they were going to receive the Gospel. I then, quoting the words of Abraham's servant, said to them, "Now will you deal kindly and truly with my master? If you will, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." I turned this question over, and pressed it upon them, and insisted upon it that I must know what course they proposed to pursue. If they did not purpose to become Christians, and enlist in the service of the Savior, I wanted to know it that I might not labor with them in vain. I said to them, "You admit that what I preach is the Gospel. You profess to believe it. Now will you receive it? Do you mean to receive it, or do you intend to reject it? You must have some mind about it. And now I have a right to take it for granted, in as much as you admit that I have preached the truth, that you acknowledge your obligation at once to become Christians. This obligation you do not deny; but will you meet the obligation? Will you discharge

it? Will you do what you admit you ought to do? If you will not, tell me; and if you will, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

After turning this over till I saw they understood it well, and looked greatly surprised at my manner of putting it, I then said to them, “Now I must know your minds, and I want that you who have made up your minds to become Christians, and will give your pledge to make your peace with God immediately, should rise up; but that, on the contrary, those of you who are resolved that you will not become Christians, and wish me so to understand, and wish Christ so to understand, should sit still.” After making this plain, so that I knew that they understood it, I then said: “You who are now willing to pledge to me and to Christ, that you will immediately make your peace with God, please rise up. On the contrary, you that mean that I should understand that you are committed to remain in your present attitude, not to accept Christ—those of you that are of this mind, may sit still.” They looked at one another and at me, and all sat still just as I expected.

After looking around upon them for a few moments, I said, “Then you are committed. You have taken your stand. You have rejected Christ and His Gospel; and ye are witnesses one against the other, and God is witness against you all. This is explicit and you may remember as long as you live, that you have thus publicly committed yourselves against the Savior, and said, ‘We will not have this man, Christ Jesus, to reign over us.’” This is the purport of what I urged upon them, and as nearly in these words as I can recollect.

When I thus pressed them they began to look angry, and arose, en masse, and started for the door. When they began to move, I paused. As soon as I stopped speaking they turned to see why I did not go on. I said, “I am sorry for you; and will preach to you once more, the Lord willing, tomorrow night.”

#### A NEW PRAYER PARTNER

They all left the house except Deacon McComber who was a deacon of the Baptist church in that place. I saw that the Congregationalists were confounded. They were few in number and very weak in faith. I presume that every member of both churches who was present, except Deacon McComber, was taken aback, and concluded that the matter was all over—that by my imprudence I had dashed and ruined all hopeful appearances. Deacon McComber came up and took me by the hand and smiling said, “Brother Finney, you have got them. They cannot rest under this, rely upon it. The brethren are all discouraged,” said he; “but I am not. I believe you have done the very thing that needed to be done, and that we shall see the results.” I thought so myself, of course. I intended to place them in a position which, upon reflection, would make them tremble in view of what they had done. But for that evening and the next day they were full of wrath. Deacon McComber and myself agreed upon the spot, to spend the next day in fasting and prayer separately in the morning, and together in the afternoon. I learned in the course of the day that the people were threatening me—to ride me on a rail, to tar and feather me, and to give me a “walking paper,” as they said. Some of them cursed me; and said that I had put them under oath, and made them swear that they would not serve God; that I had drawn them into a solemn and public pledge to reject Christ and His Gospel. This was no more than I expected. In the afternoon Deacon McComber and I went into a grove together, and spent the whole afternoon in

prayer. Just at evening the Lord gave us great enlargement, and promise of victory. Both of us felt assured that we had prevailed with God; and that, that night, the power of God would be revealed among the people.

As the time came for meeting, we left the woods and went to the village. The people were already thronging to the place of worship; and those that had not already gone, seeing us go through the villages turned out of their stores and places of business, or threw down their ball clubs where they were playing upon the green, and packed the house to its utmost capacity.

I had not taken a thought with regard to what I should preach; indeed, this was common with me at that time. The Holy Spirit was upon me, and I felt confident that when the time came for action I should know what to preach. As soon as I found the house packed, so that no more could get in, I arose, and I think, without any formal introduction of singing, opened upon them with these words: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo to the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The Spirit of God came upon me with such power, that it was like opening a battery upon them. For more than an hour, and perhaps for an hour and a half, the Word of God came through me to them in a manner that I could see was carrying all before it. It was a fire and a hammer breaking the rock; and as the sword that was piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. I saw that a general conviction was spreading over the whole congregation. Many of them could not hold up their heads. I did not call that night for any reversal of the action they had taken the night before, nor for any committal of themselves in any way; but took it for granted, during the whole of the sermon, that they were committed against the Lord. Then I appointed another meeting, and dismissed the congregation.

#### OPPOSITION FROM THE HOTEL KEEPER

I found at this place a number of deists; some of them men of high standing in the community. One of them was a keeper of a hotel in the village; and others were respectable men, and of more than average intelligence. But they seemed banded together to resist the revival. When I ascertained exactly the ground they took, I preached a sermon to meet their wants; for on the Sabbath they would attend my preaching. I took this for my text: "Suffer me a little, and I will show you that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will bring my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." I went over the whole ground, so far as I understood their position; and God enabled me to sweep it clean. As soon as I had finished and dismissed the meeting, the hotel keeper, who was the leader among them, came frankly up to me, and taking me by the hand, said, "Mr. Finney, I am convinced. You have met and answered all my difficulties. Now I want you to go home with me, for I want to converse with you." I heard no more of their infidelity; and if I remember right, that class of men were nearly, or quite, all converted.

#### THE REMOVAL OF A RAILER

There was one old man in this place, who was not only an infidel, but a great railer at religion. He was very angry at the revival movement. I heard every day of his railing and blaspheming, but took no public notice of it. He refused altogether to attend meeting. But in the midst of his

opposition, and when his excitement was great, while sitting one morning at the table, he suddenly fell out of his chair in a fit of apoplexy. A physician was immediately called, who, after a brief examination, told him that he could live but a very short time; and that if he had anything to say, he must say it at once. He had just strength and time, as I was informed, to stammer out, "Don't let Finney pray over my corpse." This was the last of his opposition in that place.

### DON'T BRING YOUR GUNS TO CHURCH

While at this place, one afternoon, a Christian brother called on me and wished me to visit his sister, who, as he informed me, was fast failing with consumption, and was a Universalist. Her husband, he said, was a Universalist, and had led her into Universalism. He said he had not asked me to go and see her when her husband was at home, because he feared that he would abuse me; as he was determined that his wife's mind should not be disturbed on the question of universal salvation. I went, and found her not at all at rest in her views of Universalism; and during my conversation with her, she gave up these views entirely, and appeared to embrace the Gospel of Christ. I believe she held fast to this hope in Christ till she died.

At evening her husband returned, and learned from herself what had taken place. He was greatly enraged, and swore he would "kill Finney." As I learned afterward, he armed himself with a loaded pistol, and that night went to meeting where I was to preach. Of this, however, I knew nothing at the time. The meeting that evening was in a schoolhouse out of the village. The house was very much packed, almost to suffocation. I went on to preach with all my might; and almost in the midst of my discourse I saw a powerful looking man, about in the middle of the house, fall from his seat. As he sunk down he groaned, and then cried or shrieked out, that he was sinking to hell. He repeated that several times. The people knew who he was, but he was a stranger to me. I think I had never seen him before.

Of course this created a great excitement. It broke up my preaching; and so great was his anguish that we spent the rest of our time in praying for him. When the meeting was dismissed his friends helped him home. The next morning I inquired for him; and found that he had spent a sleepless night, in great anguish of mind, and that at the early dawn he had gone forth, they knew not whither. He was not heard from till about ten o'clock in the morning. I was passing up the street, and saw him coming, apparently from a grove at some distance from the village. He was on the opposite side of the street when I first saw him, and coming toward me. When he recognized me, he came across the street to meet me. When he came near enough, I saw that his countenance was all in a glow. I said to him, "Good morning Mr. Comstock." "Good morning," he replied. "And," said I, "how do you feel in your mind this morning?" "Oh, I do not know," he replied; "I have had an awfully distressed night. But I could not pray there in the house; and I thought if I could get alone, where I could pour out my voice with my heart, I could pray. In the morning I went into the woods; but when I got there," said he, "I found I could not pray. I thought I could give myself to God; but I could not. I tried, and tried, till I was discouraged," he continued. "Finally I saw that it was of no use; and I told the Lord that I found myself condemned and lost; that I had no heart to pray to Him, and no heart to repent; that I found I had hardened myself so much that I could not give my heart to Him, and therefore I must leave the whole question to Him. I was at His disposal, and could not object to His doing with me just as it seemed good in His eyes, for I had no claim to His favor at all. I left the question of my salvation or damnation

wholly with the Lord.” “Well, what followed?” I inquired. “Why,” said he, “I found I had lost all my conviction. I got up and came away, and my mind was so still and quiet that I found the Spirit of God was grieved away, and I had lost my conviction. But,” said he, “when I saw you my heart began to burn and grow hot within me; and instead of feeling as if I wanted to avoid you, I felt so drawn that I came across the street to see you.” But I should have said that when he came near me, he leaped, and took me right up in his arms, and turned around once or twice, and then set me down. This preceded the conversation that I have just related. After a little further conversation I left him. He soon came into a state of mind that led him to indulge a hope. We heard no more of his opposition.

#### BEING JOINED BY NASH

At this place I again saw Father Nash, the man who prayed with his eyes open, at the meeting of presbytery, when I was licensed. After he was at presbytery he was taken with inflamed eyes; and for several weeks was shut up in a dark room. He could neither read nor write, and, as I learned, gave himself up almost entirely to prayer. He had a terrible overhauling in his whole Christian experience; and as soon as he was able to see, with a double black veil before his face, he sallied forth to labor for souls.

When he came to Evans Mills he was full of the power of prayer. He was another man altogether from what he had been at any former period of his Christian life. I found that he had a praying list, as he called it, of the names of persons whom he made subjects of prayer every day, and sometimes many times a day. And praying with him, and hearing him pray in meeting, I found that his gift of prayer was wonderful, and his faith almost miraculous.

#### FROM BAR-ROOM TO PRAYER ROOM

There was a man by the name of Dresser, who kept a low tavern in a corner of the village, whose house was the resort of all the opposers of the revival. The barroom was a place of blasphemy; and he was himself a most profane, ungodly; abusive man. He went railing about the streets respecting the revival; and would take particular pains to swear and blaspheme whenever he saw a Christian. One of the young converts lived almost across the way from him; and he told me that he meant to sell and move out of that neighborhood, because every time he was out of doors and Dresser saw him, he would come out and swear, and curse, and say everything he could to wound his feelings. He had not, I think, been at any of our meetings. Of course he was ignorant of the great truths of religion, and despised the whole Christian enterprise.

Father Nash heard us speak of this Mr. Dresser as a hard case; and immediately put his name upon his praying list. He remained in town a day or two, and went on his way, having in view another field of labor.

Not many days afterward, as we were holding an evening meeting with a very crowded house, who should come in but this notorious Dresser? His entrance created a considerable movement in the congregation. People feared that he had come in to make a disturbance. The fear and abhorrence of him had become very general among Christians, I believe; so that when he came in, some of the people got up and retired. I knew his countenance, and kept my eye upon him; I

very soon became satisfied that he had not come in to oppose, and that he was in great anguish of mind. He sat and writhed upon his seat, and was very uneasy. He soon arose, and tremblingly asked me if he might say a few words. I told him that he might. He then proceeded to make one of the most heart-broken confessions that I almost ever heard. His confession seemed to cover the whole ground of his treatment of God, and of his treatment of Christians, and of the revival, and of everything good.

This thoroughly broke up the fallow ground in many hearts. It was the most powerful means that could have been used, just then, to give an impetus to the work. Dresser soon came out and professed a hope, abolished all the revelry and profanity of his barroom; and from that time, as long as I stayed there, and I know not how much longer, a prayer meeting was held in his bar-room nearly every night.

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **REVIVAL AT EVANS MILLS AND ITS RESULTS**

#### **MINISTRY TO THE GERMANS**

A little way from the village of Evans Mills, was a settlement of Germans, where there was a German church with several elders, and a considerable membership, but no minister, and no regular religious meetings. Once each year they were in the habit of having a minister come up from the Mohawk Valley, to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. He would catechize their children, and receive such of them as had made the required attainments in knowledge. This was the way in which they were made Christians. They were required to commit to memory the catechism, and to be able to answer certain doctrinal questions; whereupon they were admitted to full communion in the church. After receiving the communion they took it for granted that they were Christians, and that all was safe. This is the way in which that church had been organized and continued.

But mingling, as they did more or less, in the scenes that passed in the village, they requested me to go out there and preach. I consented; and the first time I preached I took this text: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The settlement turned out en masse; and the schoolhouse where they worshipped was filled to its utmost capacity. They could understand English well. I began by showing, what holiness is not. Under this head I took everything that they considered to be religion, and showed that it was not holiness at all. In the second place I showed what holiness is. I then showed, thirdly, what is intended by seeing the Lord; and then, why those that had no holiness could never see the Lord—why they could never be admitted to His presence, and be accepted of Him. I then concluded with such pointed remarks as were intended to make the subject go home. And it did go home by the power of the Holy Ghost. The sword of the Lord slew them on the right hand and on the left.

In a very few days it was found that the whole settlement was under conviction; elders of the church and all were in the greatest consternation, feeling that they had no holiness. At their

request I appointed a meeting for inquiry, to give instruction to inquirers. This was in their harvest time. I held the meeting at one o'clock in the afternoon, and found the house literally packed. People had thrown down the implements with which they were gathering their harvest, and had come into the meeting. As many were assembled as could be packed in the house.

I took a position in the center of the house, as I could not move around among them; and asked them questions, and encouraged them to ask questions. They became very much interested, and were very free in asking questions, and in answering the questions which I asked them. I seldom ever attended a more interesting or profitable meeting than that.

#### THE SICK WALKING TO CHURCH

I recollect that one woman came in late, and sat near the door. When I came to speak to her, I said, "You look unwell." "Yes," she replied, "I am very sick. I have been in bed until I came to meeting. But I cannot read; and I wanted to hear God's word so much that I got up and came to meeting." "How did you come?" I inquired. She replied, "I came on foot." "How far is it?" was the next inquiry. "We call it three miles," she said. On inquiry I found that she was under conviction of sin, and had a most remarkably clear apprehension of her character and position before God. She was soon after converted, and a remarkable convert she was. My wife said that she was one of the most remarkable women in prayer that she ever heard pray; and that she repeated more Scripture in her prayers than any person she ever heard.

#### JESUS TAUGHT ME TO READ

I addressed another, a tall dignified looking woman, and asked her what was the state of her mind. She replied immediately that she had given her heart to God; and went on to say that the Lord had taught her to read, since she had learned how to pray. I asked her what she meant. She said she never could read, and never had known her letters. But when she gave her heart to God, she was greatly distressed that she could not read God's Word. "But I thought," she said, "that Jesus could teach me to read; and I asked Him if He would not please to teach me to read His Word." Said she, "I thought when I had prayed that I could read. The children have a Testament, and I went and got it; and I thought I could read what I had heard them read. But," said she, "I went over to the school madam, and asked her if I read right; and she said I did; and since then," said she, "I can read the Word of God for myself."

I said no more; but thought there must be some mistake about this, as the woman appeared to be quite in earnest, and quite intelligent in what she said. I took pains, afterwards to inquire of her neighbors about her. They gave her an excellent character; and they all affirmed that it had been notorious that she could not read a syllable until after she was converted. I leave this to speak for itself; there is no use in theorizing about it. Such, I think, were the undoubted facts.

But the revival among the Germans resulted in the conversion of the whole church, I believe, and of nearly the whole community of Germans. It was one of the most interesting revivals that I ever witnessed.

#### ORDAINED AS A MINISTER

While I was laboring at this place, the presbytery were called together to ordain me, which they did. Both churches were so strengthened, and their numbers so greatly increased, that they soon went forward and built each of them a commodious stone meeting house, and I believe have had a healthy state of religion there since that time. I have not been there for many years.

I have only narrated some of the principal facts that I remember as connected with this revival. But I would farther say respecting it, that a wonderful spirit of prayer prevailed among Christians, and great unity of feeling. The little Congregational church, as soon as they saw the results of the next evening's preaching, recovered themselves; for they had been scattered, discouraged, and confounded the night before. They rallied and took hold of the work as best they could; and though a feeble and inefficient band, with one or two exceptions, still they grew in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, during that revival.

### MY METHOD OF MINISTRY

The Baptist minister and I seldom met each other, though sometimes we were enabled to attend meeting together. He preached there but one half of the time, and I the other half; consequently I was generally away when he was there, and he was generally absent when I was there. He was a good man, and worked as best he could to promote the revival.

The doctrines preached were those which I have always preached as the Gospel of Christ. I insisted upon the voluntary total moral depravity of the unregenerate; and the unalterable necessity of a radical change of heart by the Holy Ghost, and by means of the truth.

I laid great stress upon prayer as an indispensable condition of promoting the revival. The atonement of Jesus Christ, His divinity, His divine mission, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His resurrection, repentance, faith, justification by faith, and all the kindred doctrines, were discussed as thoroughly as I was able, and pressed home, and were manifestly made efficacious by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The means used were simply preaching, prayer and conference meetings, much private prayer, much personal conversation, and meetings for the instruction of earnest inquirers. These, and no other means, were used for the promotion of that work. There was no appearance of fanaticism, no bad spirit, no divisions, no heresies, no schisms. Neither at that time, nor certainly so long as I was acquainted at that place, was there any result of that revival to be lamented, nor any feature of it that was of questionable effect.

### WORKING WITH EXTREMES

I have spoken of cases of intensified opposition to this revival. One circumstance, I found, had prepared the people for this opposition, and had greatly embittered it. I found that region of country what, in the western phrase, would be called, a "burnt district." There had been, a few years previously, a wild excitement passing through that region, which they called a revival of religion, but which turned out to be spurious. I can give no account of it except what I heard from Christian people and others. It was reported as having been a very extravagant excitement;

and resulted in a reaction so extensive and profound, as to leave the impression on many minds that religion was a mere delusion. A great many men seemed to be settled in that conviction. Taking what they had seen as a specimen of a revival of religion, they felt justified in opposing anything looking toward the promoting of a revival.

I found that it had left among Christian people some practices that were offensive, and calculated rather to excite ridicule than any serious conviction of the truth of religion. For example, in all their prayer meetings I found a custom prevailing like this: Every professor of religion felt it a duty to testify for Christ. They must “take up the cross,” and say something in meeting. One would rise and say in substance: “I have a duty to perform which no one can perform for me. I arise to testify that religion is good; though I must confess that I do not enjoy it at present. I have nothing in particular to say, only to bear my testimony; and I hope you will all pray for me.” This concluded, that person would sit down and another would rise and say, about to the same effect: “Religion is good; I do not enjoy it; I have nothing else to say, but I must do my duty. I hope you will all pray for me.” Thus the time would be occupied, and the meeting would pass off with very little that was more interesting than such remarks as these. Of course the ungodly would make sport of this.

It was in fact ridiculous and repulsive. But the impression was so rooted in the public mind that this was the way to hold a prayer and conference meeting, and that it was the duty of every professor of religion, whenever an opportunity was afforded, to give such testimony for God, that I was obliged, for the purpose of getting rid of it, to hold no such meetings. I appointed every meeting, consequently, for preaching. When we were assembled, I would begin by singing, and then would pray myself. I would then call on one or two others to pray, naming them. Then I would name a text, and talk for awhile. Then, when I saw that an impression was made, I would stop and ask one or two to pray that the Lord might fasten that on their minds. I would then proceed with my talk, and after a little, stop again and ask some one or two to pray. Thus I would proceed, not throwing the meeting open at all for remarks on the part of the brethren and sisters. Then they would go away without being in bondage, feeling that they had neglected their duty in not bearing testimony for God. Thus most of our prayer meetings were not so in name. As they were appointed for preaching, it was not expected that they would be thrown open for everyone to speak; and in this way I was enabled to overcome that silly method of holding meetings, that created so much mirth and ridicule on the part of the ungodly.

## THE PERSUASION OF PREACHING

After the revival took thorough hold in this place, and those things occurred that I have named, opposition entirely ceased so far as I could learn. I spent more than six months at this place and at Antwerp, laboring between the two places; and for the latter part of the time I heard nothing of open opposition.

I have spoken of the doctrines preached. I should add, that I was obliged to take much pains in giving instruction to inquirers. The practice had been, I believe, universal, to set anxious sinners to praying for a new heart, and to using means for their own conversion. The directions they received either assumed or implied that they were very willing to be Christians, and were taking much pains to persuade God to convert them. I tried to make them understand that God was

using the means with them, and not they with Him; that God was willing, and they were unwilling; that God was ready, and they were not ready. In short, I tried to shut them up to present faith and repentance, as the thing which God required of them, present and instant submission to His will, present and instant acceptance of Christ. I tried to show them that all delay was only an evasion of present duty; that all praying for a new heart, was only trying to throw the responsibility of their conversion upon God; and that all efforts to do duty, while they did not give their hearts to God, were hypocritical and delusive.

### RESTORATION OF HEALTH

During the whole six months that I labored in that region, I rode on horseback from town to town, and from settlement to settlement, in various directions, and preached the Gospel as I had opportunity. When I left Adams my health had run down a good deal. I had coughed blood; and at the time I was licensed, my friends thought that I could live but a short time. Mr. Gale charged me, when I left Adams, not to attempt to preach more than once a week, and then to be sure not to speak more than half an hour at a time. But instead of this, I visited from house to house, attended prayer meetings, and preached and labored every day, and almost every night, through the whole season. Before the six months were completed my health was entirely restored, my lungs were sound, and I could preach two hours, and two hours and a half, and longer, without feeling the least fatigue. I think my sermons generally averaged nearly or quite two hours. I preached out of doors; I preached in barns; I preached in schoolhouses; and a glorious revival spread all over that new region of country.

### "LETTING DOWN THE DIGNITY OF THE PULPIT"

All through the earlier part of my ministry especially, I used to meet from ministers a great many rebuffs and reproofs, particularly in respect to my manner of preaching. I have said that Mr. Gale, when I preached for him immediately after I was licensed, told me that, he should be ashamed to have anyone know that I was a pupil of his. The fact is, their education had been so entirely different from mine, that they disapproved of my manner of preaching, very much. They would reprove me for illustrating my ideas by reference to the common affairs of men of different pursuits around me, as I was in the habit of doing. Among farmers and mechanics, and other classes of men, I borrowed my illustrations from their various occupations. I tried also to use such language as they would understand. I addressed them in the language of the common people. I sought to express all my ideas in few words, and in words that were in common use.

Before I was converted I had a different tendency. In writing and speaking, I had sometimes allowed myself to use ornate language. But when I came to preach the Gospel, my mind was so anxious to be thoroughly understood, that I studied in the most earnest manner, on the one hand to avoid what was vulgar, and on the other to express my thoughts with the greatest simplicity of language.

This was extremely contrary to the notions which at that time prevailed among ministers, and even yet prevail to a very great extent. In reference to my illustrations they would say, "Why don't you illustrate from events of ancient history, and take a more dignified way of illustrating your ideas?" To this, of course, I replied, that if my illustrations brought forward anything that

was new and striking, the illustration itself would rather occupy the minds of the people, than the truth which I wished to illustrate. And in respect to the simplicity of my language, I defended myself by saying, that my object was not to cultivate a style of oratory that should soar above the heads of the people, but to make myself understood; and that therefore I would use any language adapted to this end, and that did not involve coarseness or vulgarity.

About the time that I left Evans Mills our presbytery met, and I attended the meeting. I left the revival work at the particular request of some brethren, and went over to the presbytery. The brethren had heard of my manner of preaching, those of them who had not heard me preach. The presbytery met in the morning, and went on with the transaction of business; and after our recess for dinner, as we assembled in the afternoon, the mass of the people came together and filled the house. I had not the remotest thought of what was in the minds of the brethren of the presbytery. I therefore took my seat in the crowd, and waited for the meeting of the presbytery to be opened.

As soon as the congregation was fairly assembled, one of the brethren arose and said: “The people have come together manifestly to hear preaching; and I move that Mr. Finney preach a sermon.” This was seconded, and unanimously carried. I saw in a moment that it was the design of the brethren of the presbytery to put me on trial, that they might see if I could do as they had heard that I did—get up and preach on the spur of the moment, without any previous preparation. I made no apology or objection to preaching; for I must say that my heart was full of it, and that I wanted to preach. I arose and stepped into the aisle; and looking up to the pulpit, I saw that it was a high, small pulpit, up against the wall. I therefore stood in the aisle and named my text: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The Lord helped me to preach. I walked up and down the broad aisle; and the people were evidently interested and much moved.

But after the meeting one of the brethren stepped up to me and said: “Brother Finney, if you come up our way, I should like to have you preach in some of our school districts. I should not like to have you preach in our church. But we have got schoolhouses in some of the districts, away from the village. I should like to have you preach in some of those.” I mention this to show what their ideas were of my method of preaching. But how completely they were in the dark in regard to the results of that method of addressing people! They used to complain that I let down the dignity of the pulpit; that I was a disgrace to the ministerial profession; that I talked like a lawyer at the bar; that I talked to the people in a colloquial manner; that I said “you,” instead of preaching about sin and sinners, and saying “they;” that I said “hell,” and with such an emphasis as often to shock the people; furthermore, that I urged the people with such vehemence, as if they might not have a moment to live; and sometimes they complained that I blamed the people too much. One doctor of divinity told me that he felt a great deal more like weeping over sinners, than blaming them. I replied to him that I did not wonder, if he believed that they had a sinful nature, and that sin was entailed upon them, and they could not help it.

After I had preached some time, and the Lord had everywhere added His blessing, I used to say to ministers, whenever they contended with me about my manner of preaching, and desired me to adopt their ideas and preach as they did, that I dared not make the change they desired. I said, “Show me a more excellent way. Show me the fruits of your ministry; and if they so far exceed mine as to give me evidence that you have found a more excellent way, I will adopt your views. But do you expect me to abandon my own views and practices, and adopt yours, when you

yourselves cannot deny that, whatever errors I may have fallen into, or whatever imperfections there may be in my preaching, in style, and in everything else, yet the results justify my methods?" I would say to them: "I intend to improve all I can; but I never can adopt your manner of preaching the Gospel, until I have higher evidence that you are right and I am wrong."

They used to complain, oftentimes, that I was guilty of repetition in my preaching. I would take the same thought and turn it over and over, and illustrate it in various ways. I assured them that I thought it was necessary to do so, to make myself understood; and that I could not be persuaded to relinquish this practice by any of their arguments. Then they would say, you will not interest the educated part of your congregation. But facts soon silenced them on this point. They found that, under my preaching, judges, and lawyers, and educated men were converted by scores; whereas, under their methods, such a thing seldom occurred.

## CHAPTER 7.

### REMARKS UPON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

(In this chapter, Finney diverts the reader from his story to explain or justify his manner of preaching, which had been often attacked. By comparison, one can get an idea of the kind of preaching that was common in the pulpits of America in the eighteen hundreds. This may be useful if you are a preacher yourself. If you would rather continue with the story as it relates to our tour, continue on to chapter eight.)

In what I say upon this subject I hope my brethren will not impute to me any other motive than a kind and benevolent regard for their highest usefulness. I have always taken their criticisms kindly, and given them credit for benevolent intentions. Now I am an old man, and many of the results of my views and methods are known to the public. Is it out of place in me to speak freely to the ministry, upon this subject? In reply to their objections, I have sometimes told them what a judge of the supreme court remarked to me, upon this subject. "Ministers," said he, "do not exercise good sense in addressing the people. They are afraid of repetition. They use language not well understood by the common people. Their illustrations are not taken from the common pursuits of life. They write in too elaborated a style, and read without repetition, and are not understood by the people. Now," said he, "if lawyers should take such a course, they would ruin themselves and their cause. When I was at the bar," he added, "I used to take it for granted, when I had before me a jury of respectable men, that I should have to repeat over my main positions about as many times as there were persons in the jury-box. I learned that unless I did so, illustrated, and repeated, and turned the main points over, the main points of law and of evidence, I should lose my cause. Our object," he said, "in addressing a jury, is to get their minds settled before they leave the jury-box; not to make a speech in language but partially understood by them; not to let ourselves out in illustrations entirely above their apprehension; not to display our oratory, and then let them go. We are set on getting a verdict. Hence we are set upon being understood. We mean to convince them; and if they have doubts as to the law, we make them understand it, and rivet it in their minds. In short, we expect to get a verdict, and to get it upon the spot; so that when they go to their room, it will be found that they have understood us, and that they have been convinced by the facts and arguments. If we do not thus take pains to urge

home every thought and every word, and every point, so as to lodge it in their convictions, we are sure to lose our cause. We must overcome their prejudices; we must overcome their ignorance; we must try to overcome even their interest, if they have any, against our client. Now," said he, "if ministers would do this, the effects of their preaching would be unspeakably different from what they are. They go into their study and write a sermon; they go into their pulpit and read it, and those that listen to it but poorly understand it. Many words used they will not understand, until they go home and consult their dictionaries. They do not address the people, expecting to convince them, and to get their verdict in favor of Christ, upon the spot. They seek no such object. They rather seem to aim at making fine literary productions, and displaying great eloquence and an ornate use of language." Of course I do not profess, at this distance of time, to give the exact language used by the judge; but I have given his remarks in substance, as made to me at the time.

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

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

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

The more experience I had, the more I saw the results of my method of preaching, the more I conversed with all classes, high and low, educated and uneducated, the more was I confirmed in the fact that God had led me, had taught me, had given me right conceptions in regard to the best manner of winning souls. I say that God taught me; and I know it must have been so; for surely I never had obtained these notions from man. And I have often thought that I could say with perfect truth, as Paul said, that I was not taught the Gospel by man, but by the Spirit of Christ

Himself. And I was taught it by the Spirit of the Lord in a manner so clear and forcible, that no argument of my ministerial brethren, with which I was plied so often and so long, had the least weight with me.

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

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

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

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

It was very common, as I learned, among ministers in my earlier years of preaching, to agree among themselves that if I were to succeed in the ministry, it would bring the schools into disrepute; and men would come to think it hardly worth while to support them with their funds, if a man could be accepted as a successful preacher without them. Now I never had a thought of undervaluing the education furnished by colleges or theological seminaries; though I did think, and think now, that in certain respects they are greatly mistaken in their modes of training their students. They do not encourage them to talk to the people, and accustom themselves to

extemporaneous addresses to the people in the surrounding country, while pursuing their studies. Men cannot learn to preach by study without practice. The students should be encouraged to exercise, and prove, and improve, their gifts and calling of God, by going out into any places open to them, and holding Christ up to the people in earnest talks. They must thus learn to preach. Instead of this, the students are required to write what they call sermons, and present them for criticism; to preach, that is, read them to the class and the professor. Thus they play preaching. No man can preach in this manner. These so-called sermons will of course, under the criticism they receive, degenerate into literary essays. The people have no respect for such sermons, as sermons. This reading of elegant literary essays, is not to them preaching. It is gratifying to literary taste, but not spiritually edifying. It does not meet the wants of the soul. It is not calculated to win souls to Christ. The students are taught to cultivate a fine, elevated style of writing. As for real eloquence, that gushing, impressive, and persuasive oratory, that naturally flows from an educated man whose soul is on fire with his subject, and who is free to pour out his heart to a waiting and earnest people, they have none of it.

A reflecting mind will feel as if it were infinitely out of place to present in the pulpit to immortal souls, hanging upon the verge of everlasting death, such specimens of learning and rhetoric. They know that men do not do so on any subject where they are really in earnest. The captain of a fire company, when a city is on fire, does not read to his company an essay or exhibit a fine specimen of rhetoric, when he shouts to them and directs their movements. It is a question of urgency, and he intends that every word shall be understood. He is entirely in earnest with them; and they feel that criticism would be out of place in regard to the language he uses.

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

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

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

Ministers do not like to get up and talk to the people as best they can, and break themselves at once into

the habit of talking to the people. They must preach; and if they must preach in the common acceptation

of the term, they must write. Hence, according to that view, I have never preached. Indeed, people have

often said to me: "Why, you do not preach? You talk to the people." A man in London went home from

one of our meetings greatly convicted. He had been a skeptic; and his wife seeing him greatly excited, said to him, "Husband, have you been to hear Mr. Finney preach?" He replied: "I have been to Mr. Finney's meeting. He don't preach; he only explains what other people preach." This, in substance, I have heard over and over again. "Why!" they say, "anybody could preach as you do. You just talk to the people. You talk as if you were as much at home as if you sat in the parlor." Others have said: "Why, it don't seem like preaching; but it seems as if Mr. Finney had taken me alone, and was conversing with me face to face."

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

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

I have often said to people, when I saw that they looked offended, "Now you resent this and you will go away and say that you will not come again; but you will. Your own convictions are on my side. You know that what I tell you is true; and that I tell it for your own good; and that you cannot continue to resent it." And I have always found this to be true.

My experience has been, that even in respect to personal popularity, honesty is the best policy in a minister; that if he means to maintain his hold upon the confidence, and respect, and affection

of any people, he must be faithful to their souls. He must let them see that he is not courting them for any purpose of popularity, but that he is trying to save their souls. Men are not fools. They have no solid respect for a man that will go into the pulpit and preach smooth things. They cordially despise it in their inmost souls. And let no man think that he will gain permanent respect, that he will be permanently honored by his people, unless as an ambassador of Christ he deals faithfully with their souls.

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

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

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

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

I am prepared to say, most solemnly, that I think I have studied all the more for not having written my sermons. I have been obliged to make the subjects upon which I preached familiar to my thoughts, to fill my mind with them, and then go and talk them off to the people. I simply

note the heads upon which I wish to dwell in the briefest possible manner and in language not a word of which I use, perhaps, in preaching. I simply jot down the order of my propositions, and the petitions which I propose to take; and in a word, sketch an outline of the remarks and inferences with which I conclude.

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

I have spoken of my method of preparing for the pulpit in more recent years. When I first began to preach, and for some twelve years of my earliest ministry, I wrote not a word; and was most commonly obliged to preach without any preparation whatever, except what I got in prayer. Oftentimes I went into the pulpit without knowing upon what text I should speak, or a word that I should say. I depended on the occasion and the Holy Spirit to suggest the text, and to open up the whole subject to my mind; and certainly in no part of my ministry have I preached with greater success and power. If I did not preach from inspiration, I don't know how I did preach. It was a common experience with me, and has been during all my ministerial life, that the subject would open up to my mind in a manner that was surprising to myself. It seemed that I could see with intuitive clearness just what I ought to say; and whole platoons of thoughts, words, and illustrations, came to me as fast as I could deliver them. When I first began to make skeletons, I made them after, and not before, I preached. It was to preserve the outline of the thought which had been given me, on occasions such as I have just mentioned. I found when the Spirit of God had given me a very clear view of a subject, I could not retain it, to be used on any other occasion, unless I jotted down an outline of the thoughts. But after all, I have never found myself able to use old skeletons in preaching, to any considerable extent, without remodeling them, and having a fresh and new view of the subject given me by the Holy Spirit. I almost always get my subjects on my knees in prayer; and it has been a common experience with me, upon receiving a subject from the Holy Spirit, to have it make so strong an impression on my mind as to make me tremble, so that I could with difficulty write. When subjects are thus given me that seem to go through me, body and soul, I can in a few moments make out a skeleton that shall enable me to retain the view presented by the Spirit; and I find that such sermons always tell with great power upon the people.

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

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

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

## CHAPTER 8.

### REVIVAL AT ANTWERP

I must now give some account of my labors, and their result, at Antwerp, a village north of Evans Mills. I arrived there, the first time, in April, and found that no religious services, of any kind, were held in the town. The land in the township belonged to a Mr. Parish, a rich landholder residing in Ogdensburgh. To encourage the settlement of the township, he had built a brick meeting house. But the people had no mind to keep up public worship and therefore the meeting house was locked up, and the key was in the possession of a Mr. Copeland, who kept the village hotel.

I very soon learned that there was a Presbyterian church in that place, consisting of but few members. They had, some years before, tried to keep up a meeting at the village, on Sabbath. But one of the elders who conducted their Sabbath meetings, lived about five miles out of the village, and was obliged, in approaching the village, to pass through a Universalist settlement. The Universalists had broken up the village meeting, by rendering it impossible for Deacon Randall, as they called him, to get through their settlement to meeting. They would even take off the wheels of his carriage; and finally they carried their opposition so far that he gave up attending meetings at the village; and all religious services at the village, and in the township, so far as I could learn, were relinquished.

I found Mrs. Copeland, the landlady, a pious woman. There were two other pious women in the village, a Mrs. Howe, the wife of a merchant, and a Mrs. Randall, the wife of a physician. It was on Friday, if I remember right, that I arrived there. I called on those pious women and asked them if they would like to have a meeting. They said that they would, but they did not know that it would be possible. Mrs. Howe agreed to open her parlor that evening, for a meeting, if I could get anybody to attend. I went about and invited the people, and secured the attendance, I think, of some thirteen in her parlor. I preached to them; and then said, that, if I could get the use of the village school house, I would preach on Sabbath. I got the consent of the trustees; and the next day an appointment was circulated around among the people, for a meeting at the school house Sabbath morning.

## ON THE VERY BORDERS OF HELL

In passing around the village I heard a vast amount of profanity. I thought I had never heard so much in any place that I had ever visited. It seemed as if the men, in playing ball upon the green, and in every business place that I stepped into, were all cursing and swearing and damning each other. I felt as if I had arrived upon the borders of hell. I had a kind of awful feeling, I recollect, as I passed around the village on Saturday. The very atmosphere seemed to me to be poison; and a kind of terror took possession of me.

I gave myself to prayer on Saturday, and finally urged my petition till this answer came: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. For I have much people in this city." This completely relieved me of all fear. I found, however, that the Christian people there were really afraid that something serious might happen, if religious meetings were again established in that place. I spent Saturday very much in prayer; but passed around the village enough to see that the appointment that had been given out for preaching at the schoolhouse, was making quite an excitement.

Sabbath morning I arose and left my lodgings in the hotel; and in order to get alone, where I could let out my voice as well as my heart, I went up into the woods at some distance from the village, and continued for a considerable time in prayer. However, I did not get relief, and went up a second time; but the load upon my mind increased, and I did not find relief. I went up a third time; and then the answer came. I found that it was time for meeting, and went immediately to the schoolhouse. I found it packed to its utmost capacity. I had my pocket Bible in my hand, and read to them this text: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." I cannot remember much that I said; but I know that the point on which my mind principally labored, was the treatment which God received in return for His love. The subject affected my own mind very much; and I preached and poured out my soul and my tears together.

I saw several of the men there from whom I had, the day before, heard the most awful profanity. I pointed them out in the meeting, and told what they said, how they called on God to damn each other. Indeed, I let loose my whole heart upon them. I told them they seemed to howl blasphemy about the streets like hell-hounds; and it seemed to me that I had arrived on the very verge of hell. Everybody knew that what I said was true, and they quailed under it. They did not appear offended; but the people wept about as much as I did myself. I think there were scarcely any dry eyes in the house.

## THE HOTEL KEEPER KEEPS THE KEYS

Mr. Copeland, the landlord, had refused to open the meeting house in the morning. But as soon as these first services closed, he arose and said to the people that he would open the meeting house in the afternoon.

The people scattered, and carried the information in every direction; and in the afternoon the meeting house was nearly as much crowded as the schoolhouse had been in the morning. Everybody was at meeting; and the Lord let me loose upon them in a wonderful manner. My

preaching seemed to them to be something new. Indeed it seemed to myself as if I could rain hail and love upon them at the same time; or in other words, that I could rain upon them hail, in love. It seemed as if my love to God, in view of the abuse which they heaped upon Him, sharpened up my mind to the most intense agony. I felt like rebuking them with all my heart, and yet with a compassion which they could not mistake. I never knew that they accused me of severity; although I think I never spoke with more severity, perhaps, in my life.

But the labors of this day were effectual to the conviction of the great mass of the population. From that day, appoint a meeting when and where I would, anywhere round about, and the people would throng to hear. The work immediately commenced and went forward with great power. I preached twice in the village church on Sabbath, attended a prayer meeting at intermission, and generally preached somewhere, in a schoolhouse in the neighborhood, at five o'clock in the afternoon.

### REVIVAL IN SODOM

On the third Sabbath that I preached there, an aged man came to me as I was entering the pulpit, and asked me if I would not go and preach in a schoolhouse in his neighborhood, about three miles distant; saying that they had never had any services there. He wished me to come as soon as I could. I appointed the next day, Monday, at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a warm day. I left my horse at the village, and thought I would walk down, so that I should have no trouble in calling along on the people, in the neighborhood of the schoolhouse. However, before I reached the place, having labored so hard on the Sabbath, I found myself very much exhausted, and sat down by the way and felt as if I could scarcely proceed. I blamed myself for not having taken my horse.

But at the appointed hour I found the schoolhouse full, and I could only get a standing-place near the open door. I read a hymn; and I cannot call it singing, for they seemed never to have had any church music in that place. However the people pretended to sing. But it amounted to about this: each one bawled in his own way. My ears had been cultivated by teaching church music; and their horrible discord distressed me so much that, at first, I thought I must go out. I finally put both hands over my ears, and held them with my full strength. But this did not shut out the discords. I stood it, however, until they were through; and then I cast myself down on my knees, almost in a state of desperation, and began to pray. The Lord opened the windows of heaven, and the spirit of prayer was poured out, and I let my whole heart out in prayer.

I had taken no thought with regard to a text upon which to preach; but waited to see the congregation. As soon as I had done praying, I arose from my knees and said: "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." I told them I did not recollect where that text was; but I told them very nearly where they would find it, and then went on to explain it. I told them that there was such a man as Abraham, and who he was; and that there was such a man as Lot, and who he was; their relations to each other; their separating from each other on account of differences between their herdmen; and that Abraham took the hill country, and Lot settled in the vale of Sodom. I then told them how exceedingly wicked Sodom became, and what abominable practices they fell into. I told them that the Lord decided to destroy Sodom, and visited Abraham, and informed him what He was about to do; that Abraham prayed to the Lord to spare Sodom, if

He found so many righteous there; and the Lord promised to do so for their sakes; that then Abraham besought Him to save it for a certain less number, and the Lord said He would spare it for their sakes; that he kept on reducing the number, until he reduced the number of righteous persons to ten; and God promised him that, if He found ten righteous persons in the city, He would spare it. Abraham made no farther request, and Jehovah left him. But it was found that there was but one righteous person there, and that was Lot, Abraham's nephew. And the men said to Lot, "Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

While I was relating these facts I observed the people looking as if they were angry. Many of the men were in their shirt sleeves; and they looked at each other and at me, as if they were ready to fall upon me and chastise me on the spot. I saw their strange and unaccountable looks, and could not understand what I was saying, that had offended them. However it seemed to me that their anger rose higher and higher, as I continued the narrative. As soon as I had finished the narrative, I turned upon them and said, that I understood that they had never had a religious meeting in that place; and that therefore I had a right to take it for granted, and was compelled to take it for granted, that they were an ungodly people. I pressed that home upon them with more and more energy, with my heart full almost to bursting.

I had not spoken to them in this strain of direct application, I should think, more than a quarter of an hour, when all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off their seats as fast as they fell. Indeed nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate, I should think, in less than two minutes from this first shock that fell upon them. Every one prayed for himself, who was able to speak at all.

### PREACHING IN THEIR EARS

Of course I was obliged to stop preaching; for they no longer paid any attention. I saw the old man who had invited me there to preach, sitting about in the middle of the house, and looking around with utter amazement. I raised my voice almost to a scream, to make him hear, and pointing to him said, "Can't you pray?" He instantly fell upon his knees, and with a stentorian voice poured himself out to God; but he did not at all get the attention of the people. I then spoke as loud as I could, and tried to make them attend to me. I said to them, "You are not in hell yet; and now let me direct you to Christ." For a few moments I tried to hold forth the Gospel to them; but scarcely any of them paid any attention. My heart was so overflowing with joy at such a scene that I could hardly contain myself. It was with much difficulty that I refrained from shouting, and giving glory to God.

As soon as I could sufficiently control my feelings I turned to a young man who was close to me, and was engaged in praying for himself, laid my hand on his shoulder, thus getting his attention, and preached in his ear Jesus. As soon as I got his attention to the cross of Christ, he believed, was calm and quiet for a minute or two, and then broke out in praying for the others. I then

turned to another, and took the same course with him, with the same result; and then another, and another.

In this way I kept on, until I found the time had arrived when I must leave them, and go and fulfill an appointment in the village. I told them this, and asked the old man who had invited me there, to remain and take charge of the meeting, while I went to my appointment. He did so. But there was too much interest, and there were too many wounded souls, to dismiss the meeting; and so it was held all night. In the morning there were still those there that could not get away; and they were carried to a private house in the neighborhood, to make room for the school. In the afternoon they sent for me to come down there, as they could not yet break up the meeting.

When I went down the second time, I got an explanation of the anger manifested by the congregation during the introduction of my sermon the day before. I learned that the place was called Sodom, but I knew it not; and that there was but one pious man in the place, and him they called Lot. This was the old man that invited me there. The people supposed that I had chosen my subject, and preached to them in that manner, because they were so wicked as to be called Sodom. This was a striking coincidence; but so far as I was concerned, it was altogether accidental.

#### MEETING A CONVERT AGAIN

I have not been in that place for many years. A few years since, I was laboring in Syracuse, in the state of New York. Two gentlemen called upon me one day; one an elderly man; the other not quite fifty years of age. The younger man introduced the older one to me as Deacon White, elder in his church; saying that he had called on me to give a hundred dollars to Oberlin College. The older man in his turn introduced the younger, saying, "This is my minister, the Rev. Mr. Cross. He was converted under your ministry." Whereupon Mr. Cross said to me: "Do you remember preaching at such a time in Antwerp, and in such a part of the town, in the schoolhouse, in the afternoon, and that such a scene, --describing it, occurred there?" I said, "I remember it very well, and can never forget it while I remember anything." "Well," said he, "I was then but a young man, and was converted in that meeting." He has been many years a successful minister. Several of his children have obtained their education in our college in Oberlin.

As nearly as I can learn, although that revival came upon them so suddenly, and was of such a powerful type, the converts were sound, and the work permanent and genuine. I never heard of any disastrous reaction as having taken place.

#### DEACON RANDALL'S NEIGHBORHOOD

I have spoken of the Universalists having prevented Deacon Randall from attending religious meetings on Sabbath, in the village of Antwerp, by taking off the wheels of his carriage. When the revival got its full strength, Deacon Randall wanted me to go and preach in that neighborhood. Accordingly I made an appointment to preach on a certain afternoon, in their schoolhouse. When I arrived I found the schoolhouse filled, and Deacon R sitting near a window, by a stand with a Bible and hymn book on it. I sat down beside him, then arose and read a hymn,

and they sung after a fashion. I then engaged in prayer, and had great access to the throne of grace. I then arose and took this text: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

I saw that Deacon Randall was very uneasy; and he soon got up and went and stood in the open door. As there were some boys near the door, I supposed, at the time, that he had gone to keep the boys still. But I afterward learned that it was through fear. He thought that if they set upon me, he would be where he could escape. From my text he concluded that I was going to deal very plainly with them; and he had been made quite nervous with the opposition which he had met with from them, and wanted to keep out of their reach. I proceeded to pour myself out upon them with all my might; and before I was through, there was a complete upturning of the very foundations of Universalism, I think, in that place. It was a scene that almost equaled that of which I have spoken, in Sodom. Thus the revival penetrated to every part of the town, and some of the neighboring towns shared in the blessing. The work was very precious in this place.

### FIRST BAPTISMS AT ANTWERP

When we came to receive the converts, after a great number had been examined, and the day approached for their admission, I found that several of them had been brought up in Baptist families, and asked them if they would not prefer to be immersed. They said they had no choice; but their parents would prefer to have them immersed. I told them I had no objection to immersing them, if they thought it would please their friends better, and themselves as well. Accordingly, when Sabbath came, I arranged to baptize by immersion, during the intermission. We went down to a stream that runs through the place; and there I baptized, I should think, a dozen or more.

When the hour for afternoon services arrived, we went to the meeting house; and there I baptized a great number of persons by taking water in my hand and applying it to the forehead. The administration of the ordinance in the church was so manifestly owned and blessed of God, as to do much to satisfy the people that that mode of baptism was acceptable to him.

Among the converts was also a considerable number whose friends were Methodists. On Saturday I learned that some Methodist people were saying to the converts, "Mr. Finney is a Presbyterian. He believes in the doctrine of election and predestination; but he has not preached it here. He dare not preach it, because if he should, the converts would not join his church." This determined me to preach on the doctrine of election, the Sabbath morning previous to their joining the church. I took my text, and went on to show, first, what the doctrine of election is not; secondly, what it is; thirdly, that it is a doctrine of the Bible; fourthly, that it is the doctrine of reason; fifthly, that to deny it, is to deny the very attributes of God; sixthly, that it opposes no obstacle in the way of the salvation of the non-elect; seventhly, that all men may be saved if they will; and lastly, that it is the only hope that anybody will be saved; and concluded with remarks.

The Lord made it exceedingly clear to my own mind, and so clear to the people, that, I believe, it convinced the Methodists themselves. I never heard a word said against it, or a word of dissatisfaction with the argument. While I was preaching, I observed a Methodist sister with whom I had become acquainted, and whom I regarded as an excellent Christian woman,

weeping, as she sat near the pulpit stairs. I feared that I was hurting her feelings. After the close of the meetings she remained sitting and weeping; and I went to her and said to her, "Sister, I hope I have not injured your feelings." "No," said she, "you have not injured my feelings, Mr. Finney; but I have committed a sin. No longer ago than last night, my husband, who is an impenitent man, was arguing this very question with me; and maintaining, as best he could, the doctrine of election." Said she, "I resisted it, and told him that it was not true. And now, today, you have convinced me that it is true; and instead of forming any excuse for my husband, or anybody else, it is the only hope I can have that he will be saved, or anybody else." I heard no farther objection to the converts joining a church that believed in the doctrine of election.

During this revival, we heard much of opposition to it from Gouverneur, a town about twelve miles, I believe, farther north. We heard that the wicked threatened to come down and mob us, and break up our meetings. However, of course, we paid no attention to that; and I mention it here only because I shall have occasion soon to notice a revival there. Having received the converts, and having labored in Antwerp together with Evans' Mills, until the fall of the year, I sent and procured for them, a young man by the name of Denning, whom they settled as pastor. I then suspended my labors at Antwerp.

## **CHAPTER 9.**

### **RETURN TO EVANS MILLS**

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

### **REVIVAL AT PERCH RIVER**

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

### **REVIVAL AT BROWNVILLE**

The revival soon spread in the direction of Brownville, a considerable village several miles, I think, in a southwestern direction from that place. Finally, under the pressing invitation of the minister and church at Brownville, I went there and spent the winter, having written to my wife,

that such were the circumstances that I must defer coming for her, until God seemed to open the way.

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

#### PRAYING FOR MR. BALLARD

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

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

However, he was all broken down then, and from that time became a new man.

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

#### SIX MONTH ABSENCE FROM HIS BRIDE

Early in the spring, 1825, I left Brownville, with my horse and cutter, to go after my wife. I had been absent six months since our marriage; and as mails then were between us, we had seldom

been able to exchange letters. I drove on some fifteen miles, and the roads were very slippery. My horse was smooth shod, and I found I must have his shoes reset. I stopped at LeRaysville, a small village about three miles south of Evans Mills. While my horse was being shod, the people, finding that I was there, ran to me, and wanted to know if I would not preach, at one o'clock, in the schoolhouse; for they had no meeting house.

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

### GOING TO GOUVERNEUR

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

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

### MINISTRY IN LERAYSVILLE

But now I return to my labors in LeRaysville. After laboring there a few weeks, the great mass of the inhabitants were converted; and among the rest Judge C-- (Kanady), a man in point of influence, standing head and shoulders above all the people around him. My wife arrived, of course, a few days after I sent for her; and we accepted the invitation of Judge C-- (Kanady) and his wife, to become their guests.

### GOING TO RUTLAND

But after a few weeks, the people urged me to go and preach in a Baptist church in the town of Rutland, where Rutland joins LeRay. I made an appointment to preach there one afternoon. The weather had become warm, and I walked over, through a pine grove, about three miles to their place of worship. I arrived early, and found the house open, but nobody there. I was warm from having walked so far, and went in and took my seat near the broad aisle, in the center of the house. Very soon people began to come in and take their seats here and there, scattered over the house. Soon the number increased so that they were coming continually. I sat still; and, being an entire stranger there, no person came in that I knew, and I presume that no person that came in knew me.

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

#### THE FIRST ALTAR CALL

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

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

#### WORKING WITH NASH AGAIN

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

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

## CHAPTER 10.

### REVIVAL AT GOUVERNEUR

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

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

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

When the hour arrived, the house was filled. The people had heard enough, for and against me, to have their curiosity excited, and there was a general turning out. The Lord gave me a text, and I went into the pulpit and let my heart out to the people. The Word took powerful effect. That

was very manifest to everybody, I think. I dismissed the meeting, and that night got some rest.

## TWO CHURCHES IN TOWN

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

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

## FATHER NASH CONFRONTS THE YOUNG MEN

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

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

The house was as still as death, and most of the people held down their heads. I could see that the young men were agitated. For myself, I regretted that Brother Nash had gone so far. He had committed himself, that God would either take the life of some of them, and send them to hell, or convert some of them, within a week. However on Tuesday morning of the same week, the leader of these young men came to me, in the greatest distress of mind. He was all prepared to submit; and as soon as I came to press him he broke down like a child, confessed, and manifestly gave himself to Christ. Then he said, "What shall I do, Mr. Finney?" I replied "Go immediately to all your young companions, and pray with them, and exhort them at once to turn to the Lord."

He did so; and before the week was out, nearly if not all of that class of young men, were hoping in Christ.

### THE CONVERSION OF MR. SMITH

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

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

He greatly respected and loved his wife; and she was indeed a gem of a woman. To oblige her, he consented to come in. Mrs. Smith introduced me to him, and left the room. I then said to him, "Mr. Smith, I have not come in here to have any dispute with you at all; but if you are willing to converse, it is possible that I may suggest something that may help you over some of your difficulties, in regard to the Christian religion, as I probably have felt them all myself." As I addressed him in great kindness, he immediately seemed to feel at home with me, and sat down near me and said, "Now, Mr. Finney, there is no need of our having a long conversation on this point. We are both of us so familiar with the arguments, on both sides, that I can state to you, in a very few minutes, just the objections to the Christian religion on which I rest, and which I find myself utterly unable to overcome. I suppose I know beforehand how you will answer them, and that the answer will be utterly unsatisfactory to me. But if you desire it, I will state them."

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

and this in accordance with certain preestablished laws of which God is the author; that notwithstanding this sinful nature, which is utterly incapable of any good, God commands us to obey Him, and to be good, when to do so is utterly impossible to us; and He commands this on pain of eternal death.”

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

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

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

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

Very soon after, the meeting house bell tolled for a prayer and conference meeting. I went into the meeting and soon after the meeting commenced, Mr. and Mrs. Smith came in. His countenance showed that he had been greatly moved. The people looked around, and appeared surprised to see Mr. S come into a prayer meeting. He had always been in the habit of attending worship on the Sabbath, I believe; but to come into a prayer meeting, and that in the daytime, was something new. For his sake, I took up a good deal of the time, at that meeting, in remarks, to which he paid the utmost attention.

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

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

### STEALING SOULS

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

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

But I then said to him, "Now a considerable number of the young people, whose parents belong

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

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

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

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

### THE REVIVAL STOPS

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

When Wednesday came, the house was crowded. I saw quite a number of the Baptist brethren

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

### CONTROVERSY OVER BAPTISM

The next day the house was crowded, if possible, more than the day before. Quite a number of the principal Baptist brethren were present; and I observed the old elder, the great proselyter, sitting in the congregation. After going through with the introductory services, I arose and commenced my reading. At this point the elder arose and said, "Mr. Finney, I have an appointment, and cannot stay to hear your readings. But I shall wish to answer you; and how shall I know what course you take?" I replied to him:

"Elder, I have before me a little skeleton, wherein I quote all the passages that I shall read, and note the order in which I discuss the subject. You can have my skeleton, if you please, and reply to it." He then went out, and, as I supposed, went away to attend his appointment.

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

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

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

### THE HOMECOMING OF LUCY SMITH

I have already intimated that I was a guest of Mr. (Benjamin) Smith. He had a very interesting family. He and his wife, called by everybody, "Aunt Lucy," had no children of their own; but they had, from time to time, through the yearnings of their hearts, adopted one child after another, until they had ten; and they were so nearly of an age that, at this time, his family was composed of himself, and Aunt Lucy, his wife, and ten young people, I think about equally divided, young men and young women. They were all soon converted, and their conversions were very striking. They were bright converts, and very intelligent young people; and a happier and more lovely family I never saw than they were when they were all converted.

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

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

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

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

## PRAYING IN THE MORNING FOR MR. MARTIN

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

### CONCLUSION

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

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

The doctrines preached in promoting that revival, were those that I have preached everywhere. The total moral, voluntary depravity of unregenerate man; the necessity of a radical change of heart, through the truth, by the agency of the Holy Ghost; the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His vicarious atonement, equal to the wants of all mankind; the gift, divinity and agency of the Holy Ghost: repentance, faith, justification by faith, sanctification by faith; persistence in holiness as a condition of salvation; indeed all the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, were stated and set forth with as much clearness, and point, and power, as were possible to me under the circumstances. A great spirit of prayer prevailed; and after the discussion on baptism, a spirit of most interesting unity, brotherly love, and Christian fellowship prevailed. I never had occasion finally, to rebuke the opposition of the Baptist brethren publicly. In my readings on the subject of baptism, the Lord enabled me to maintain such a spirit that no controversy was started, and no controversial spirit prevailed. The discussion produced no evil result, but great good, and, so far as I could see, only good.

## CHAPTER 11.

### REVIVAL AT DE KALB

From Gouverneur I went to Dekalb, another village still farther north, some sixteen miles, I think. Here were a Presbyterian Church and minister; but the church was small, and the minister

seemed not to have a very strong hold upon the people. However, I think he was decidedly a good man. I began to hold meetings in Dekalb, in different parts of the town. The village was small and the people were very much scattered. The country was new, and the roads were new and bad. But a revival commenced immediately, and went forward with a good deal of power, for a place where the inhabitants were so much scattered.

### FALLING UNDER THE POWER

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

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

### THE KINDNESS OF MR. FINE

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

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

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

### THE CATHOLIC TAILOR

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

### STOP LYING TO GOD

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

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

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

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

In the afternoon the people had assembled for worship, and I was standing in the pulpit reading a hymn. I heard somebody talking very loud, and approaching the house, the door and windows being open. Directly two men came in. Elder Burnett I knew; the other man was a stranger. As soon as he came in at the door, he lifted his eyes to me, came straight into the desk, and took me

up in his arms: "God bless you!" said he "God bless you!" He then began and told me, and told the congregation, what the Lord had just done for his soul.

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

Very soon the Roman Catholic tailor, Mr. Father, rose up, and said, "I must tell you what the Lord has done for my soul. I was brought up, a Roman Catholic; and I never dared to read my Bible. I was told that if I did, the devil would carry me off bodily. Sometimes when I dared to look into it, it seemed as if the devil was peering over my shoulder, and had come to carry me off. But," said he, "I see it is all a delusion." And he went on to tell what the Lord had done for him, just there on the spot—what views the Lord had given him of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. It was evident to everybody that he was converted.

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

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

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

#### LEAVING THE NORTH COUNTRY

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

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

## THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

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

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

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

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

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

## GETTING DIRECTION

For several weeks before I left Dekalb to go to the synod, I was very strongly exercised in prayer, and had an experience that was somewhat new to me. I found myself so much exercised, and so borne down with the weight of immortal souls, that I was constrained to pray without ceasing. Some of my experiences, indeed, alarmed me. A spirit of importunity sometimes came

upon me so that I would say to God that He had made a promise to answer prayer, and I could not, and would not, be denied. I felt so certain that He would hear me, and that faithfulness to His promises, and to Himself, rendered it impossible that He should not hear and answer, that frequently I found myself saying to Him, "I hope Thou dost not think that I can be denied. I come with Thy faithful promises in my hand, and I cannot be denied." I cannot tell how absurd unbelief looked to me, and how certain it was, in my mind, that God would answer prayer—those prayers that, from day to day, and from hour to hour, I found myself offering in such agony and faith. I had no idea of the shape the answer would take, the locality in which the prayers would be answered, or the exact time of the answer. My impression was that the answer was near, even at the door; and I felt myself strengthened in the divine life, put on the harness for a mighty conflict with the powers of darkness, and expected soon to see a far more powerful outpouring of the Spirit of God, in that new country where I had been laboring.

## CHAPTER 12.

### REVIVAL AT WESTERN

I have spoken of my turning aside to Western, as I was returning from the synod at Utica. At this place, commenced that series of revivals, afterward called the western revivals. So far as I know these revivals first attracted the notice, and excited the opposition of certain prominent ministers at the East, and raised the cry of "New Measures."

The churches in that region were mostly Presbyterian. There were in that county, however, three Congregational ministers who called themselves "The Oneida Association," who, at the time, published a pamphlet against those revivals. This much we knew; but as the pamphlet made no public impression that we could learn, no public notice, so far as I am aware, was ever taken of it. We thought it likely that that association had much to do with the opposition that was raised in the East. Their leader, Rev. William R. Weeks, as was well known, embraced and propagated the peculiar doctrines of Dr. Emmons, and insisted very much upon what he called "The divine efficiency scheme." His peculiar views on this subject naturally led him to be suspicious of whatever was not connected with those views, in preaching, and in the means that were used to promote a revival. He seemed to have little or no confidence in any conversions that did not bring men to embrace his views of divine efficiency and divine sovereignty; and as those of us who labored in those revivals had no sympathy with his views in that respect, it was very natural for him to have but little confidence in the genuineness of the revivals. But we never supposed that the whole of the opposition could have originated in representations made by any of the members of that association.

No public replies were made to the letters that found their way into the public prints, nor to anything that was published in opposition to the revivals. Those of us who were engaged in them, had our hands too full, and our hearts too full, to turn aside, to reply to letters, or reports, or publications, that so manifestly misrepresented the character of the work. The fact that no answers were made at the time, left the public abroad, and without the range of those revivals, and where the facts were not known, to misapprehend their character. So much misapprehension came to exist, that it has been common for good men, in referring to those revivals, to assume,

that although they were, upon the whole, revivals of religion; yet, that they were so conducted that great disorders were manifest in them, and that there was much to deplore in their results.

Now all this is an entire mistake. I shall relate as fairly as I can, the characteristics of these revivals, the measures that were used in promoting them, and disclose, to the best of my ability, their real character and results; understanding well, as I do, that there are multitudes of living witnesses, who can attest the truth of what I say, or if, in anything, I am mistaken, can correct me.

### GOING TO WESTERN, NEW YORK

And now I will turn to Western, where these revivals commenced, in Oneida County. I have said, that Mr. Gale had settled upon a farm in Western; and was employing some young men, in helping to cultivate the farm, and was engaged in teaching them, and endeavoring to regain his health. I went directly to his house, and for several weeks was his guest. We arrived there Thursday, I think, and that afternoon there was a stated prayer meeting, in the schoolhouse, near the church. The church had no settled minister, and Mr. Gale was unable to preach; indeed, he did not go there to preach, but simply for his health. I believe they usually had a minister, only a part of the time; and for some time previously to my going there, I think, they had had no stated preaching at all, in the Presbyterian church. There were three elders in the church, and a few members; but the church was very small, and religion was at low water mark. There seemed to be no life, or courage, or enterprise, on the part of Christians; and nothing was doing to secure the conversion of sinners, or the sanctification of the church.

### CONFRONTING OUR CONDITION

In the afternoon Mr. Gale invited me to go to the prayer meeting, and I went. They asked me to take the lead of the meeting; but I declined, expecting to be there only for that afternoon, and preferring rather to hear them pray and talk, than to take part in the meeting myself. The meeting was opened by one of the elders, who read a chapter in the Bible, then a hymn, which they sung. After this he made a long prayer, or perhaps I should say an exhortation, or gave a narrative—I hardly know what to call it. He told the Lord how many years they had been holding that prayer meeting weekly, and that no answer had been given to their prayers. He made such statements and confessions as greatly shocked me. After he had done, another elder took up the same theme. He read a hymn, and, after singing, engaged in a long prayer, in which he went over very nearly the same ground, making such statements as the first one had omitted. Then followed the third elder, in the same strain. By this time I could say with Paul, that my Spirit was stirred within me. They had got through and were about to dismiss the meeting. But one of the elders asked me if I would not make a remark, before they dismissed. I arose and took their statements and confessions for a text; and it seemed to me, at the time, that God inspired me to give them a terrible searching.

When I arose, I had no idea what I should say; but the Spirit of God came upon me, and I took up their prayers, and statements and confessions, and dissected them. I showed them up, and asked if it had been understood that that prayer meeting was a mock prayer meeting whether they had

come together professedly to mock God, by implying that all the blame of what had been passing all this time, was to be ascribed to His sovereignty?

At first I observed that they all looked angry. Some of them afterward said, that they were on the point of getting up and going out. But I followed them up on the track of their prayers and confessions, until the elder, who was the principal man among them, and opened the meeting, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Brother Finney, it is all true!" He fell upon his knees and wept aloud. This was the signal for a general breaking down. Every man and woman went down upon their knees. There were probably not more than a dozen present; but they were the leading members in the church. They all wept, and confessed, and broke their hearts before God. This scene continued, I presume, for an hour; and a more thorough breaking down and confession I have seldom witnessed.

### THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER TAKES HOLD

As soon as they recovered themselves somewhat, they besought me to remain and preach to them on the Sabbath. I regarded it as the voice of the Lord, and consented to do so. This was Thursday, at night. On Friday, my mind was greatly exercised. I went off frequently into the church, to engage in secret prayer, and had a mighty hold upon God. The news was circulated, and on Sabbath the church was full of hearers. I preached all day, and God came down with great power upon the people. It was manifest to everybody that the work of grace had begun. I made appointments to preach in different parts of the town, in schoolhouses, and at the center, during the week; and the work increased from day to day.

In the meantime, my own mind was much exercised in prayer; and I found that the spirit of prayer was prevailing, especially among the female members of the church. Mrs. Brayton and Mrs. Harris, the wives of two of the elders of the church, I found, were, almost immediately, greatly exercised in prayer. Each of them had families of unconverted children; and they laid hold in prayer with an earnestness that, to me, gave promise that their families must be converted. Mrs. H, however, was a woman of very feeble health, and had not ventured out much, to any meeting, for a long time. But, as the day was pleasant, she was out at the prayer meeting to which I have alluded, and seemed to catch the inspiration of that meeting, and took it home with her.

It was the next week, I think, that I called in at Mr. Harris's, and found him pale and agitated. He said to me "Brother Finney, I think my wife will die. She is so exercised in her mind that she cannot rest day or night, but is given up entirely to prayer. She has been all the morning," said he, "in her room, groaning and struggling in prayer; and I am afraid it will entirely overcome her strength." Hearing my voice in the sitting room, she came out from her bedroom, and upon her face was a most heavenly glow. Her countenance was lighted up with a hope and a joy that were plainly from heaven. She exclaimed, "Brother Finney, the Lord has come! This work will spread over all this region! A cloud of mercy overhangs us all; and we shall see such a work of grace as we have never yet seen." Her husband looked surprised, confounded, and knew not what to say. It was new to him, but not to me. I had witnessed such scenes before, and believed that prayer had prevailed; nay, I felt sure of it in my own soul.

## PREACHING AT ELMER'S HILL

The work went on, spread, and prevailed, until it began to exhibit unmistakable indications of the direction in which the Spirit of God was leading from that place. The distance to home was nine miles, I believe. About half way, was a small village, called Elmer's Hill. There was a large schoolhouse, where I held a weekly lecture; and it soon became manifest that the work was spreading in the direction of Rome and Utica. There was a settlement northeast of Rome, about three miles, called Wright's settlement. Large numbers of persons came down to attend the meetings at Elmer's Hill, from Rome and from Wright's settlement; and the work soon began to take effect among them.

### THE BRAYTONS'

But I must relate a few of the incidents that occurred in the revival at Western. Mrs. Brayton, to whom I have already alluded, had a large family of unconverted children. One of the sons was, I believe, a professor of religion, and lived at Utica; the rest of the family were at home. They were a very amiable family; and the eldest daughter, especially, had been manifestly regarded by the family as almost perfect. I went in several times to converse with her; but I found that the family were so tender of her feelings that I could not strip away her self-righteousness. She had evidently been made to believe that she was almost, if not quite, a Christian. Her life had been so irreproachable, that it was very difficult to convict her of sin. The second daughter was also a very amiable girl; but she did not regard herself as worthy to be compared with the eldest, in respect to amiability and excellence of character.

One day when I was talking with Sarah, the eldest, and trying to make her see herself as a great sinner, notwithstanding her morality, Cynthia, the second daughter said to me, "Mr. Finney I think that you are too hard upon Sarah. If you should talk so to me, I should feel that I deserved it; but I don't think that she does." After being defeated several times in my attempts to secure the conviction and conversion of Sarah, I made up my mind to bide my time, and improve some opportunity when I should find her away from home, or alone. It was not long before the opportunity came. I entered into conversation with her, and by God's help stripped the covering from her heart, and she was brought under powerful conviction for sin. The Spirit pursued her with mighty power. The family were surprised and greatly distressed for Sarah; but God pushed the question home till, after a struggle of a few days, she broke thoroughly down, and came out into the kingdom, as beautiful a convert as, perhaps, I have ever seen. Her convictions were so thorough, that when she came out, she was strong in faith, clear in her apprehension of duty and of truth, and immediately became a host in her power for good among her friends and acquaintances.

In the meantime, Cynthia, the second daughter, became very much alarmed about herself, and very anxious for the salvation of her own soul. The mother seemed to be in real travail of soul day and night. I called in to see the family almost daily, and sometimes, two or three times a day. One of the children after another was converted; and we were expecting every day to see Cynthia come out a bright convert. But for some reason she lingered. It was plain the Spirit was resisted; and one day I called to see her, and found her in the sitting room alone. I asked her how she was getting on, and she replied, "Mr. Finney, I am losing my conviction. I do not feel nearly as much

concerned about myself as I have done.” Just at this moment, a door was opened, and Mrs. Brayton came into the room, and I told her what Cynthia had said. It shocked her so that she groaned aloud, and fell prostrate on the floor. She was unable to rise; and she struggled and groaned out her prayers, in a manner that immediately indicated to me that Cynthia must be converted. She was unable to say much in words, but her groans and tears witnessed the extreme agony of her mind. As soon as this scene had occurred, the Spirit of God manifestly came upon Cynthia afresh. She fell upon her knees, and before she arose she broke down; and became to all appearance as thorough a convert as Sarah was. The Brayton children, sons and daughters, were all converted at that time, I believe, except the youngest, then a little child. One of the sons has preached the Gospel for many years.

### LAUGHTER IN THE HAYLOFT

There was one passage of my own experience that, for the honor of God, I must not omit to relate in this connection. I had preached and prayed almost continually during the time that I had been at Mr. Gale’s. As I was accustomed to use my voice in private prayer, for convenience sake, that I might not be heard, I had spread a buffalo robe on the hayloft; where I used to spend much of my time, when not abroad visiting, or engaged in preaching, in secret prayer to God. Mr. Gale had admonished me, several times, that, if I did not take care, I should go beyond my strength and break down. But the Spirit of prayer was upon me, and I would not resist Him; but gave Him scope, and let out my strength freely, in pouring my soul out to God. It was November, and the weather was becoming cold. Mr. Gale and I had been out visiting inquirers with his horse and buggy. We came home and went into the barn, and put out the horse. Instead of going into the house, I crept up into the hayloft to pour out my burdened soul to God in prayer. I prayed until my burden left me. I was so far exhausted that I fell down, and lost myself in sleep. I must have fallen asleep almost instantly, I judge, from the fact that I had no recollection of any time elapsing, after the struggle in my soul was over. The first I knew, Mr. Gale came climbing up into the hayloft, and said, “Brother Finney, are you dead?” I awoke, and at first could give no account why I was there asleep, and could form no idea how long I had been there. But this I knew, that my mind was calm and my faith unwavering. The work would go on, of that I felt assured.

I have said that at Western I was the guest of Mr. Gale, and that he had come to the conclusion that he was never converted. He told me the progress of his mind; that he had firmly believed, as he had so frequently urged upon me, that God would not bless my labors, because I would not preach what he regarded as the truths of the Gospel. But when he found that the Spirit of God did accompany my labors, it led him to the conclusion that he was wrong; and this led him to such an overhauling of his whole state of mind, and of his views as a preacher, as resulted in his coming to the conclusion that he had never been converted, and did not understand the Gospel himself. During the revival in Western, he attended nearly all the meetings; and before many weeks, he told me he had come into an entirely different state of mind in regard to his own soul, and had changed his views of the Gospel, and thought I was right. He said he thanked God that he had had no influence with me, to lead me to adopt his views; that I should have been ruined as a minister if he had prevailed. From this time he became a very efficient worker, so far as his health would permit, in the revival in that region of country.

I have spoken of the meetings at Elmer's Hill, and have said that people from Rome and Wright's settlement began to come in large numbers; and that the manifest effect of the Word upon those that came, plainly indicated that the work was rapidly extending in that direction.

## CHAPTER 13.

### REVIVAL AT ROME

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

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

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

### THE BEGINNING OF REVIVAL AT ROME

Mr. Gillett asked me to be present at the proposed meeting of inquiry. I told him I would; and that he might circulate information through the village, that there would be a meeting of inquiry,

on Monday evening. I would go to Western, and return just at evening; it being understood that he was not to let the people know that he expected me to be present. The meeting was called at the house of one of his deacons. When we arrived, we found the large sitting room crowded to its utmost capacity. Mr. Gillett looked around with surprise, and manifest agitation; for he found that the meeting was composed of many

of the most intelligent and influential members of his congregation; and especially was largely composed

of the prominent young men in the town. We spent a little while in attempting to converse with them; and

I soon saw that the feeling was so deep, that there was danger of an outburst of feeling, that would be almost uncontrollable. I therefore said to Mr. Gillett, "It will not do to continue the meeting in this shape. I will make some remarks, such as they need, and then dismiss them."

#### SPONTANEOUS OUT POURING

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

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

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

#### CONVICTION COMES

At this moment a young man by the name of Wright, a clerk in Mr. Huntington's store, being one of the first young men in the place, so nearly fainted, that he fell upon some young men that

stood near him; and they all of them partially swooned away, and fell together. This had well-nigh produced a loud shrieking; but I hushed them down, and said to the young men, "Please set that door wide open, and go out, and let all retire in silence." They did as I requested. They did not shriek; but they went out sobbing and sighing, and their sobs and sighs could be heard till they got out into the street.

This Mr. Wright, to whom I have alluded, kept silence till he entered the door where he lived; but he could contain himself any longer. He shut the door, fell upon the floor, and burst out into a loud wailing, in view of his awful condition: This brought the family around him, and scattered conviction among the whole of them.

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

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

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

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

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

I preached that evening, and Mr. Gillett appointed a meeting for inquiry, the next morning, in the

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

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

#### THE CONVICTION SPREADS

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

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

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

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

#### A DOCTOR COMES TO CHRIST

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

#### OPPOSITION REMOVED

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

#### THE WORK SPREADS

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

#### THE BANKER FROM UTICA

During the progress of this work, a good deal of excitement sprung up in Utica, and some there,

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

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

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

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

#### SHERIFF BROADHEAD COMES TO TOWN

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

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

#### THE REVIVAL AT WRIGHTS SETTLEMENT

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

#### NEAR PERFECT REVIVAL

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

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

volume of itself.

## THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

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

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

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

## THE ARMY OFFICER'S WIFE

There was the wife of an officer in the United States army residing at Rome, the daughter of a prominent citizen of that place. This lady manifested a good deal of opposition to the work, and, as was reported, said some strong things against it; and this led to her being made a particular subject of prayer. This had come to my knowledge but a short time before the event occurred, which I am about to relate. I believe, in this case, some of the principal women made this lady a particular subject of prayer, as she was a person of prominent influence in the place. She was an educated lady, of great force of character, and of strong will; and of course she made her opposition felt. But almost as soon as this was known, and the spirit of prayer was given for her in particular, the Spirit of God took her case in hand. One evening, almost immediately after I had heard of her case, and perhaps the evening of the very day that the facts came to my knowledge, after the meeting was dismissed, and the people had retired, Mr. Gillett and myself

had remained to the very last, conversing with some persons who were deeply bowed down with conviction. As they went away, and we were about to retire, the sexton came hurriedly to us as we were going out, and said, "There is a lady in yonder pew that cannot get out; she is helpless. Will you not come and see her?" We returned, and lo! down in the pew, was this lady of whom I have spoken, perfectly overwhelmed with conviction. The pew had been full, and she had attempted to retire with the others that went out; but as she was the last to go out, she found herself unable to stand, and sunk down upon the floor, and did so without being noticed by those that preceded her. We had some conversation with her, and found that the Lord had stricken her with unutterable conviction of sin. After praying with her, and giving her the solemn charge to give her heart immediately to Christ, I left her; and Mr. Gillett, I believe, helped her home. It was but a few rods to her house. We afterwards learned, that when she got home she went into a chamber by herself and spent the night. It was a cold winter's night. She locked herself in, and spent the night alone. The next day she expressed hope in Christ, and so far as I have known, proved to be soundly converted.

### CONVERSION OF THE PASTOR'S WIFE

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

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

It went on thus, until one day I came into the house, and turned into the study. In a few moments, as usual, she was before me, begging me to pray for her, and complaining that there was no salvation for her. I got up abruptly and left her, without praying with her, and saying to her that it was of no use for me to pray for her, that she was depending upon my prayers. When I did so, she sunk down as if she would faint. I left her alone, notwithstanding, and went abruptly from the study to the parlor. In the course of a few moments she came rushing across the hall into the parlor, with her face all in a glow, exclaiming, "O Mr. Finney! I have found the Savior! I have found the Savior! Don't you think that it was the ornaments in my hair that stood in the way of my conversion? I have found when I prayed that they would come up before me; and I would be

tempted, as I supposed, to give them up. But," said she, "I thought they were trifles, and that God did not care about such trifles. This was a temptation of Satan. But the ornaments that I wore, continually kept coming up before my mind, whenever I attempted to give my heart to God. When you abruptly left me," she said, "I was driven to desperation. I cast myself down, and, lo! these ornaments came up again; and I said, 'I will not have these things come up again, I will put them away from me forever.'" Said she, "I renounced them, and hated them as things standing in the way of my salvation. As soon as I promised to give them up, the Lord revealed Himself to my soul; and Oh!" said she, "I wonder I have never understood this before. This was really the great difficulty with me before, when I was under conviction, my fondness for dress; and I did not know it."

## CHAPTER 14.

### REVIVAL AT UTICA, NEW YORK

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

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

### THE CONVERSION OF SHERIFF BROADHEAD

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

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

### REVIVAL AT THE BAGGS' HOTEL

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

### REVIVAL COMES TO LOWVILLE

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

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

what the Lord had done for his soul, it immediately produced a very solemn impression in Lowville, and soon resulted in a great revival in that place.

### DENOMINATIONAL OPPOSITION ARISES

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

### THE STRONG OPPOSITION OF WEEKS

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

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

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

### OPPOSITION DIES

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

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

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

### CURIOSITY WILL GET YOU CONVERTED

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

### THE CONVERSION OF A FUTURE MISSIONARY

About the same time a young woman, Miss Fanny Thomas, from some part of New England, came to Utica under the following circumstances: she was teaching a high school, in the neighborhood of Newburgh, New York. As much was said in the newspapers about the revival in Utica, Miss Thomas, among others, became filled with wonder and astonishment, and with a desire to go and see for herself what it meant. She dismissed her school for ten days, and took the stage for Utica. As she passed through Genesee street to the hotel, she observed on one of the

signs, the name of Briggs Thomas. She was an entire stranger in Utica, and did not know that she had an acquaintance or relative there. But after stopping a day or two at her hotel, and inquiring who Briggs Thomas was, she dropped him a note, saying that the daughter of a Mr. Thomas, naming her father, was at the hotel, and would be pleased to see him. Mr. Thomas waited upon her and found that she was a distant relative of his, and invited her immediately to his house. She accepted his invitation, and he being an earnest Christian man, immediately took her to all the meetings, and tried to interest her in religion. She was greatly surprised at all that she saw, and a good deal annoyed.

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

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

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

#### PREACHING IN NEW HARTFORD AND WHITESBORO

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

## CONVICTION IN THE FACTORY

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

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

## THE CONVERSION OF THEODORE WELD

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

going on at Utica, he became very much excited, and his opposition was greatly aroused. He became quite outrageous in his expressions of opposition to the work, as I understood.

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

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

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

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

I went out also, and returned to Mr. Aiken's, where for the time I was lodging. I had been there but a few moments when somebody called at the door, and as no servant was at hand I went to the door myself. And who should come in but Mr. Weld? He looked as if he would sink. He began immediately to make the most humble confession and apology for the manner in which he had treated me; and expressed himself in the strongest terms of self-condemnation. I took him kindly by the hand and had a little conversation with him, assured him that I had laid up nothing against him, and exhorted him earnestly, to give his heart to God. I believe I prayed with him before he went. He left, and I heard no more of him that day.

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

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

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

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

#### OPPOSITION FROM TRENTON

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

This revival occurred in the winter and spring of 1826. When the converts had been received into the churches throughout the county, Rev. John Frost, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Whitesboro, published a pamphlet giving some account of the revival, and stated, if I remember right, that within the bounds of that presbytery, the converts numbered three thousand. I have no copy of any of these pamphlets. I have said that the work spread from Rome and Utica, as from a center, in every direction.

Ministers came from a considerable distance, and spent more or less time in attending the meetings, and in various ways helping forward the work. I spread my own labors over as large a field as I could, and labored more or less throughout the bounds of the presbytery. I cannot now remember all the places where I spent more or less time. The pastors of all those churches sympathized deeply with the work; and like good and true men, laid themselves upon the altar, and did all they could to forward the great and glorious movement; and God gave them a rich reward.

#### THE OPPOSITION GETS STRONGER

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

#### CHAPTER 30.

##### LABORS IN WESTERN AND IN ROME, 1854-5

The next winter, at Christmas time, we went again to Western, Oneida county, where as I have already related, I commenced my labors in the autumn of 1825. The people were at this time again without a minister; and we spent several weeks there in very interesting labor, and with very marked results.

## SALVATION OF THE SCHOOL TEACHER

The revival was of a very interesting character; and there was a goodly number of souls born to God. The conversion of one young lady there I remember with a good deal of interest. She was teaching the village school. Her father was, I believe, a skeptic; and as I understood, she was an only daughter, and a great favorite with her father. He was a man, if I was rightly informed, of considerable influence in the town, but did not at all attend our meetings. He lived on a farm away from the village. Indeed the village is very small, and the inhabitants are scattered through the valley of the Mohawk, and over the hills on each side; so that the great mass of inhabitants have to come a considerable distance to meeting.

I had heard that this young woman did not attend our meetings much, and that she manifested considerable opposition to the work. In passing the schoolhouse one day I stepped in to speak with her. At first she appeared surprised to see me come in. I had never been introduced to her, and should not have known her, if I had not found her in that place. She knew me, however, and at first appeared as if she recoiled from my presence. I took her very kindly by the hand, and told her that I had dropped in to speak with her about her soul. "My child," I said, "how is it with you? Have you given your heart to God?" This I said while I held her hand. Her head fell, and she made no effort to withdraw her hand. I saw in a moment that a subduing influence came over her, and so deep and remarkable an influence, that I felt almost assured that she would submit to God right on the spot.

The most that I expected when I went in, was to have a few words with her that I hoped might set her to thinking, and to appoint a time to converse with her more at large. But the impression was at once so manifest, and she seemed to break down in her heart so readily, that with a few sentences quietly and softly spoken to her, she seemed to give up her opposition, and to be in readiness to lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ. I then asked her if I should say a few words to the scholars; and she said, yes, she wished I would. I did so, and then asked her if I should present herself and her scholars to God in prayer. She said she wished I would, and became very deeply affected in the presence of the school. We engaged in prayer, and it was a very solemn, melting time. The young lady from that time seemed to be subdued, and to have passed from death unto life. She did not live long before she passed, I trust, to heaven.

## GOING TO AGAIN TO WESTERN

These two seasons of my being in Western were about thirty years apart. Another generation had come to live in that place from that which lived there in the first revival in which I labored there. I found, however, a few of the old members there. But the congregation was mostly new, and composed principally of younger people who had grown up after the first revival.

As in the case of the first revival, so in this, the people in Rome heard what was passing in Western, and came up in considerable numbers to attend our meetings. This led after a few weeks, to my going down and spending some time in Rome.

The state of religion in Western has, I believe, been very much improved since this last revival.

The ordinances of the Gospel have been maintained, and I believe considerable progress has been made in the right direction. The Braytons' have all gone from Western, with the exception of one son and his family. That large and interesting family have melted away; but one of them being left in Western, one in Utica, and one son who was converted in the first revival there, and who has for many years been a minister, and pastor of the first Presbyterian church in Watertown, New York.

### GOING BACK TO ROME

When I was at Rome the first time, and for many years after, the church was Congregational. But a few years before I was there the last time, they had settled a Presbyterian minister, a young man, and he felt that the church ought to be Presbyterian instead of Congregational. He proposed and recommended this to the church, and succeeded in bringing it about; but to the great dissatisfaction of a large number of influential persons in the church. This created a very undesirable state of things in Rome; and when I arrived there from Western I was, for the first time, made acquainted with that very serious division of feeling in the church. Their pastor had lost the confidence and affection of a considerable number of very influential members of his church.

When I learned the state of things, I felt confident that but little could be done to promote a general revival, unless that difficulty could be healed. But it had been talked over so much, and the persons first concerned in it had so committed themselves, that I labored in vain to bring about a reconciliation. It was not a thing to preach about; but in private conversation I tried to pluck up that root of bitterness. I found the parties did not view the facts alike. I kept preaching, however; and the Spirit of the Lord was poured out, conversions were occurring very frequently, and I trust great good was done.

But after endeavoring in vain to secure a union of feeling and effort such as God would approve, I made up my mind to leave them. I have heard since that some of the disaffected members of the church went and joined the church in Western, leaving the church in Rome altogether. I presume the pastor did what he deemed to be his duty in that controversy, but the consequent divisions were exceedingly painful to me, as I felt a peculiar interest in that church.

### CHAPTER 31.

#### SYRACUSE

The next winter we left Oberlin at the usual season, and started East to occupy a field of labor to which we had been invited. While we were in Hartford, the previous winter, we had a very pressing invitation to go to the city of Syracuse to labor. The minister of the Congregational church came down to Hartford, to persuade me, if possible, to return with him. I could not see it my duty to go at that time, and thought no more about it. But on our way East at this time, we met this minister at Rochester. He was not then the pastor of the Congregational church in the city of Syracuse. But he felt so much interest for them, that he finally induced me to promise him that I would stop there, and spend at least one Sabbath. We did so, and found the little church

very much discouraged. Their number was small. The church was mostly composed of persons of very radical views, in regard to all the great questions of reform. The Presbyterian churches, and the other churches generally, did not sympathize at all with them, and it seemed as if the Congregational church must become extinct.

I preached one Sabbath, and learned so much about the state of things as to be induced to remain another Sabbath. Soon I began to perceive a movement among the dry bones. Some of the leading members of the Congregational church began to make confession to each other, and public confession of their wanderings from God, and of other things that had created prejudice against them in the city. This conciliated the people around them, and they began to come in, and soon their house of worship was too narrow to hold the people; and although I had not expected to stay more than one Sabbath, I could not see my way clear to leave, and I kept on from Sabbath to Sabbath. The interest continued to increase and to spread. The Lord removed the obstacles, and brought Christian people nearer together.

The Presbyterian churches were thrown open to our meetings, and conversions were multiplied on every side. However, as in some other cases, I directed my preaching very much to the Christian people. There had been very little sympathy existing between them; and a great work was needed among professors of religion, before the way could be prepared outside of the churches. Thus I continued to labor in the different churches, until the Second Presbyterian church was left without a pastor; after which we concentrated our meetings there in a great measure, and held on throughout the winter.

Here again Mrs. Finney established her ladies' meetings with great success. She generally held them in the lecture room of the first Presbyterian church, I think, a commodious and convenient room for such meetings. A great many very interesting facts occurred in her meetings that winter. Christians of different denominations seemed to flow together, after awhile, and all the difficulties that had existed among them seemed to be done away. The Presbyterian and the Congregational churches were all without pastors while I was there, and hence none of them opened their doors to receive the converts. I was very willing that this should be so, as I knew that there was great danger, if they began to receive the converts, that jealousies would spring up and mar the work.

As we were about to leave in the spring, I gave out notice from the pulpit, on my own responsibility, that on the next Sabbath we should hold a communion service, to which all Christians, who truly loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and gave evidence of it in their lives, were invited. That was one of the most interesting communion seasons I ever witnessed. The church was filled with communicants. Two very aged ministers, Fathers Waldo and Brainard, attended and helped at the communion service. There was a great melting in the congregation; and a more loving and joyful communion of the people of God, I think I never saw anywhere.

After I left, the churches all secured pastors. I have been informed that that revival resulted in great and permanent good. The Congregational church built them a larger house of worship; and have been, I believe, ever since a healthy church and congregation. The Presbyterian churches, and I believe the Baptist churches, were much strengthened in faith and increased in numbers.

The work was very deep there among a great many professors of religion. One very striking fact occurred which I will mention. There was a lady by the name of C, the Christian wife of an unconverted husband. She was a lady of great refinement, and beauty of character and person. Her husband was a merchant, a man of good moral character. She attended our meetings, and became very much convicted for a deeper work of grace in her soul. She called on me one day, in a state of very anxious inquiry. I had a few moments conversation with her, and directed her attention especially to the necessity of a thorough and universal consecration of herself and of her 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. I gave her the brief direction which I have mentioned, and she got up hastily and left me. Such a pressure was upon her mind, that she seemed in haste to lay hold of the fullness there was in Christ. I do not think she was in my room more than five or ten minutes, and she left me like a person who has some pressing business on hand. In the afternoon she returned as full of the Holy Spirit, to all human appearance, as she could be. She said she hurried home from my room in the morning, and went immediately to her chamber, and cast herself down before God, and made a thorough consecration of herself and of her all to Him. She said she had clearer apprehensions by far of what was meant by that, than she had ever had before; and she made a full and complete resignation of herself and everything into the hands of Christ. Her mind became at once entirely calm, and she felt that she began to receive of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In a very short time she seemed to be lifted up above herself, and her joy was so great that she could hardly refrain from shouting.

I had some conversation with her, and saw that she was in danger of being over excited. I said as much as I dared to say, to put her on her guard against this, and she went home.

A few days afterwards her husband called on me one morning with his sleigh, and asked me to take a ride with him. I did so, and found that his object was to talk with me about his wife. He said that she was brought up among the Friends, and when he married her, he thought she was one of the most perfect women that he ever knew. But finally, he said, she became converted and then he observed a greater change in her than he thought was possible; for he thought her as perfectly moral in her outward life before as she could be. Nevertheless, the change in her spirit and bearing, at the time of her conversion, was so manifest, he said, that no one could doubt it. "Since then," he said, "I have thought her almost or quite perfect." But, said he, "now she has manifestly passed through a greater change than ever. I see it in everything," said he. "There is such a spirit in her, such a change, such an energy in her religion, and such a fullness of joy and peace and love!" He inquired, "What shall I make of it? How am I to understand this? Do such changes really take place in Christian people?"

I explained it to him as best I could. I tried to make him understand what she was by her education as a Quaker, and what her conversion had done for her; and then told him that this was a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit, that had so greatly changed her at that time. She has since passed away to heaven; but the savor of that anointing of the Holy Spirit remained with her, as I have been informed, to the day of her death.

There is one circumstance that I have often heard Mrs. Finney relate, that occurred in her meetings, that is worth notice here. Her ladies' meetings were composed of the more intelligent

ladies in the different churches. Many of them were probably fastidious. But there was an elderly and uneducated old woman that attended their meetings, and that used to speak, sometimes, apparently to the annoyance of the ladies. Somehow she had the impression that it was her duty to speak at every meeting; and sometimes she would get up and complain of the Lord, that He laid it upon her to speak in meeting, while so many ladies of education were allowed to attend and take no part. She wondered why it was that God made it her duty to speak; while these fine ladies, who could speak so much to edification, were allowed to attend and “have no cross,” as she expressed it, “to take up.” She seemed always to speak in a whining and complaining manner. The part that she felt it her duty to take in every meeting, a good deal annoyed and discouraged my wife. She saw that it did not interest the ladies; and it seemed to her rather an element of disturbance.

But after things had gone on in this way for some time, one day this same old woman arose in meeting, and a new spirit was upon her. As soon as she opened her mouth it was apparent to everybody that a great change had come over her. She had come to the meeting full of the Holy Ghost, and she poured out her fresh experience, to the astonishment of all. The ladies were greatly interested in what the old woman said: and she went forward with an earnestness in relating what the Lord had done for her, that carried conviction to every mind. All turned and leaned toward her, to hear every word that she said, the tears began to flow, and a great movement of the Spirit seemed to be visible at once throughout the meeting. Such a remarkable change wrought immense good, and the old woman became a favorite. After that they expected to hear from her; and were greatly delighted from meeting to meeting to hear her tell what the Lord had done, and was doing for her soul.

I found in Syracuse a Christian woman whom they called Mother Austin, a woman of most remarkable faith. She was poor, and entirely dependent upon the charity of the people for subsistence. She was an uneducated woman, and had been brought up manifestly in a family of very little cultivation. But she had such faith as to secure the confidence of all who knew her. The conviction seemed to be universal among both Christians and unbelievers, that mother Austin was a saint. I do not think I ever witnessed greater faith in its simplicity than was manifested by that woman. A great many facts were related to me respecting her, that showed her trust in God, and in what a remarkable manner God provided for her wants from day to day. She said to me on one occasion, “Brother Finney, it is impossible for me to suffer for any of the necessaries of life, because God has said to me, ‘Trust in the Lord and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’” She related to me many facts in her history, and many facts were related to me by others, illustrative of the power of her faith.

She said, one Saturday evening a friend of hers, but an impenitent man, called to see her; and after conversing awhile he offered her, as he went away, a five dollar bill. She said that she felt an inward admonition not to take it. She felt that it would be an act of self-righteousness on the part of that man, and might do him more harm than it would do her good. She therefore declined to take it, and he went away. She said she had just wood and food enough in the house to last over the Sabbath, and that was all; and she had no means whatever of obtaining any more. But still she was not at all afraid to trust God, in such circumstances, as she had done for so many years.

On the Sabbath day there came a violent snowstorm. On Monday morning the snow was several feet deep, and the streets were blocked up so that there was no getting out without clearing the way. She had a young son that lived with her, the two composing the whole family. They arose in the morning and found themselves snowed in, on every side. They made out to muster fuel enough for a little fire, and soon the boy began to inquire what they should have for breakfast. She said, "I do not know, my son; but the Lord will provide." She looked out, and nobody could pass the streets. The lad began to weep bitterly, and concluded that they should freeze and starve to death. However, she said she went on and made such preparations as she could, to provide for breakfast, if any should come. I think she said she set her table, and made arrangements for her breakfast, believing that some would come in due season. Very soon she heard a loud talking in the streets, and went to the window to see what it was, and beheld a man in a single sleigh, and some men with him shoveling the snow so that the horse could get through. Up they came to her door, and behold! they had brought her a plenty of fuel and provision, everything to make her comfortable for several days. But time would fail me to tell the instances in which she was helped in a manner as striking as this. Indeed, it was notorious through the city, so far as I could learn, that Mother Austin's faith was like a bank; and that she never suffered for want of the necessaries of life, because she drew on God.

I never knew the number of converts at that time in Syracuse. Indeed I was never in the habit of ascertaining the number of hopeful converts.

## **CHAPTER 36.**

### **THE DEATH OF CHARLES FINNEY**

Those who have read the preceding pages, will naturally inquire in reference to the closing years of a life so full of labor and of usefulness. The narrative, completed with the beginning of 1868, leaves Mr. Finney still pastor of the First church in Oberlin, and lecturer in the seminary. The responsibilities of pastor he continued to sustain, with the help of his associate, some four or five years longer, preaching, as his health would admit, usually once each Sabbath. At the same time, as professor of Pastoral Theology, he gave a course of lectures each summer term, on the pastoral work, on Christian experience, or on revivals. He resigned the pastorate in 1872, but still retained his connection with the seminary, and completed his last course of lectures in July 1875, only a few days before his death. He preached, from time to time, as his strength permitted; and during the last month of his life, he preached one Sabbath morning in the First church, and another in the Second.

Notwithstanding the abundant and exhausting labors of his long public life, the burden of years seemed to rest lightly upon him. He still stood erect, as a young man, retained his faculties to a remarkable degree, and exhibited to the end the quickness of thought, and feeling, and imagination, which always characterized him. His life and character perhaps never seemed richer in the traits and the beauty of goodness, than in these closing years and months. His public labors were of course very limited, but the quiet power of his life was felt as a benediction upon the community, which, during forty years, he had done so much to guide and mold and bless.

His last day on earth was a quiet Sabbath, which he enjoyed in the midst of his family, walking out with his wife at sunset, to listen to the music, at the opening of the evening service in the church nearby. Upon retiring he was seized with pains which seemed to indicate some affection of the heart; and after a few hours of suffering, as the morning dawned, he died, August 16th, 1875, lacking two weeks of having completed his eighty-third year.

The foregoing narrative gives him chiefly in one line of his work, and one view of his character. It presents him in the ruling purpose, and even passion of his life, as an evangelist, a preacher of righteousness. His work as a theologian, a leader of thought, in the development and expression of a true Christian philosophy, and as an instructor, in quickening and forming the thought of others, has been less conspicuous, and in his own view doubtless entirely subordinate; but in the view of many, scarcely less fruitful of good to the church and the world. To set forth the results of his life in these respects, would require another volume, which will probably never be written; but other generations will reap the benefits, without knowing the source whence they have sprung.

Fini.



*C. G. Finney.*

These chapters, which pertain to the area covered in our tour, were taken from the Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, which was published shortly after his death in 1876.