

THE EVOLVING CRITICISMS AGAINST CHARLES G. FINNEY AND
WHAT THEY TEACH US REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF INNOVATIONS IN WORSHIP

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When Charles Finney burst onto the scene in 1826 as one of the preeminent evangelists in America, almost everyone focused on his use of new and exciting revivalistic techniques; they should have focused, instead, on his theology.¹ The failure to recognize early on that Finney's theology was at variance with the Calvinistic theology of the Presbyterian Church put into play a series of events that led to such enmity and strife within that denomination that it eventually split in two.²

Now that is not to say that such an evaluation would have been easy. It would have been difficult indeed. There were many factors that shielded Finney from a thorough analysis. First, Finney the man was fairly enigmatic. He came out of nowhere and ascended to prominence so quickly that he took the church by surprise. Secondly, Finney was so successful as an evangelist that it would have been hard pragmatically for the Presbyterian Church to out and out reject him in light of the urgency it felt to keep up with the westward expansion of the Methodists and the Baptists. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there was a preexisting theological debate within Presbyterianism that further obscured the true nature of Finney's underlying thought.

Still, Finney could have been evaluated theologically. There were enough accounts of his sermons and especially the methods he employed that it would have been possible to ascertain the true

¹ William G. McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1959), 27. McGloughlin writes: "...it was not until his revival in Western in September 1825, that eastern newspapers began to carry reprints from the upstate New York papers about him and publish eyewitness reports. From the outset his career, his manner, his methods...were subjects of violent controversy."

² Melvin L. Vulgamore, "Charles G. Finney: Catalyst in the Dissolution of American Calvinism," *The Reformed Review* 17, no. 4 (1964): 38. Vulgamore writes: "Among the Presbyterians the division was accomplished before the break in 1837-1838. It was the identification of Finney with the 'New Divinity', which was in the largest measure responsible."

nature of Finney's beliefs. But it simply did not happen. Instead, his contemporaries focused over and over again on his methods, sometimes approvingly but often with great disdain.³

It is a major premise of this paper that the focus on Finney's methods and the subsequent failure to evaluate his core theology was a mistake. That is not to argue primarily that Finney's theology was wrong, which of course it was. Instead, it is to argue that Finney's theology was sufficiently divergent from the Calvinistic doctrine of American Presbyterianism that someone should have recognized the fact and resisted the church's move to lend him her approbation. Had Finney been confronted early enough, he might have been turned. But even if he had not been turned, the church could have been spared the disruption of its peace and the schism that he ultimately precipitated. The church might have gotten a sense of the futility of trying to fit Finney into a world framed by the Westminster Confession of Faith.⁴ The church might have understood much earlier than it did that the water that came up in their respective buckets was drawn from two completely different wells.

But Finney's story, the preoccupation of the church with his methods and its failure to evaluate his theology early on, is not just some interesting point of historical trivia. It is, instead, an issue of particular relevance for the church today. It is relevant because the church is facing a crisis almost exactly parallel to what it faced in Finney's day. The theological issues are somewhat different. The denominations involved are much more diverse. But the manners in which innovations in worship are evaluated are almost identical.

³ John F. Thornbury, *God Sent Revival: The Story of Asahel Nettleton and the Second Great Awakening* (Grand Rapids: Evangelical Press, 1977), 162. Thornbury writes: "Initially the more conservative pastors took issue, not so much with Finney's doctrine, for this did not come out so strongly at the outset, but with his harsh, crude, sometimes abusive style and his use of the so-called new measures. There was, of course some connection between the measures and the doctrines, but this was not readily apparent."

⁴ Finney eventually called the Confession a "paper pope" stating that it was even more dangerous than a living pope, at least a living pope died. Cf. Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology: The Complete & Newly Expanded 1878 Edition*, compiled and edited by Dennis Carroll, Bill Nicely, Lewis Parkhurst Jr. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1994), 4.

Today, the modern evangelical American church is faced with its own radical evolution in worship methodology. The use of traditional liturgies and worship forms is being discarded in favor of a modern, marketing-based approach that looks and sounds different from anything the church has ever done. Drama, an exaggerated emphasis on music and sermons that focus on felt needs are quickly replacing expository preaching, corporate prayer, the public confession of sin and the primacy of the sacraments. Such a dramatic shift away from the traditional core elements of worship does not necessarily mean that such a shift is wrong. But it does mean that it might be wrong. It does mean with certainty that something has changed and it means that that change, right or wrong, is worthy of a measure of serious reflective thought. Of course, it can be argued that the elements of worship are neutral and thus open to continual contextualization and modification. But even if that is true, specifics ought to be evaluated theologically.

Yet, very little theological evaluation is happening.

That is why the study of Finney is still important for the modern church a full one hundred and seventy-five years after he first happened on the scene. The study of Finney and how his theology evolved to match his methods provides us adequate warrant for believing that religious methodologies do reflect underlying theological suppositions. To say it plainly, Finney provides warrant for the idea that the forms we use are a visible expression of what we believe theologically. Even if it is not true, that is, that what we do is a reflection of what we believe, it ought to be true. Churches like individuals are often plagued by their adherence to mutually exclusive theological positions. But just because it is that way, does not mean it has to stay that way. Areas that betray muddled thinking ought to be set right; actions that reflect a divergent or opposing theology ought to be discarded in favor of actions more in keeping with the theology that we hold to be biblical. Studying Finney and particularly how the church evaluated him early on can provide us with valuable insight into how we ought to look at our own liturgical landscape. It will provide us with a healthy motivation to be theologically introspective, to ask why we do what we do and to ask it often. Equally, it will provide us with a healthy fear for what can happen if we do not.

To sum up, Finney's contemporaries focused on his methods rather than the theological implications of his methods. That focus was a mistake. They should have focused on the theological suppositions that Finney held that allowed him to reinvent the liturgical wheel. Had they done so, they might have allayed the schism that Finney ultimately precipitated. Their mistake can be instructive for the modern church as it faces a similar transformation of its worship practices. The innovations themselves are secondary; the primary issue is the theology that lurks underneath and finally reveals itself through the innovations.

CHAPTER 2

DISTRACTIONS

Now as was pointed out in the introduction, there were several reasons why Finney was shielded from an early theological assessment. Though they are secondary to the argument of this paper, they are important to understanding the evangelical landscape in Finney's day. The things that distracted the church from seeking to fully understand Finney's theology are not sufficient to justify the failure of the church in doing their duty but they do help explain why it happened.

Finney's Rise Was Too Sudden

One of the reasons Finney's contemporaries failed to evaluate him theologically early on was because his rise to prominence was so sudden. It was a suddenness that must have made Finney as mystifying as John the Baptist. He went from being an unknown itinerant evangelist, to being a national figure in a matter of months. In the space of just a few more years, his fame would propel him from the wilderness of western New York to supply some of the most prominent, most urbane pulpits in Boston, Philadelphia, New York and even Europe.

But it was his sudden notoriety that made him difficult to evaluate. He had not been around long enough to have anything in print.⁵ The primary sources for finding out what Finney was saying and doing were based on second-hand reports. In 1826, about all his contemporaries had to go on were the extraordinary reports of his triumphs and his use of radical new techniques.

Some of that difficulty could have been allayed if Finney had been seminary educated. If he had been educated in a more traditional manner, some of his doctrinal irregularities might have been anticipated. At least, it would have been possible to place him within the framework of particular

⁵ McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 65. McGloughlin writes: "Finney had escaped theological assault prior to 1831 primarily because he had never published any of his views..."

educational tradition. But he was not seminary trained.⁶ He was not the product of Harvard, Yale or Princeton. Finney was a lawyer and a self-educated lawyer at that. But it was that isolated self-education that made Finney hard to categorize theologically. When he first rose to prominence, it was impossible to associate him with any particular school of thought.

It was the combination of his sudden rise to prominence and his lack of association with any particular educational institution that caused some of his beleaguered contemporaries to focus on other issues rather than on his theology. Some focused on ephemeral things like his personal appearance, which was understandable, for Finney cut a striking figure. He was tall, a full six foot two inches. He was thin, unusually refined for a self-educated New York rustic, and he had a melodious, resonant voice. No early description of him ever failed to note his exquisite, almost hypnotic, steel blue eyes.⁷

Still, most people focused less on the man and more on his innovative and often controversial methods. He tried methods no one else would and almost everything he tried worked. Those that admired him attempted to copy him. Those that disapproved of him pilloried him without quarter. But two things are certain; his contemporaries had no idea what Finney believed and everybody had opinions about his use of “new measures.”

A Sense of Urgency

Another reason that Finney was not evaluated theologically is that there a genuine sense of urgency to keep the revival going that had started a decade earlier. That urgency was spurred on by a

⁶ Charles G. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text*, edited by Garth M Rosell and Richard A.G. Dupuis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 47. In his *Memoirs* Finney wrote, “Some of them (members of the Presbytery) urged me to go to Princeton to study theology; but I declined...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 at all of what a minister of Christ should be.” However, Finney’s minister George Gale disputes Finney’s statement saying no school would accept him. Cf. G.W. Gale, *Autobiography of George Washington Gale 1789-1861: Founder of Galesburg, Illinois and Knox College* (New York: Privately Published, 1964), 185.

⁷ Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 35.

sense of postmillennial optimism that if the revival continued the nation might be brought to repentance in a decade or two.⁸ When Finney came along with his “new measures,” there was a fear from conservative revivalists that his dramatic innovations might muck things up. On the other hand, those that tended to be more experimental in their methods viewed Finney as supplying additional tools for their evangelistic arsenals.

It was this second group that Finney appealed to most. He concentrated on results and so did they. Because of that, they were always concerned with acquiring newer and even more successful means. Some of the less educated, less refined followers wound up going too far. They laughed like idiots or barked like dogs and in doing so became caricatures, much less like Finney and more like the fanatics of Cane Ridge or the notorious James Davenport. The unruly revivalists troubled the conservatives, men like Asahel Nettleton who wrote, “Whoever has made himself acquainted with the state of things in New England near the close of the revival days of Whitefield and Edwards cannot but weep over its likeness to the present.”⁹

Nevertheless, some of the better-educated men emulated his methods in order to obtain his results. Nathaniel S. Beman, one of Finney’s most ardent supporters, expressed a representative attitude in an invitation to Finney to come to his church in Troy. Beman pleaded with Finney to come over and help him, “I hope we look to God, but we must have means.”¹⁰

⁸ Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 78. Weisberger summarizes Beecher’s attitude about keeping the revival going, “The hosts of hell would be routed, the community of the righteous would expand, and who could say, then, that the millennium might not be in the offing?”

⁹ Lyman Beecher and Asahel Nettleton, *Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton, on the “New Measures” in Conducting Revivals of Religion, with a Review of a Sermon by Novanglus* (New York: G. and C. Carvill, 1828), 13.

¹⁰ Quoted in Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, 113. Weisberger points out that Beman was in trouble in his church and was convinced that a dramatic revival would secure his position. That was also the charge of the church at Troy. C.f. Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Presbytery of Troy, N.Y., *A Brief Account Of The Origin And Progress Of The Divisions In The First Presbyterian Church In The City Of Troy* (Troy, N.Y: Tuttle and Richards, 1827), 16.

It was those “means”, of course, that drew the ire of Finney’s critics. They focused on his methodology. Many were incensed by his use of radically “new measures” in the promotion of revivals. They focused on his use of protracted meetings, his use of a radical new style of preaching, his confrontational manner, his public condemnation of established ministers, his permitting women to pray publicly in open meetings and especially his use of the “prayer of faith” and the “anxious bench.”¹¹ But his “new measures” didn’t concern them because they reflected some dangerous theological shift; they concerned about them because they were fearful such drastic new techniques might cause the revival to stop.

Still, the sense of urgency regarding revivals that permeated the Presbyterian Church kept things going. That sense of urgency can best be illustrated by two very different examples.

The 1801 Plan of Union

In 1801, the Presbyterians agreed to join forces with the Congregationalists to evangelize the western frontier. It was never intended to be a new denomination; it was intended only as a temporary partnership. Charles Hodge’s son explained the plan this way:

This plan was designed to promote harmony and to combine the heterogeneous elements of the population in the new settlements in aggressive church extension. It proposed to effect this end not by forming a new and compromising form of church government, but by providing for the practical working together in the same congregations of ministers and people belonging to both denominations.¹²

Looking back, it was easy to see why the plan had been attractive. Both groups were Calvinistic; both groups subscribed, in theory, to the Westminster Confession of Faith. They both faced

¹¹ Susan J. White, *Christian Worship and Technological Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 96. White writes, “Charles G. Finney spoke for most revivalists of the period when he defended the progressive development of his practical worship measures by arguing that ‘God has established, in no church, any particular form, or manner of worship, for promoting the interests of religion.’ In a sense, the revivalists can be pictured as holding a Bible in one hand and a blank liturgical slate in the other.”

¹² Alexander A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge, D.D., LL.D: Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1881), 286.

problems that union seemed to address. Neither denomination possessed sufficient resources to sustain such a large home missionary enterprise. Both groups suffered from their ability to crank out educated ministers at a clip sufficient to keep up with the westward expansion of the less education conscious Methodists and Baptists.¹³ On the surface, The Plan of Union seemed the temporary solution to all their problems. It allowed them to unite their forces. Looking toward the potential benefits, they decided to allow congregations composed of members of one denomination to call a minister of the other.¹⁴ They worked out an agreement to settle disputes allowing injured parties to appeal to a Presbytery, an Association or even a committee comprised of equal members from both denominations. While such a move allowed them to draw from a larger pool of otherwise inaccessible ministers, it also held inherent dangers, especially for the confessionally minded Presbyterians.

Initially, however, the Presbyterians enjoyed immediate benefit from the Plan of Union.¹⁵ Their number increased over ten-fold in less than thirty years while Congregational expansion just about stopped altogether. However, in terms of the propagation of theological views, the benefit fell largely to the Congregationalists.¹⁶

Now the point being made concerning the 1801 Plan of Union is that the Presbyterians were willing to relinquish control of their denomination to keep the revival moving. Assuredly, they had no

¹³ Samuel J. Baird, *A History of the New School and of the Questions Involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1868), 163.

¹⁴ James H. Moorhead, "The 'Restless Spirit of Radicalism': Old School Fears and the Schism of 1837," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 20.

¹⁵ George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and theology in Nineteenth Century America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 11-12. He notes, "The Presbyterian Church grew phenomenally, largely through the addition of the New Englanders. Between 1807 and 1834 the General Assembly reported an increase in communicant membership from 18,000 to 248,000. The strength of the Presbyterians was even greater than these numbers indicate."

¹⁶ Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 457. Ahlstrom contributes the dominant influence of the Congregationalists to the fact that many of the men seconded by the Plan of Union were enthusiastic evangelists who had already been participating in the Second Awakening.

original intention of allowing their denomination to be overrun by the Congregationalists but that is what happened. Thirty-six years later, they rued the day they had ever made the agreement. Traditionally, Presbyterians have been sticklers for peace and order, especially order. But the 1801 Plan of Union was a concession on their part to put order at risk in hope of pushing the revival along.

Still, the Presbyterians were not limited to making concessions just on a national level. They were also willing to make them on a local level. Perhaps, no better example of that can be found than the licensure examination of Charles Finney.

The Licensure Examination of Charles Finney

In December of 1823, Finney was called before the St. Lawrence Presbytery to be examined for licensure. Normally, such examinations are rigorous. Finney's was not. He wrote:

But after a great struggle 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. 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 Catechisms and Presbyterian 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.¹⁷

Now the genuinely interesting thing about Finney's licensure is that the Presbytery deviated from its normal practice just to accommodate Finney. The reason for that was that the Presbytery looked favorably upon the success that Finney had already had in promoting revival. We know that what they

¹⁷ Finney, *Memoirs*, 53-54.

did was an accommodation from remarks George Gale made in his autobiography concerning the usually stringent nature of exams the Presbytery practiced.¹⁸

Now the point has been made that Finney's meager examination was an accommodation on the part of the presbytery to accept Finney because of his ability to advance the revival then underway. In truth, it is just one more reflection of the kind of distraction that kept Finney's contemporaries from closely examining his theology. Acceptance in total, not in substance, of the Westminster Standards was the normal rule of the day for men standing for licensure in the Presbyterian Church.¹⁹ The successful licensure of Charles Finney was an illustration that the Presbyterians were willing to relax their doctrinal distinctives in order to add someone that could help keep the revival going.²⁰ Still the pragmatic approach taken by the St. Lawrence Presbytery was nothing more or less than a local manifestation of a national sentiment that continuing the revival was the main thing.

Preexisting Doctrinal Debates

Now the point has been made that Finney's theology went undetected because of his sudden rise to prominence and because of a pervasive desire to keep the revival going. There was one other factor that obscured Finney's theology. That was a preexisting theological debate within Presbyterianism. The debate involved four different groups, only one of which had existed prior to the 1801 Plan of Union. The four groups were (1) the Old School Presbyterians, (2) the Middle Party at Princeton, (3) the New School Presbyterians and (4) the New Divinity Party.

The Old School Party

¹⁸ Gale, *Autobiography*, 166-167. Gale dissuaded one young man from standing for licensure because of "Knowing that in the Presbytery it would be difficult to get him licensed, on account of our rules, and the firmness with which some adhered to them..."

¹⁹ Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 67-68.

²⁰ Gale, *Autobiography*, 78-79. Gale is representative of the pragmatic approach taken by the Presbytery that examined Finney. He once said, "Mr. Finney had some peculiarities, some things that were not practicable that I would alter, but...he was a good man and God was with him."

The Old School party was led by Ashbel Green, former President of Princeton College, George Junkin and R.J. Breckinridge, B.B. Warfield's grandfather. The Old School party subscribed fully to the Westminster Confession of Faith. As a result, they affirmed the immediate imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind, the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ on behalf of the elect, and the forensic, legal imputation of Christ's righteousness to His people. They were opposed to the excessive emotionalism connected with revivalism. They were also intensely displeased with the New School party and they loathed the New Divinity Party, also known as Taylorites. Concerning their displeasure, Alexander Hodge wrote, "... (they) were convinced that the crisis was imminent, that the evils were so great as to be intolerable, and who, therefore, pressed urgently the prosecution of heresy, and demanded peremptorily either the speedy abatement of these evils or the division of the church."²¹

The Middle Party at Princeton

The triumvirate composed of Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller and Charles Hodge led the Middle party at Princeton. They were called the Middle party because of their conciliatory nature. Hodge notes that the Middle party fully subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith.²² They were every bit as orthodox as the Old School party. In fact, the statement of faith they signed to teach at Princeton went beyond what was required of any Presbyterian minister anywhere in United States.²³ They differed from the Old School party only in the fact that they were willing to tolerate greater theological diversity within Presbyterianism. Alexander Hodge concluded:

The Princeton or Middle party was wholly Old School ...They desired ...to have all ministers holding and teaching...“Taylorism” tried and excluded from office...(and) to have new measures discouraged...on the other hand, they did not wish to see the church divided ...which the Old

²¹ Alexander A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge D.D., LL.D.: Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton* (Edinburgh and New York: T. Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1881), 290.

²² *Ibid.*, 292.

²³ Earl A. Pope, *New England Calvinism and the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 53. Pope provides the actual subscription document they signed.

School leaders...appeared to desire. The Princeton men protested...that...(the) Hopkinsian peculiarities, which should be tolerated, were indiscriminately confused with Taylorite errors...²⁴

As if to confirm Hodge's assertion that the Mediating party at Princeton was more willing to accept some theological deviation, J.W. Alexander, the son of Archibald Alexander, wrote concerning his father, "He believed that there were such errors maintained by ministers and authors as should disqualify them for exercising office in our church; but he also believed that there were some differences which did not amount to heresy, and which ought not to be made (a) matter of discipline."²⁵

While modern Calvinists view the men at Princeton as stalwarts of orthodoxy, some of the Old-Schoolers viewed the gentlemen at Princeton with less regard. Alexander Hodge complained in his father's biography about the manner in which they were skewered:

It was inevitable, under all the conditions of the case, that the excited leaders of the Old School majority in these conflicts should have been annoyed by the independent position of the "Princeton gentlemen" and those who agreed with them. This annoyance naturally led to hard thoughts and derogatory language. No one at any time doubted their doctrinal soundness, but the entire class of men, wherever resident, was called the "Princeton Party" in order to belittle it. They were characterized as "moderates," "trembling brethren," "compromisers."²⁶

The New School Party

The New School Presbyterians differed in so many points from both the Old Schoolers and the Mediating party at Princeton that they caused enormous tension between the other two groups.²⁷ The New Schoolers were primarily composed of conservative Hopkinsians. As Hopkinsians, they rejected the idea of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity. They believed that each man was sinful exclusively because of his own sinful acts. But they also believed that each man sinned inevitably in the

²⁴ Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge*, 290.

²⁵ J.W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander D.D., LLD: First Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* (New Jersey: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1857), 409. Alexander believed being a Taylorite was sufficient grounds for being removed from Presbyterian ministry; he did not believe that being a Hopkinsian was sufficient cause to be removed from the ministry.

²⁶ Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge*, 308.

²⁷ Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 40. Marsden's discussion of New School Presbyterianism is particularly enlightening.

first moments of his being. As a result, they held that man was totally depraved and could be converted only through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. But they believed that man was depraved only in his will, not in whole of his being, and the resulting confusion that was caused by that shift led many Hopkinsians to strong affinity for revivalism.²⁸ Hopkinsians also rejected the accepted view of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ for the elect only and held the governmental theory of atonement.

The governmental view of the atonement was a view that focused primarily on God as the moral governor of the universe. It was quite different than the forensic view held by the Old-Schoolers and by the Middle party at Princeton. The governmental view of the atonement rejected the idea that Christ bore the literal penalty of the sins of the elect. It asserted, rather, that the atonement was only necessary to demonstrate God's seriousness and commitment to judge sin. In that sense, the atonement procured the actual redemption of no one. God was not propitiated. It simply made it possible for God to forgive the sins of sinful humanity without having to fear lawlessness and anarchy on the part of mankind. The idea was that mankind would see in the atonement God's commitment to judge sin and not think that He viewed sin as inconsequential. David Wells has rightly called the governmental view of the atonement the "deterrence view".²⁹ Because the Hopkinsians viewed the atonement as an illustration of God's commitment to judge sin, and not an actual propitiation for the sins of the elect, they considered the atonement to be universal and not limited in its scope.

The Old School Presbyterians rejected the New School Presbyterians because they viewed Hopkinsianism as a complete renunciation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. They also distrusted

²⁸ Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 62. Haroutunian writes, "Transferring depravity from man as man to his 'will,' Hopkins exposed himself to a confusion which, from a Calvinistic point of view, underlay all the heresies of subsequent New England theology."

²⁹ David F. Wells, "The Debate Over the Atonement in the 19th Century Pt. 3: The Collision of Views on the Atonement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144, no. 576 (October, 1987): 374. Wells provides a great service for anyone trying to become acquainted with governmental theory of atonement. Most of the literature of the period (pro or con) is undecipherable; Wells cuts to the chase.

the New Schoolers because they affirmed the Westminster Standards in its overall substance but not in its details. But because they did not have the denominational strength to overthrow the New Schoolers they had to accommodate themselves to having them in their midst. This point is crucial for it speaks volumes about the reason they failed to evaluate Finney theologically. They already thought they knew what he believed. They did not. They thought Finney was a New School Presbyterian, that is, a Hopkinsian. He was not. He belonged to the Taylorites, to whom we now turn.

The New Divinity Party or “Taylorism”

The one party that received criticism from all the other parties that made up the Presbyterian Church in the 1830’s was the New Divinity party. Though the New Divinity party never included more than a handful of men in either the Presbyterian or Congregational church, their views precipitated a crisis in both denominations. Their views were similar to those of the New School party with one distinct exception. They rejected the need for a miraculous work of grace on the part of the Holy Spirit to enable a sinner to be converted. For them such a work was unnecessary and not much more than a convenient excuse for unrepentant sinners. They based their rejection on the idea that man was not depraved in the same sense the Hopkinsians held. They believed man retained the innate ability to repent and believe the gospel.³⁰ Understandably, their view of man’s innate ability to repent left them susceptible to the recurrent charge of Pelagianism.

Looking back with the insight afforded by forty years of historical reflection, Alexander Hodge wrote in 1881:

There were in those days four parties in the church: (1) those congregations and groups of congregations, which were imperfectly organized, and those ministers and people who maintained the extreme type of error they styled “Taylorism.” These occasioned all the trouble.

³⁰ Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 50. Marsden writes, “The vital difference between the messages of Taylor and Hopkins was that Taylor told the sinner that he could, and certainly must, act to escape his damnable condition. For Hopkins, on the other hand, regeneration was solely the work of the Holy Spirit, and the sinner remained passive until he was enabled to respond in the converting experience.”

Without them all the other parties could have coalesced together in a sufficiently homogeneous Presbyterian church.³¹

They were called the New Divinity, Taylorite party, or even New Haven party because their views flowed from one source. That source was Nathaniel Taylor, professor of theology at Yale Seminary in New Haven, Connecticut. Early in his career, Taylor began to extend beyond the traditional, Hopkinsian view of man's native sinfulness. Part of his defection was due to his strong commitment to revivalism. Part of his defection was due to what he believed was an inherent flaw in the anthropology of Jonathan Edwards. Part of his defection was due to his desire to redefine Calvinism so that it might be more able to counter the arguments of the Unitarians.³² The whole of his defection was to create havoc and schism throughout the Presbyterian Church and Congregationalism.

Now it is important to add at this point that the real battle was between the Old Schoolers and the New Schoolers. Had the Old Schoolers understood that Finney was a Taylorite right off, they would have cast him aside. But they did not. They failed to make the connection because other things distracted them. They were confused by Finney's sudden rise to notoriety, by his extraordinary success in promoting revival and by an assumption that he was a Hopkinsian.

In the end, however, they got it right. When they began to evaluate his theology, they understood the implications and the dangers. When they did so responded with a vengeance not only excising the Taylorites but the New School Presbyterians as well. In 1837, the Old Schoolers united with the Middle party of Princeton to form a majority at the meeting of the General Assembly. In one encompassing move, they abrogated the 1801 Plan of Union kicking out the New Schoolers altogether. When they did so they made the abrogation retroactive and excised most of the churches that had been formed as a result of the 1801 Plan of Union. They cast off forty percent the extant Presbyterian Church, along with its New School synods, presbyteries and seminaries. But one man they were not able to excise

³¹ Hodge, *The Life of Hodge*, 289. "Imperfectly organized" = Congregational.

³² Sidney Earl Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor 1786-1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: Archon Books, 1967), 95-127. Mead's explanation of Taylor's transition from a traditional Edwardean to a theological innovator is still the most compelling thing written on the subject.

was Charles Grandison Finney. Finney had already seen the handwriting on the wall. In 1835, Finney he resigned his connection with the Presbyterians and united with the Congregationalists.

Now this section of the paper was included because it is important to understand the nature of the reasons why more energy was not put into evaluating Finney's theologically early on. Surely, the overall reason was pragmatism. But that pragmatism manifested itself in specific ways. In the beginning, Finney's rise was so spectacular that it caught the church off guard. There was probably a feeling that Finney's evaluation could be put off until he was more fully developed. That initial reluctance to evaluate him was made all the more difficult, however, by his continued success. As Finney's fame grew it was accompanied by a realization that Finney had indeed struck onto something. They saw that Finney's methods, if sufficiently harnessed, could be utilized to perpetuate the revival that was precious to Old Schoolers and New Schoolers alike.

Finally, Finney's theology was shielded by the ongoing conflict between Old Schoolers and New Schoolers. The Old Schoolers thought Finney was a New School Presbyterian, which they were forced to accommodate. McGloughlin writes:

Just how blind the Middle Atlantic Presbyterians had been to the possibility that Finney's revivalism in Philadelphia in 1828 was the Trojan horse in their midst was reflected in Finney's remark that they had taken no interest in the distinction made at New Lebanon between new and old measures. They thought him to be merely a crude western exponent of Hopkinsianism, and while they did not like Hopkinsians they had learned to put up with them. When Taylor and Barnes endorsed the doctrines of free will, however, it suddenly dawned upon the Presbyterians that New England Congregationalists were split into two camps and that Finney's "new measures" were not simply a matter of revival procedure but a matter of doctrine...³³

The New School Presbyterians, on the other hand, did not care what Finney was because of his success in promoting revivals. Still they should have known. If they had listened to Finney, as he belittled Old School Presbyterianism and Hopkinsianism alike, they might have inferred that he was truly something else altogether.³⁴

³³ McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 45-46.

³⁴ David L. Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney* (Metuchen N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985), 120. Weddle writes, "Throughout his career,

But they did not. Instead they focused on his “new measures.” The Old Schoolers focused on the disorder they promoted and the New Schoolers focused on how well they worked. Both groups should have wondered what theological suppositions allowed him to do the things he did. But they did not and in 1837, they were left to wonder how they could ever put the pieces back together.

Now all of this discussion is not just academic, it has important application for the modern church as well. There is a tendency in our day to lay hold too quickly to those who might draw the interest of unbelievers. It can be seen in the wholesale embrace of any athlete or film star who has made a profession of faith. Rather than being subjected to genuine aggressive discipleship they are often foisted upon an adoring public in hope of the possibilities of the moment. They are not examined or honed to maturity; they are, rather, displayed until they do something sufficiently embarrassing to be laid aside.

But beyond that, there is also an extraordinary willingness to employ whatever liturgical techniques seem to be the most productive. They are not evaluated theologically; they are simply seasoned to taste and put to work. Surely, such a failure is an accommodation to American pragmatism.³⁵

Finally, there seems to be little concern in our day that the same liturgical innovations span so many different denominations. If the Presbyterians learned any thing from the 1801 Plan of Union, it was that the theological underpinning for the Congregational use of Finney’s “new measures” was much different than their own. That has relevance today, as Charismatics, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans

Finney regarded Hopkins’ system of doctrines as representative of Old School Calvinism.” See also McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 44. McGloughlin writes: “As far as he (Finney) was concerned, Hopkinsians held virtually the same doctrines ... (as the) Princetonians ... Finney seemed totally unaware that Lyman Beecher was doing his best to coax the New England Hopkinsians into the new divinity camp...because Beecher’s eastern colleagues at New Lebanon were generally considered to be Hopkinsians, Finney at this time lumped all New Englanders with Philadelphians and Princetonians as enemies of revivalism.

³⁵ White, *Christian Worship*, 96. White’s analysis of Finney sounds like she is talking about modern evangelicalism. “For the later revivalists, salvation was a commodity to be “promoted,” and worship was the principal “showroom” in which that commodity was marketed and sold (as well as the means of production by which that salvation was “manufactured.”) And the promoters of salvation knew the importance of targeting a particular consumer market and designing the experience of worship so that it would “sell” salvation to the consumer. This approach, of course, presupposed an almost total commitment to liturgical pragmatism, the sense that whatever worked was necessarily right.”

and Catholics alike employ the same techniques. Surely, there ought to be a measure of concern that that is happening. Surely, denominational scholars ought to be striving to understand what theological accommodations are being made that would allow such an extraordinary uniformity of method.

But all that having been said, let us turn now to the manner in which Finney was actually evaluated and the evolution of the criticisms leveled against him.

CHAPTER 3

THE CRITICISMS AGAINST FINNEY

The criticisms against Finney started almost immediately at the beginning of his career. Initially, no connection was made between his methods and the theological implications of his methods. That such a connection should have been made is the principle point of this paper. Of course, there were things that got in the way of making that connection. Still, it seems someone should have been able to surmise what theological assertions drove Finney's methodology. That did not happen, however, until Finney finally went into print. At first, the criticisms against him were restricted to his innovative methodology, his "new measures".³⁶ Later, questions arose concerning his underlying theology. The following is a brief chronological account of some of the early criticisms.³⁷

Early Criticisms

Early in 1826, The Utica Christian Repository began publishing chapters of William Weeks' *A Pilgrim's Progress in the Nineteenth Century*. In these chapters, Weeks expressed concern over the employment of Finney's controversial, "new measures."³⁸ After Weeks' death in 1848, the chapters that made up *The Pilgrim's Progress in the Nineteenth Century* were coalesced into a book. Though the chapters

³⁶ Whitney A. Cross, *The Burned Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Octagon Books, 1981), 182. Cross writes, "Such devices were deliberately adopted, because experience showed that they worked. Their use does not itself prove that the perpetrators were hypocrites or scoundrels. People had come to expect this kind of thing and rewarded the ingenuity, which provided new sensations. All the devices to 'get up' a revival were frankly admitted, accompanied in every case by apparently sincere statements that all came from God. The contradiction did not become apparent to either lay or clerical minds tuned to the evangelistic mood."

³⁷ I have drawn heavily from the work of both McMillan and Watke. See David K. McMillan, *Untitled Manuscript*. (Cleveland: 1983), 90-91. See also Curtis Watke, "Finney and New Measures Revivalism: A Theoretical and Theological Critique," (Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 1994), Appendix D.

³⁸ McMillan, *Untitled Manuscript*, 90-91.

released in the newspaper received only local attention at the time, Weeks' criticisms formed the basis of an important pastoral letter he wrote later the following year.³⁹

In December of 1826, the Unitarian Ephraim Perkins wrote a tract entitled, *A Bunker Hill Contest*, in which he listed a host of scurrilous charges.⁴⁰ His attacks against Finney are so vitriolic and spiteful that they are not detailed. One of Perkins' descriptions of Finney, though almost certainly a caricature, is representative of the rest of his criticisms against Finney.

But in this "Revival" they have not been active because they think the manifest object of it is, to give directions to God, and to reconcile God to man; where it should be the very reverse. In these "Revivals" we see little of the peaceable fruits of righteousness, but much arrogance; indignity and irreverence towards God in prescribing to him the course, the time, and the manner, in which they would have him convert their neighbors to their particular faith; the purport of which seems to be "not thy will but mine be done." Their language is, "smite them this night" — "shake them" — "shake them off their seats" — "shake them over hell" — "take off the blanket and show them hell, and hold them over it." — "God, go home with these sinners." — "I have no doubt many of them think they see the Lord in the strong wind, rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rock the earthquake, and in the fire."⁴¹

In January 1827, after his second meeting with Finney, Asahel Nettleton, a famous New School Congregational revivalist in his own right, wrote a letter to the Rev. Samuel Aiken complaining about Finney's "new measures." In the letter, Nettleton listed eleven criticisms concerning Finney's "new measures" most of which centered around Finney's irreverent use of the name of God, his general denunciatory spirit, the permitting of women to pray in mixed meetings and his introduction of the "prayer of faith."⁴²

³⁹ William R. Weeks, *The Pilgrim's Progress in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: M.W. Dodd, Brick Church Chapel, 1958), 358-361.

⁴⁰ Ephraim Perkins, *A Bunker Hill Contest, A.D. 1826 Between The "Holy Alliance: for the Establishment of Hierarchy, and Ecclesiastical Domination Over the Human Mind, on the One Side; And the Asserters of Free Inquiry, Bible Religion, Christian Freedom and Civil Liberty on the Other. The Reverend Charles Finney, "Home Missionary," and High Priest of the Expeditions of the Alliance in the Interior of New York; Head Quarters, County of Oneida* (Utica, N.Y.: Published by Author, 1826), 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴² Bennet Tyler, *Asahel Nettleton: Life and Labours*, edited by Andrew Bonar (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 342-355. See Appendix A.

In that same month, much to his surprise, a letter Lyman Beecher had written to Nathan Beman was published. It made many of the same criticisms Nettleton had which is not surprising in that it was written shortly after Nettleton's and was probably the result of letters going back and forth between the two. The one additional criticism Beecher added that was completely new was Finney's justifying of his new techniques solely on the basis of their successfulness.⁴³

In 1827, Joseph Brockway, one of the disgruntled members of the First Presbyterian Church in Troy, published a passionate and inflammatory account of the practices associated with the revival in Troy. He ended one section with what has become one of the better quotes in Finney studies.

He (that is, Beman) had before said, in one of his lectures, that the only reason why the Methodists were so much blessed, and why they had grown up, as it were, in a day, to so great a people, was because they preached the simple truth of God. Mr. Finney, too, bears testimony to the same point, and says that there has been more of the spirit of religion among them, and they have done more good than all other denominations put together. I say then, let them go to the Methodists.⁴⁴

That same year, some of the other members of the First Presbyterian Church in Troy, probably in league with Brockway, published their own tract. In it they detailed many of the excesses associated with the Revival in Troy. Their tract was one of the first to make the charge that the theology associated with the "new measures" was less than orthodox. The harshness of the accusations contained in their *Brief Account* make them suspect. One example will suffice.

While things were in this state...Mr. Beman (introduced) into his pulpit the notorious Charles G. Finney. This man had acquired a high reputation as an active and successful promoter of revivals; and a message had been transmitted to him that Troy would be, at the present juncture, a suitable theatre for his labors. The character of the man must be too well known to require any illustration from us... we shall treat him (as) an acknowledged outlaw. If no other objections could be urged against him, it was not proper to obtrude upon an unwilling auditory a man who was not qualified, either by his talents or acquirements, to instruct or please an enlightened community. But his shocking blasphemies, his novel and repulsive sentiments, and his theatrical and

⁴³ Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography, Correspondence Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* vol. 2, edited by Charles Beecher (New York: Harper Brothers, 1865), 83-96. See Appendix A.

⁴⁴ Josephus Brockway, *A Delineation of the Characteristic Features of a Revival of Religion in Troy, in 1826 and 1827* (Troy, N.Y.: Francis Adancourt, 1827), 59.

frantic gesticulations, struck horror into those who entertained any reverence either for religion or decency.⁴⁵

In June and July of 1827, Congregationalist minister William Weeks published a lengthy letter entitled *A Pastoral Letter of the Ministers of the Oneida Association*. In it, he listed some thirty criticisms of the “new measures” employed by Charles Finney.⁴⁶ Basically, Week’s criticisms were the same as Nettleton’s and Beecher’s with the exception that they were more detailed. Week’s focused especially on Finney’s denunciation of ministers who objected to his methods and his practice of calling men’s names out loud to embarrass them into making a public decision. Week’s was also one of the first to note Finney’s use of making concerned sinners go to a special place in the church to obtain the Spirit or be converted. Clearly, Week’s had in mind the “anxious bench.”

The preceding examples of the early criticisms leveled against Finney are representative of the kind of concerns that were expressed in many private letters, newspaper articles and tracts. The examples given are not exhaustive but are provided merely to illustrate the nature of the critiques made against Finney and the “new measures.” The common feature of all the criticisms of that period was that they focused on Finney’s methods without concerning themselves about Finney’s underlying theology.

A Partial Cease Fire

In 1827, Lyman Beecher had had enough. He decided to meet Finney face to face and try force Finney to modify his methods. Scholars are divided on the reason why Beecher made his decision but most think he may have finally recognized that Finney was not simply going to fade off the scene.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Presbytery of Troy, N.Y., *A Brief Account Of The Origin And Progress Of The Divisions In The First Presbyterian Church In The City Of Troy* (Troy, N.Y: Tuttle and Richards, 1827), 19.

⁴⁶ William R. Weeks, “Pastoral Letter,” 246-254, 293-303. See Appendix A.

⁴⁷ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 267. Cf. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 77-78. Marsden quotes Beecher from a letter written to Nettleton, “There is such an amount of truth and power in the preaching of Mr. Finney, and so great an amount of good hopefully done, that if he can be so far restrained as that he shall more good than evil, then it would be dangerous to oppose him, lest at length we might be found to fight against God; for though some revivals may be so badly managed...(they are) on the whole blessings to the Church.”

They argue that Beecher, ever the pragmatist himself, realized it would be better to harness Finney's popularity than let it slip away.⁴⁸ Certainly, the letter Beecher sent to Beman proposing the meeting reflects Beecher's statesmanship at its best. Beecher wrote, "... (It is) necessary that Brother Finney should come upon ground on which we can sustain him, for we cannot justify his faults for the sake of his excellencies."⁴⁹

Other scholars think that Beecher was afraid that the preoccupation with Finney's "new measures" might draw further attention to his own Taylorism.⁵⁰ They feared too much scrutiny would endanger both their own position in Congregationalism and the tenuous agreement with the Presbyterians.⁵¹ It seems that Beecher clearly understood the foul mood of the Presbyterians.

In July of 1827, representative from both parties met at New Lebanon, New York. The westerners, led by Finney and Beman, were undaunted by Beecher and the easterners. After some initial posturing, they ploughed into each other. The eastern men complained the westerners were bringing reproach upon revivalism with their radical "new measures." The westerners fired back that the problem with the eastern men was the coldness of their hearts. Neither side was willing to budge and the meeting wound up a stalemate. Both parties did vow to be more guarded in their language and to stop their public condemnation of each other. They even signed an agreement to that end, one that forty years later Finney could not remember. After New Lebanon, Beecher argued that Finney toned down his methods. But Finney always denied that he ever changed any of his methods. Beecher wrote afterwards, "We crossed the mountains expecting to meet a company of boys, but we found them to be full-grown men."⁵²

⁴⁸ Murray, *Revival & Revivalism*, 267.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, 117.

⁵⁰ Murray, *Revival & Revivalism*, 265-266.

⁵¹ McGloughlin argues that the more Finney pressed for the theological reinterpretation within Presbyterianism, the more tenuous the alliance became. See McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 44-45.

⁵² Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney*, 144.

The Pens at Princeton

Even though New Lebanon toned down the rhetoric concerning revivalism within Congregationalism, the issue was carried on by a very disgruntled Asahel Nettleton and by other men like Bennet Tyler. The gentlemen at Princeton also weighed in on the controversy. But as the men at Princeton became involved, the discussion finally took on a much more theological bent. Their discussion of the “new measures” was, however, much less personal than the earlier arguments levied against Finney. Ever mindful of their influential position at Princeton and ever mindful of their manners, the men at Princeton refused steadfastly to attack Finney and the others until they came into print. It seems that they were the first persons more concerned with responding to the innovative ideas behind Finney’s methods than in just attacking his “new measures.”

In January 1830, the venerable Archibald Alexander wrote a lengthy discourse of “The Early History of Pelagianism” which, of course, struck at the heart of his concern with Taylor’s New Divinity.⁵³ Concerning his article and the others that followed, his son wrote:

This was beyond all doubt the period of his greatest literary activity. Both in pressing his researches into the works of others, and in committing his own thoughts to writing, he was indefatigable, so that he scarcely knew an idle hour. He was constantly adding to his written lectures, filling up gaps in the series, and by compilation and original research preparing himself for treatises and volumes which he afterwards made public. His voluminous manuscripts largely belong to this period. Having discovered a faculty of composition, of which he had long supposed himself destitute, he began to make amends for past inaction. At no time did he contribute so much to the *Biblical Repertory*, and his choice was generally directed to the most important subjects; which, however, he saw fit to treat rather in their principles and history, and upon their intrinsic merits, than with express allusion to the controversies then agitating the American Churches.⁵⁴

⁵³ Originally the *Princeton Review* published its articles without giving the name of the author. While it was the custom of the day, it makes the task of research quite difficult. I am extremely grateful for the work done by Kennedy to connect names with the articles. Cf. Earl William Kennedy, *Authors of Articles in the Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Escondido, California: Westminster Seminary, 1963), 1-8.

⁵⁴ Alexander, *The Life of Alexander*, 417.

That was Alexander's admission that his father wanted to weigh in on the fray but was not willing to use names until something was on paper. Alexander, taking the ethical high road, felt compelled to deal first with ideas. What is clear from the junior Alexander's statement and what seems to be transparently clear from both McGloughlin and Murray's observations is that Princeton, led by Alexander and Hodge, had no intention of ignoring the strife caused by Finney's "new measures" or by his theology.⁵⁵

Later that year, Alexander followed up his article on Pelagianism with a series of other articles directly related to the whole New School-Old School debate. In October of 1830, he wrote an article entitled "The Doctrine of Original Sin as Held by the Church, Both Before and After the Reformation."⁵⁶ In July of 1831, he wrote an article entitled, "An Inquiry Into That Inability Under Which The Sinner Labors, And Whether It Furnishes Any Excuse For His Neglect Of Duty."⁵⁷ In October 1835, he wrote "An Essay on Native Depravity."⁵⁸ In April 1836, he wrote "On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ."⁵⁹

Some of his articles were essays, some were reviews but what is clear is that he felt the need to continually address topics germane to the Old School-New School debate. Alexander wanted to address the issues without addressing Finney. Alexander was not alone in his desire to deal with the hot topics.

In April 1830, Charles Hodge wrote a review entitled, "Regeneration and the Manner of Its Occurrence"⁶⁰. In July 1830, he followed that with another review entitled, "Inquiries Respecting the

⁵⁵ Cf. Murray, *Revivals and Revivalism*, 270. See also McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 64.

⁵⁶ Kennedy, *Authors of Articles*, 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

Doctrine of Imputation.”⁶¹ In April 1832, Hodge was able to attack Finney for the first time directly. Hodge did so in a review of a review written against Asa Rand’s “The New Divinity Tried.”

Rand was an enterprising editor who feared the impact Finney was having upon the church. As a result, he often followed Finney around seeking to get to the root of his theology. In the autumn of 1831, Rand got his chance. Finney preached a sermon entitled, “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts.”⁶² Rand, understanding the potential direction of the sermon, feverishly copied down every word of the sermon he could. He then quickly reviewed the sermon and made the connection publicly that others may have only suspected. Rand entitled his review, “The New Divinity Tried” not “The New Measures Tried.”⁶³ In doing so Rand, a Hopkinsian himself, made it clear that Finney had moved beyond Hopkinsianism and was in agreement with Taylor.⁶⁴ Clearly, Rand was the first person to make a theological connection between Finney’s “new measures” and Finney’s theology. Naturally, the promoters of Taylorism objected to Rand’s analysis and made their objection in a review of Rand’s article.

Hodge seized the opportunity afforded by Rand to weigh into Finney himself. Though he did not approve of Rand’s sneakiness, he still did not hesitate to take advantage of the chance it offered. Hodge’s manner is priceless.

We are not prepared to justify the course pursued by Mr. Rand, in thus bringing Mr. Finney before the public without his knowledge or consent. The considerations which evince the general impropriety of such a step are obvious...That there may be cases in which the evil produced by a popular preacher constantly presenting erroneous views in his discourses, is so serious, that the usual etiquette of literary proceedings should be...Nor, do we question that Mr. Rand felt the present to be such a case. As the publication has not only been made, but noticed by the friends and advocates of Mr. Finney, there can be no impropriety in our calling the attention of our readers...the contents of this Review. It is an elaborate reproduction, distinguished both by acuteness and research, and pervaded by a tone of moderation...On the other hand, it is

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶² “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts” was first preached by Finney in 1831. It started the theological evaluation of Finney in earnest. It was based on Ezekiel 18:31.

⁶³ Charles, Hodge, “New Divinity Tried,” *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 4, no. 2 (April, 1832): 285.

⁶⁴ Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney*, 231.

lamentably deficient in open, manly discussion. Instead of a clear and bold statement of the distinguishing principles of the New Divinity, and a frank avowal of its dissent from the Old Divinity of New England...⁶⁵

That was Hodge's admission that what Rand had done was rude but now that it was done it might be all right to go ahead and really look at what Finney had said, which is, of course, exactly what he did. In his review, Hodge scrutinized the review of Rand's article (and thus, Finney's sermon), with a painstaking analysis. In the review, Hodge evaluated each objection to Rand's article one at a time in the light of historical, Calvinistic thought. Hodge used the word "Pelagian" eight times in the article. He never overtly called Finney or Taylor Pelagians but he may as well have. Only one quote is necessary to see where Hodge wanted to go.

We believe that the characteristic tendency of this mode of preaching is to keep the Holy Spirit and his influences out of view; and we fear a still more serious objection is, that Christ and his cross are practically made of none effect. The constant exhortation is to make choice of God as the portion of the soul, to change the governing purpose of the life, to submit to the moral Governor of the universe. The specific act to which the sinner is urged as immediately connected with salvation, is an act which has no reference to Christ. The soul is brought immediately in contact with God; the Mediator is left out of view. We maintain that this is another Gospel. It is practically another system, and a legal system of religion.⁶⁶

With the publication of Hodge's article, Finney's methods and his theology became open game. In 1833, Charles Hodge published an anonymous article entitled "Dangerous Innovations" in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* in which he lodged ten major complaints against the "new measures".⁶⁷ He did not mention Finney by name but clearly he had in mind Finney and his associates. Hodge's review against the "new measures" was significant because it made the theological connection between the use of "new measures" and a depreciation of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁵ Hodge, "New Divinity Tried," 285.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁶⁷ Charles, Hodge, "Dangerous Innovations," *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 5, no. 3 (July, 1833): 323-333. See Appendix A.

In 1847, when Finney's *Lectures on Systematic Theology* was released, Hodge turned again to Finney, reviewing his book in detail. His review was relentless. It is also one of the few places Hodge ever showed himself to be quite funny.

This is in more senses than one a remarkable book. It is to a degree very unusual an original work; it is the product of the author's own mind. The principles which he holds, have indeed been held by others; and the conclusions at which he arrives had been reached before; but still it is abundantly evident that all the principles here advanced are adopted by the writer, not on authority, but on conviction, and that the conclusions presented have all been wrought out by himself and for himself. The work is therefore in a high degree logical. It is as hard to read as Euclid. Nothing can be omitted; nothing passed over slightly. The unhappy reader once committed to a perusal is obliged to go on, sentence by sentence, through the long concatenation. There is not one resting place; not one lapse into amplification, or declamation from beginning to the close. It is like one of those spiral staircases, which lead to the top of some high tower, without a landing from the base to the summit; which if a man has once ascended, he resolves never to do the like again.⁶⁸

For forty pages, Hodge painstakingly analyzed underlying flaws in Finney's presuppositions. His most serious charge, by far, was that Finney's assertion that "I ought, therefore I can" was, in fact, Pelagian.

It was, says Neander, the radical principle of Pelagius's system that he assumed moral liberty to consist in the ability, at any moment, to choose between good and evil; or as Mr. Finney expresses it, "in the power to choose, in every instance, in accordance with moral law." It is an undisputed historical fact that this view of liberty has not been adopted in the confession of any one denominational church in Christendom, but is expressly repudiated by them all. We are not concerned, at present, to prove or disprove the correctness of this definition. Our only object is to show that Mr. Finney had no right to assume as an axiom or a first truth of reason, a doctrine which nine-tenths of all Christians intelligently and constantly reject.⁶⁹

What Hodge could have addressed and did not was Finney's view of justification. In his *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, Finney had stated:

If I understand the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith, they regarded justification as a state resulting from the relation of an adopted child of God, which state is entered into by faith alone, and held that justification is not conditioned upon obedience for the time being, but that a person in this state may, as they hold that all in this life in fact do, sin daily and even continually, (simul justus peccator) yet without condemnation by the law, their sin bringing them only under

⁶⁸ Charles Hodge, "Finney's Lectures on Theology," *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 19, no. 2 (April, 1847): 237.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

his fatherly displeasure, and subjecting them to the necessity of repentance...not as a condition of pardon or of ultimate salvation. They seem to have regarded the child of God as no longer under moral government, in such a sense that sin was imputed to him, this having been imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness so literally imputed to him that, do what he may, after the first act of faith he is accounted and treated in his person as wholly righteous. If this is not antinomianism, I do not know what is...⁷⁰

To which Finney added:

They hold that justification by imputed righteousness is a forensic proceeding...with them, faith receives an imputed righteousness, and a judicial justification. The first act of faith...introduces the sinner into this relation, and obtains for him a perpetual justification. They maintain that after this first act of faith it is impossible for the sinner to come into condemnation; that, being once justified, he is always thereafter justified... indeed that he is never justified...upon condition that he ceases to sin; that Christ's righteousness grounded that his own present obedience is not even a condition of his justification, so that, in fact, his own present or future obedience to the law of God is, in no case, and in no sense, a *sine qua non* of his justification, present or ultimate. Now this is certainly another gospel from the one I am inculcating.⁷¹

But Hodge did not go there. Instead, he opted to go after Finney's foundational mistakes. Hodge may have done so because he felt no need to attack the governmental view of the atonement. More than likely, Hodge felt that exposing the difference between Finney's underlying anthropology and that of the Hopkinsians was adequate to make his point. Perhaps Hodge felt that focusing on Finney's confidence in the inherent ability of man would sufficiently discredit him. But Hodge's conclusion was clear. Finney was not anywhere near mainstream orthodoxy. That same conclusion had been reached twelve years before by Albert Dod.

Dod was one the senior professors at Princeton College. In July 1835, the task fell to him to review Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*. Dod divided his review into two parts because he felt it necessary to review Finney along the two separate lines of theology and methodology. He opened with the following salvo.

We have never had any doubt what would be the decision of the public mind respecting the new divinity and new-measure system of our day, if its distinctive features could be brought out to the light and exposed to general observation... The truth is, that this system contains but little

⁷⁰ Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology*, edited by J.H. Fairchild (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 396.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 392-393.

that is new. It is mainly, if not entirely, composed of exploded errors and condemned heresies. The church has already once and again pronounced judgment upon it... The chief reason why the condemnation of this system has at all lingered, is, that its true character has not been generally known.⁷²

Now one thing that is obvious even from the short quote above is that Dod saw a connection between the “new measures” and the overall theology associated with the New Divinity. Once having made that connection, Dod switched his emphasis from the measures themselves to the underlying theology. As far as Finney’s theology was concerned, Dod noted that essentially Finney was a Taylorite. After Dod accused Finney of being a Taylorite, he proceeded to connect Finney’s measures with its flawed view of man’s inherent ability.

Mr. Finney asserts the perfect unqualified ability of man to regenerate himself. It is easier indeed he says to comply with the commands of God than to reject them. He tells his congregation that they “might with much more propriety ask, when the meeting is dismissed, how they should go home, than to ask how they should change their hearts.” He declares that they who teach the sinner that he is unable to repent and believe without the aid of the Holy Spirit, insult his understanding and mock his hopes-they utter a libel upon Almighty God-they make God an infinite tyrant...⁷³

To drive home the point, Dod even quoted the limerick Finney had popularized.

You can and you can’t.
 You will and won’t
 You’ll be damned if you do,
 You’ll be damned if you don’t.⁷⁴

Naturally, Dod was not amused by Finney’s rhyme. Dod launched into a sarcastic barrage against Finney bemoaning his lack of refinement and his flippant treatment of such a holy topic. Dod then reminded his readers that it had been Jesus, Himself, who had said that no man could come to Him unless drawn by the Holy Spirit, which led Dod, quite naturally, to discuss Finney’s view of the work of the Spirit in salvation. Dod quoted Finney’s appeal to the work of the Spirit’s “influence.”

⁷² Dod, *Essays, Theological and Miscellaneous*, 76.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Mr. Finney's view of the doctrine of divine influence...is expressed in the following extract. "The work of the Holy Spirit does not consist merely in giving instruction, but in compelling him to consider truths which he already knows—to think upon his ways and turn to the Lord. He urges upon his attention and consideration those motives which he hates to consider and feel the weight of." Again he says—"It is indeed the pressing of truth upon the sinner's consideration that induces him to turn." It will be at once perceived that he limits the agency of the Holy Spirit, in the regeneration of the sinner, to the simple presentation of truth.⁷⁵

All of which led Dod, to evaluate Finney historically. Dod felt that, based on Finney's views of man's inherent natural ability and his views that the work of the Holy Spirit was merely one of influence, that there was really only one conclusion to draw. Dod wrote, "We might describe them all, indeed, in a single phrase, by saying, that they are neither more nor less than the old Pelagian notions."⁷⁶

The second half of Dod's review ended with an examination of Finney's "new measures" that is torturous to read not because Dod is wrong in his evaluations but because he is so unrelenting. But the rest of Dod's article is immaterial to the argument of this paper. The point of this paper is simply that the criticisms against Finney finally evolved away from his methods to his theology, a point hopefully demonstrated. Still, it is worthwhile to note that Dod concluded his review not with a summary but with a solemn charge to Finney, one that in its scope and severity was extraordinary for its day.

We conclude this article, as we did our former, by pointing out to Mr. Finney his duty to leave our church. It is an instructive illustration of the fact that fanaticism debilitates the conscience, that this man can doubt the piety of any one who uses coffee...while he remains, apparently without remorse, with the sin of broken vows upon him. In this position we leave him before the public. Nor will we withdraw our charges against him until he goes out from among us, for he is not of us.⁷⁷

Now to sum up, the early criticisms against Finney focused on his "new measures." Only after Finney's sermon "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts" was reviewed by Asa Rand did the analysis change to focus on his theology. There was, however, a transitional period when the men at

⁷⁵ Ibid., 108.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 151. This is clearly an allusion to Finney's broken vow regarding his promise to defend the Westminster Standards, which he publicly rejected. Cf. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology: The Complete & Newly Expanded 1878 Edition*, 4.

Princeton, Alexander and Hodge, attempted to address Finney's theology obliquely. Their attempts were, perhaps, too subtle to accomplish what they desired. After Finney finally went into print, the recurrent charge of Dod, Hodge, and Warfield was Pelagianism.

The application here for modern evangelicalism is clear. Changing methodologies imply a change in theology. While the theological change may not be a conscious change, it is a change nevertheless. It is the duty of theologians to analyze, critique and even anticipate the implications that a change in methodologies signal.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH ALMOST REVOLUTIONIZED⁷⁸

Now the major point of this paper has been that the Presbyterian Church in Finney's day should have evaluated his "new measures" theologically and that they should have done so right off. Had they focused on the theological implications of his innovations, they might have saved themselves considerable grief and perhaps even prevented the eventual schism of their denomination in 1837. It has also been argued that a number of things, chiefly a pragmatic acceptance of what worked, got in the way of that theological evaluation. But regardless of what the reasons were, the evaluation took so long to take place that it was unable to prevent the disruption of the church. Instead, the church became so focused of Finney's "new measures" that they missed the underlying implications of his methods. By the time the church realized Finney's theology was suspect they had already turned his methods into the normative practices of the church.

That is important because in our day, as in Finney's, the church is faced with enormous pressure to change its worship practices. Liturgical anchors, that have held the church fast for centuries, have been cast overboard in favor of newer, more extemporaneous moorings that have never even been exposed to the winds of serious, theological reflection. The church simply has no idea whether such moorings will hold. It is not that newer forms are necessarily evil in and of themselves, it is rather that very little critical thought has been applied to thinking them through. One illustration from Finney's ministry might help make the concern practical.

Finney faced a fair amount of opposition in his day concerning his use of the "anxious bench." The "anxious bench" was an area or a pew where sinners concerned with their salvation would gather to be counseled as to what they should do regarding their souls. To Finney, the "anxious bench"

⁷⁸ This title is borrowed from McGloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 14.

was important because it forced earnest seekers to make a public statement concerning their interest in Christ. To Finney, a seeker's resolve needed to be quantified to determine if it was genuine. In that regard, Finney used the "anxious bench" in much the same way later evangelicals would use the public invitation. Finney's own words reflect his views.

The Church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose (that is, to determine a sinner's determination). In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The Gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation of a determination to be a Christian.⁷⁹

Now, it does not take much reflection to see that Finney was arguing for a new sacramentalism. If such an assertion were true, as it most assuredly was not, it should have led to some very important questions. It should have led to questions like, "If that is true is there any reason to continue the Christian rite of baptism?" Or it might have led someone to ask, "If that is true, should parents that hold to infant baptism avail themselves of the infant "anxious bench?" Or it might have spawned an even simpler question, "Who is making the statement in baptism, God or the believer?" But no such questions were asked. It is not that the "anxious bench" went unopposed. It was contested heartily. But it was not opposed on the basis of its underlying theological suppositions; it was opposed rather on the basis of the disorder it created.⁸⁰

The example provided by Finney's new sacramentalism ought to lead the modern church to ask some serious questions about its own use of "new measures." For example, if contemporary music or drama are included in every service, to the exclusion of things like baptism or the Lord's Table, doesn't that mean that their primacy in appearance alone make them sacramental? Or if non-sacramental things like the public, corporate confession of sin are replaced with more affirming, uplifting things like

⁷⁹ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals*, 254.

⁸⁰ John W. Nevin, *The Anxious Bench; The Mystical Presence* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Lippincott, 1843), 49-56. Nevin's booklet is strident attack on the use of the "anxious bench" in the German Reformed Church.

“sharing a testimony” doesn’t that mean that there has been a subtle shift in the church’s ecclesiology or at least its anthropology? Is there no component of liturgy that is sacrosanct?

Finney, of course, would have argued that the answer was “No.” To Finney nothing was set in stone. The means were ever open to change. Not only were the means constantly changing but they were ever changing to something more dramatic, more effectual. They had to in order to keep up with the world’s enticements.

Without new measures it is impossible that the Church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to religion. There are so many exciting subjects constantly brought before the public mind, such a running to and fro, so many that cry “Lo here!” and “Lo there!” that the Church cannot maintain her ground without sufficient novelty in measures, to get the public ear.⁸¹

Finney felt that such novelty was critical because he rejected the idea of the Spirit doing a work of regeneration on a sinner’s depraved heart. Since, for Finney, the Spirit only influenced sinners and never actually turned their stony, unbelieving hearts into hearts of flesh, he felt the freedom and the need to keep turning the spiritual thermostat higher and higher.

But so long as the laws of mind remain what they are, it cannot be done in this way. There must be excitement sufficient to wake up the dormant moral powers, and roll back the tide of degradation and sin. And precisely so far as our land approximates to heathenism, it is impossible for God or man to promote religion in such a state of things but by powerful excitements. This is evident from the fact that this has always been the way in which God has done it. God does not create these excitements, and choose this method to promote religion, for nothing, or without reason. Men being so reluctant to obey God will not act until they are excited.⁸²

Now, Finney may have been right or he may have been wrong. But such an assertion demands to be evaluated theologically. It should have generated all sorts of questions. Questions like: “How far do we go? Do we really have to approximate the excitements of heathenism in order to advance the Church? Does that mean we must counter World Wrestling Federation with an approximate, parallel,

⁸¹ Ibid., 258.

⁸² Finney, *Lectures on Revival*, 11-12.

Christian counterpart? Is it really impossible for God to do it another way? Has God really never promoted a revival without the use of excitements?"

This last question is particularly telling in Finney's case because he answered it himself. But in doing so, he either engaged in historical revisionism or demonstrated his total misunderstanding of what happened in the Reformation. He wrote, "You all know what difficulties they (Luther and the Reformers) had to contend with, and the reason was, that they were trying to introduce new measures – new modes of performing the public duties of religion, and new expedients to bring the Gospel with power to the hearts of men."⁸³

Now there are some things that Finney argued that might be difficult to contend. This point is not one of them. Surely, Luther and Calvin were convinced that their struggle in the Reformation was over theological ideas, not methodologies or even morals. They believed they were recovering the gospel, not reinventing the Roman Catholic wheel. Beyond that, it is hard to see how Calvin could have ever been accused of using "excitements", Luther perhaps, but not Calvin.

That is why the manner in which Finney's contemporaries evaluated his "new measures" can be so instructive today. Modern evangelicalism is also being continually confronted with "new measures," and they are measures that seem to be highly effectual. Surely they ought to be evaluated on the basis of their theological suppositions. Questions like, "Are such measures biblically valid?" or "Is there any biblical warrant for such measures?" really ought to be asked, perhaps even to the exclusion of the question, "Will it work?" A failure to ask what we are doing and why we are doing it may betray a pragmatic knuckling under to an unbelieving culture, or at very least a waffling commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture.

Finney once argued, "A revival is not a miracle according to another definition of the term 'miracle' – something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary

⁸³ Ibid., 246.

powers of nature. It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else."⁸⁴

Now that too may be true or it may not be true. Let us hope to God it is not. But even if it is true how are we to intuitively know that some new set of measures ought to replace those set forth in Scripture. Surely such weighty issues ought not be decided solely on the basis of a pragmatic appeal to success. But that seems to be exactly what church-growth advocates are contending when they argue that the application of modern marketing techniques will insure success. Granted, modern-marketing techniques will draw, though perhaps not hold, a sizeable following. Shouldn't the real question be, "What will they draw?" or perhaps "Why will they draw?"

Now, it is not being argued that modern church-growth advocates are Pelagian or anything like that. They may be Pelagian; they may be Arminian. They are apparently not Old-School Presbyterians. What does seem certain is that they are intensely pragmatic.⁸⁵ But pragmatism must not be the standard by which we judge such issues. Pragmatically, Finney was intensely successful; doctrinally, he was a Pelagian.

What seems to be as certain as its pragmatism is the fact that the church-growth movement emphasizes the immanence of God and not His transcendence. That too may be a good thing or it may be a bad thing but it is most assuredly a different thing and it needs to be evaluated theologically. If they are emphasizing God's immanence to the exclusion of His transcendence, they may be failing to employ the very means that He has ordained as appropriate to bridge the gap between man's sinfulness and His unapproachable Holiness. David Wells has warned:

In the church today, where such awe is conspicuously absent and where easy familiarity with God has become the accepted norm for providing worship that is comfortable and consumable,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁵ Gregory A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 280. Pritchard writes, "Hybels teaches a pragmatism that devalues education per se. 'I'm a pragmatist,' Hybels comments, 'and I measure things by whether or not they work.'"

we would do well to remember that God is not mocked. It is true that the New Testament encourages a bold confidence in our access to God through Christ's holiness and by his work, but in our confidence we must never be careless of the purity of God or the requirements he has established for his people. The holiness of God begets and requires in those who approach him an echo of holiness. Ananias and Sapphira learned that the hard way...⁸⁶

Now, that is a lesson that no one willingly wants to learn. It is also a lesson that no one has to learn. God has provided us with an adequate idea of what we ought to be doing in worship. He has ordained means to communicate His grace to us and we ought to thoughtfully, prayerfully make an effort to put those means to work. When there is uncertainty let us relentlessly apply serious theological reflection to each and every idea, tracing them ever backward to the theological precept from which they sprang. Finally, let us apply one other test. Let us structure our worship, both in its rudiments and its spirit, as if the Lord Jesus Himself were the audience. For in truth, He is the audience. He has been there all along and His rod is in His hand.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 141-142.

APPENDIX A LIST OF CRITICISMS AGAINST FINNEY'S METHODS

Taken from a letter written by Nettleton to Samuel Aiken in December 1826. Cf. Bennet Tyler, *Asahel Nettleton: Life and Labours*. Edited by Andrew Bonar. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 342-355.

1. An irreverent use of the names of God
2. A spirit of denunciation
3. An outbreak of anger in the churches
4. Preoccupation with the conversion of ministers, who were already converted
5. A violation of all the rules of "ministerial order"
6. Too much confidence placed in "novices"
7. The denunciation of all who oppose him as "enemies of revivals"
8. Allowing females to pray publicly in mixed assemblies
9. Intrusion in congregations where the minister did not request it
10. Publicly praying for people by name, to embarrass them
11. Introduction of the "prayer of faith"

Taken from a letter written from Lyman Beecher to Nathan S.S. Beman in January, 1827. Cf. *Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and the Rev. Mr. Nettleton, on the New Measures in Conducting Revivals of Religion with a Review of a Sermon by Novanglus* (New York: G & C Carvill, 1828), 83-96.

1. The hasty recognition of persons as converted upon their own judgment, without interrogation or evidence.
2. Severe and repelling mode of preaching and conversing with stupid and awakened sinners, giving a predominance to the awful and terrific traits of the divine character and administration.
3. Assuming without sufficient evidence, that persons are unconverted.
4. The application of harsh and provoking epithets, which, though they may be true in some theological sense, are, as they would naturally be understood, a violation of civilized decorum and of Christian courtesy.
5. Another evil to be deprecated by such unusual treatment of mankind, is its tendency to produce imitators, who without the moral power, will offer the same provocations, and be treated by an indignant community as the seven sons of Sceva were treated by the unclean spirits.--"Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?"
6. Female prayer in promiscuous assemblies.
7. Bold, or imprudent expressions in the ardor of preaching, or under the provocation of opposition, or in the delirious exultation of spiritual pride.
8. Language of unbecoming familiarity with God in prayer.
9. Coarse, blunt, and vulgar expressions.
10. A harsh and severe mode of addressing sinners.
11. New era in revivals--reformers--reformation always opposed, even by good men, &c.
12. A self-sufficient and daring state of mind, which is reckless of consequences, and incorrigible to argument or advice.
13. Whatever the code of public opinion has adopted which is sinful, must be rejected; but there are a multitude of things, which belong to man as an intellectual and social being, which cannot be disregarded, without destroying alike civilization and Christianity.
14. Success an evidence that all which is done in revivals is right.

Taken from a letter written by Weeks to other Congregational ministers in June 1827. Cf. Weeks, William R., "Pastoral Letter of the Ministers of the Oneida Association, to the Churches under their care on the subject of Revivals of Religion," in *The Christian Advocate* (Philadelphia), 5, (June and July 1827), 246–254, 293–303.

1. Indifference on the subject of Revivals.
2. Neglect to discriminate between true religion and false.
3. Insensibility to danger.
4. Condemning in the gross, or approving in the gross.
5. Indifference to instruction.
6. Calling men hard names.
7. Making too much of any favorable appearance.
8. Ostentation and noise.
9. Going to particular places to obtain the Spirit, or to be converted.
10. Not guarding against false conversions.
11. The hasty acknowledgment of persons as converted.
12. Injudicious treatment of young converts.
13. Suffering the feelings to control the judgment.
14. Giving heed to impulses, impressions, or supposed revelations.
15. Allowing anybody and every body to speak and pray in promiscuous meetings, as they feel disposed.
16. Wrong means of exciting fear.
17. Trying to make people angry.
18. Talking much about opposition.
19. The affectation of familiarity with God in prayer.
20. Language of profaneness.
21. Disregard of the distinctions of age or station.
22. Censuring, as unconverted, or as cold, stupid, and dead.
23. Those who are in good standing in the visible church.
24. Praying for persons by name in an abusive manner.
25. Imprecations in prayer.
26. Denouncing as enemies to revivals those who do not approve of every thing that is done.
27. Female prayer and exhortation.
28. Loud groaning, speaking out, or falling down in time of public or social worship.
29. Taking the success of any measures, as an evidence that those measures are right, and approved of God.
30. Disorderly and disorganizing measures.

Hodge, Charles, "Dangerous Innovations," in *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*, 5, 3 (July 1833), 328-333.

1. They tend to deceive people on the unspeakably interesting subject of personal religion. How this results is sufficiently obvious. When they are practiced, we have already seen, that neither time nor suitable opportunity is afforded, for ascertaining the nature of regeneration, and the evidences by which it is accompanied.
2. They create the necessity for an extensive and disastrous exercise of discipline. We do not say that a necessary discipline is always exercised, but a necessity for discipline always exists after the...
3. They react in the production of general skepticism. True religion is brought into question by indiscreet zeal in its advancement.

4. They create painful doubts in the minds of many of God's people. If all these religious appearances may occur without any genuine religion, can there be any certainty in religion at all?
5. They generate a spirit of slander and abuse, which are dishonoring to the cause of Christ. All are loudly and bitterly proscribed who will not concur with them.
6. They lead to the dismissal of ministers from their pastoral charges. The unsettlement of ministers, since these measures have been in vogue, has been unprecedented in respect to frequency.
7. They tend to render people unimpressible by the ordinary means of grace, and thus augur unfavorably for the future prosperity of the Church. Facts bear out this assertion. Novelties lose their effect by repetition, and where these innovations have been employed for any length of time, it has become matter of public notoriety, that they have lost their magic virtue.
8. They tend to lower the standard of preaching. This is a result intimately connected with the preceding. The taste for instructive preaching is fast declining; the people are listless if the doctrines of Scripture are explained and defended, or if the precepts of Scripture are enforced; they do not wish to be directed to the duty of tranquil meditation or of sober self-examination; excitement is to them pleasurable, but the study and practice of Christian duty, is irksome; knowledge is without value, and feeling is every thing, and hence, if God avert not the consequence, it will soon be seen that ignorance of the great system of the Gospel, will become the principle feature of our Church.
9. They create an enthusiasm, which if not arrested or controlled will, and necessarily must, terminate in downright fanaticism. If reason be constrained to succumb to feeling, the consequences must be deplorable.
10. They tend to disparage the offices and work of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the exclusive agent in the conversion of the soul.

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