THE INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSALISM ON FINNEY'S VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT

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Introduction

The thought of Charles Grandison Finney (1792—1875) intersected many crucial theological and philosophical categories. His works evidence the exhaustive application of a highly disciplined mind to those categories of importance to him. It impossible in a short paper to deal comprehensively with even one.[1]

Finney—especially the early Finney—was in many respects a typical Edwardsean preacher in the line of Samuel Hopkins. Finney inherited many categories from his Edwardsean predecessors. A common enemy to all Edwardseans, including Hopkinsian Edwardseans, was Universalism. A crucial doctrine common to all Edwardseans was the governmental theory of atonement. Edwardseans adopted the governmental theory in part as a response to the rise of Universalism in America, especially in New England. Governmental atonement became the hallmark of what was eventually known as the New England theology.[2]

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[1] The basis for this paper is my recently completed dissertation, L. Mark Bruffey, "The Influence of Universalism on the Theology of Charles Grandison Finney" (PhD diss., Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis, 2018). Should you desire to read it, please contact me. Should you find the documentation in this paper a bit sparse, you will find a slightly higher ratio of footnote text to body text in the dissertation. * For Finney's primary works see Lectures on Revivals of Religion, 2nd ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835); C. G. Finney, Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures (Oberlin, OH: James Steele, 1840); Lectures on Systematic Theology: Embracing Moral Government, the Atonement, Moral and Physical Depravity, Natural, Moral, and Gracious Ability, Repentance, Faith, Justification, Sanctification, &c, ed. George Redford, Rev. ed. (London: William Tegg & Co., 1851); Charles G. Finney, Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney, ed. J. H. Fairchild (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1876). Critical editions: Charles Grandison Finney, The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text, ed. Garth Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1989); Charles Grandison Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, ed. William G. McLoughlin Jr., The John Harvard Library (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960). For an accessible and commonly-cited but abridged edition of Finney's *Systematic Theology*, see Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, ed. J. H. Fairchild, abridged (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1878). I cite the 1851 edition of *Systematic Theology* as *LST* 1851. I cite the *Complete Memoirs* as RD.

[2] The theology of Edwards's successors developed in a stream most closely connected with his disciples and peers, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins. Through the latter half of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, the stream divided here and criss-crossed there. Various rivulets might be found as well, but the power of Edwards as its source—despite dramatic modifications—warrant treating it as a single stream. * We lack space to deal with the distinction between Hopkinsian and Bellamyite Edwardseanism, but the Hopkinsian instantiation of Edwardseanism (dominant at Andover Seminary) was already undergoing dramatic modification at the hands of Nathaniel Taylor at the Yale School of Divinity (where both impulses were present) at the time of Finney's conversion. Finney resonated with Taylorite modifications and became the centre of Taylorite soteriology in the West. A nascent Taylorism coalesced around Finney in various proto-New School Presbyterian figures such as John Frost, Noah Coe, Samuel Aiken, Nathan Beman, and Joel Parker of Rochester. * Bellamyite Edwardseanism is sometimes referred to under the label Old Calvinism. This label is accurately applied when what is in view is the Bellamyite use of the Old Calvinist "means" as opposed to the Hopkinsian call for immediate repentance. In another use, Old Calvinist refers to those who affirmed the traditional theory of original sin with its concomitants: imputation, inherited depravity, and inability. A great deal of confusion has arisen for lack of clarity in the use of these terms both in the literature of the day and in the modern literature.

Governmental theory occupied a crucial position in Finney's theological system. Universalism influenced Finney's view of the atonement in several ways. It was shaped self-consciously by Finney's immediate interactions with Universalists, especially just prior to his conversion and just after. Finney's apparent successes in countering Universalist arguments and in converting Universalists reinforced it. Its retention across the variants of the New England theology further reinforced it.[3]

I hope to draw attention to the significance of Universalism in antebellum America, and to deliver a taste of its outworking in Finney's theology. We must consider a number of categories relatively briefly in order to become familiar with the landscape: the rise of Universalism in America as a matter of history; the various strands of American Universalism theologically; the Edwardsean response to Universalism; and the westward expansion of Universalism. Familiarity with these helps us to understand the connections between Universalism and Finney's view of the atonement, and thereby to tease out connections between Universalism and Finney's view of sanctification.

The Case For Universalist Influence On Finney's View Of The Atonement

Finney And The Governmental View

The governmental theory of atonement opposes the commercial and penal views. It denies that the atonement consisted in payment for sin, and that it involved punishment. It affirms substitution but alters the referent: God accepted the sufferings of Christ as a sufficient substitute for the actual penalty. The atonement is rectorally but not formally equivalent to the sin-debt of the race. The theory also views propitiation along an altered trajectory: The atonement did not satisfy a personally offended and angry God. Rather, it exhibited the Divine attitude toward crime, or violation of Divine law.[4]

Finney held a governmental theory of atonement for the duration of his ministry. It functioned as an essential element in his theology from its very beginning.[5] For many months prior to his conversion, Finney regularly discussed theology with his Princetonian pastor, George Washington Gale. Finney drew his own conclusions on a number of points, usually in opposition to Gale's. Finney settled a final question just prior to his conversion in October 1821: the extent of the atonement.[6]

Finney's public ministry began formally in mid-1824. Excepting the publication of a single sermon by Finney in 1827, no authorized publications appeared until 1834. Governmental motifs, however, appear in the few available snippets of Finney's earliest preaching from 1824—1827. At Auburn (1831, following the Great Rochester Revival) Finney articulated the implications of various categories derived from the governmental

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[3] Universalist influences prior to his conversion are revealed in Finney's sermons from the 1840s and 1850s appearing in the *Oberlin Evangelist*. Evidences of Universalist influence following his conversion appear across the Finney corpus, but especially in the early chapters of the *Memoirs*.

[4] On the various theories of atonement, see Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (1907; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 728–71.

[5] Shortly we will examine one vignette from Finney's *Memoirs*, which substantiates this claim.

[6] On Finney's discussions with Gale, see RD chapter four. On Finney's preconversion consideration of the atonement, see Charles G. Finney, "God's Love for a Sinning World," in Sermons on Gospel Themes (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1876), 11; see also David Leslie Hollon, "Love as Holiness: An Examination of Charles G. Finney's Theology of Sanctification, 1830–1860" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 21.

theory of atonement. Elements of governmental atonement appeared in Finney's doctrinal series of early 1835. Finney regularly advanced arguments based upon the theory in sermons published in the *Oberlin Evangelist* (1839—1860) and throughout his manuscript sermons (18[40s]—1875).[7]

Four terms capture the emphases in Finney's view: circumvention, authorization, justice, and influence. Finney viewed the atonement as the means by which God set aside an otherwise insurmountable obstacle. The debt of sin did not constitute this obstacle; the atonement cancelled no debt. Instead, the atonement eliminated the possibility that God might be mis-perceived as less than serious about violation of the law. A pardon granted solely on the basis of repentance without atonement would have created such an impression. The atonement demonstrated that God was serious about violation of the law. It authorized Him to announce pardon or amnesty universally—on condition of sufficient penitence.[8]

Finney denied that the atonement consisted in retributive or penal justice; rather, it consisted in *commutative justice*. In the atonement the Father did not exact punitively

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[7] For the beginning of Finney's ministry, see RD 63n3, n4. For Finney's earliest official publication, see Charles G. Finney, A Sermon Preached in the Presbyterian Church at Troy, March 4, 1827, by the Rev. Charles G. Finney, from Amos III.3: Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed? (Troy, N.Y.: Tuttle and Richards, 1827).. For the next, C. G. Finney, Sermons on Various Subjects (New York: S. W. Benedict & Co., 1834). Finney's infamous sermon "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts," was transcribed and published without authorization in late 1831. See RD 349-352. The earliest records of Finney's preaching are found in Warren Skinner's eyewitness account, and the Charles Churchill Memoranda. See W[arren] S[kinner], "Specimen of Revival Preaching [From the (Vermont) Christian Watchman]," Christian Intelligencer and Eastern Chronicle 9, no. 33 (August 14, 1829): 129c4-c5; Charles Churchill, "Book of Memoranda" 1822–1831, Charles Churchill Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa. See Churchill as well for Finney's preaching at Auburn. Finney delivered a ten-lecture series in NYC on Sunday evenings beginning the first Sunday of January 1835. Joshua Leavitt, editor of the Finney-founded, New School Presbyterian publication, the *New York Evangelist*, did not publish the doctrinal series until late summer—early fall 1835, in part because the publication of Finney's "Lectures on Revivals" pre-empted it, and in part (I believe) to shield Finney from the implications of his theological affirmations and denials. I have found no references to Finney's doctrinal series in the literature; it appears to have been entirely overlooked. See C. G. Finney, "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon I—Remarks [Sovereignty]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 31 (August 1, 1835): 212; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon II—Doctrine of Election," New York Evangelist 6, no. 32 (August 8, 1835): 216; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon III—Reprobation," New York Evangelist 6, no. 33 (August 15, 1835): 220; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon IV—Man's Accountability," New York Evangelist 6, no. 34 (August 22, 1835): 224; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon V—The General Judgment [Part One: General Judgment Essential to Justice of Future State (Rewards and Punishments)]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 35 (August 29, 1835): 228; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon VI—The General Judgment [Part Two] and Human Tribunals," New York Evangelist 6, no. 35 (September 5, 1835): 232–3; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon VII—[General Judgment Part Three: Moral Law the Rule of Judgment; Possible Pleas]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 37 (September 12, 1835): 236; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon VIII—[General Judgment Part Four: Virtue the Basis of Judgment]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 38 (September 19, 1835): 240; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon IX—[General Judgment Part Five: Justification]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 39 (September 26, 1835): 244–5; "Mr. Finney's Doctrinal Sermons: Sermon X—[General Judgment Part Six: Condemnation]," New York Evangelist 6, no. 40 (October 3, 1835): 248. For an example from *OE*, see "On the Atonement," Oberlin Evangelist 18, no. 16 (July 30, 1856): 121c3a. In the manuscripts, see "Sermon Outline 102. Isaiah 55:7: Mercy" 1863, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio; C. G. Finney, "Sermon Outline 103. Isaiah 55:7: Mercy" 1863, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio; C. G. Finney, "Sermon Outline 104. Isaiah 55:7: Mercy" 1863, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. As part of his course of theological instruction, Finney lectured at length on the atonement, from the beginning of his tenure at Oberlin (1835). See *Skeletons* 212-235 and *LST* 1851 319-351.

[8] Finney rehearsed these categories in his recollection of an early encounter with a Universalist minister, which I examine below. See RD 50—53.

from the Son the value of the sin debt of the race. Instead, the Father substituted just enough suffering to make the point. Both the penitent and Christ receive the benefit of commutative justice, or mercy. The finally impenitent experience punitive justice, unmitigated. Finney envisioned the atonement as expressive rather than transactional. As a display it expressed honor for the Divine law. It also produced the greatest possible amount of motive or influence to virtue. Under moral government, it provided the great justification for God's retention of the title "Moral Governor."[9]

Indications Of Universalist Influence

Universalism occupied Finney's attention. E. A. Park of Andover Seminary recalled that Finney was never so excited as when he was preaching against Universalism. George Washington Gale described the early Finney's method of dealing with Universalists as something of a relentless, logical dissection. Several letters written to Finney over the course of five decades substantiate Finney's reputation for quelling Universalists. In Finney's vocabulary the term "great" revival implied subjugation of Universalism. The aging Finney judged a large segment of postbellum evangelicalism incompatible with revival on account of its sympathetic tolerance of Universalism.[10]

Finney developed his theology in part to counter Universalism. Its influence lay partly in his immediate interactions with it. In the *Memoirs,* Finney referred explicitly to Universalism as a factor in his early theological development. Interactions with Universalists stimulated the development of Finney's doctrine of "prevailing prayer" and nurtured Finney's view of reprobation. Later in the *Memoirs*, Universalist vignettes

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[9] On circumvention of an obstacle see *Skeletons* 214, point 13. On authorization to pardon, see *Skeletons* 214, points 16—18, 22. On justice, see *Skeletons* 213, points 8—11 and 233, point 5. On expression, see *Skeletons* 232, points 2(2) and 2(3); 233, points 2(5) and 2(6); 226—227, point *i*. On honor for the law, see *Skeletons* 212—213, points 6—7; on influence, see *Skeletons* 214, points 14—15; 217, points 24 and 30; 224—225, points 1—8; 232, point 4.

[10] On Park's recollection, see G. Frederick Wright, Charles Grandison Finney, American Religious Leaders (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1893), 72. On Gale's assessment see The Autobiography (to 1834) of George Washington Gale (1789–1861), Founder of Galesburg, Illinois, and Knox College (New York: privately printed, 1964), 271. For the letters to Finney, see Adams Platt and Sarah Platt, "Sarah and Adams Platt (Rutland, NY) to Mrs. Lydia R. Finney and Mr. Finney (Utica, NY)," April 14, 1826, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; Reuben Smith, "Reuben Smith (Burlington, VT.) to E. D. Smith [for Finney] (Rochester, NY)," January 1, 1831, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; James McLean, "James McLean (Wenusha, WI) to Finney (Oberlin)," January 18, 1869, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; Silas [Andras], "Silas [Andras] (Hartford, CT) to James S. Seymour (Auburn, NY)," April 27, 1831, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; William Richardson, "William Richardson (Wilton, NH) to Finney (Boston)," October 10, 1831, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; Devereaux, "Devereaux (Salisbury, Herkimer Co., NY) to Finney (Oberlin)," March 29, 1841, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; Henry C. Bowen, "Henry C. Bowen (New York) to Finney (Oberlin)," April 24, 1871, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; William Hayes Ward, "William Hayes Ward (New York) to Finney (Oberlin)," September 13, 1871, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; Jacob Helffenstein, "Jacob Helffenstein (Germantown, PA) to Finney (Oberlin)," November 15, 1873, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; S. T. Spear, "S. T. Spear (Brooklyn, NY) to Finney (Oberlin)," December 14, 1874, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; J. Arnold, "J. Arnold, [Syracuse, NY] to C. G. Finney, [Syracuse, NY]," January 31, 1853, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH; E[liphalet] W. Gilbert, "Eliphalet Gilbert (Wilmington, DE) to Finney (New Lebanon, NY)," October 19, 1827, Charles Grandison Finney Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, OH. On Finney's use of the expression "great revival" see Bruffey, "Universalism and Finney," 45—46; 46n17. For the aging Finney on the relation between revival and Universalism, see Ibid., 54–5.

supplied a platform for Finney's articulation of the great truths of moral government. Wintering in Boston 1843—1844, a greatly discouraged Finney held Universalism accountable in part for obstructing the acceptance of his perfectionist theory of sanctification.[11]

Finney's preconversion discussions with Gale had catalyzed his thought on the atonement. Soon after his conversion Finney encountered S. R. Smith, a seasoned Universalist itinerant. Finney and Smith exchanged two rounds of public lectures. The incident stimulated Finney's thinking, and hardened it. According to Finney, the itinerant's first round of public lectures centered on justice conditioned by the love of God; his second on the implications of penal atonement combined with the notion of unlimited extent. Smith's first argument contained propositions described by Finney as "new to me." It took some time for Finney to prepare a response to it.[12]

Finney recounts almost nothing of his response to Smith's first argument. Against the second, the *Memoirs* contains a precise but thorough delineation of the categories at stake and Finney's view of each. For the second argument, Finney was already prepared; he remembered it well decades later. These are signal facts. So is the supreme importance that Finney assigned to the occasion: this would be the first instance in which Finney publicly contradicted the theology of his mentor George Gale. The category? Atonement. The response? Governmental theory. [Read aloud Finney's response from RD 1989 51]

Against the Universalist minister Finney represented himself as victorious in both exchanges. He had silenced Universalism in the region, and a Universalist-leaning woman for whom he had been praying was converted as a result of Finney's lectures. The Holy Spirit, Finney reasoned, had clearly blessed his theory of the atonement over against the theory of hapless Princetonian Gale.

Treatments of Finney's encounter with the Universalist minister generally recognize its influence. Most accept at face value Finney's assessment of his success against the Universalist minister and against Universalism in the region. Not one, however, examines the state of Universalism in Jefferson County. Not one devotes meaningful space to Finney's account of Smith's first argument. Not one evidences awareness that S. R. Smith was a Ballouan Universalist; Smith could not possibly have believed the content of his own second argument. It was a ruse. In part, what this seasoned Universalist was seeking was movement: movement on the atonement. We now turn to the question of historical and theological antecedents to Finney's encounter with S. R. Smith.[13]

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[11] Finney most certainly affirmed a doctrine of reprobation. The final chapters of *LST* 1851—never published in any modern edition of his theology—contain Finney's most sophisticated development of the doctrine. For Finney's early encounters with Universalism, see RD chapters three and four. For Finney's winter in Boston, see RD 454. Finney's theory of sanctification and his theory of atonement were integrally connected. Finney referred to the atonement as "the great and only means of sanctifying sinners." See *Skeletons* 214, point 21. More on this later.

[12] For the vignette, see RD 50-53. For the expression "new to me," see RD 50

[13] Descriptions of the encounter as a "debate" in the literature may create a false impression. See, for instance, William Charles Walzer, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Presbyterian Revivals of Central and Western New York" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1944), 184; James E. Johnson, "The Life of Charles Grandison Finney" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1959), 298–9; David L. Weddle, The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney, Studies in Evangelicalism 6 (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985), 114; Keith J. Hardman, Charles Grandison Finney, 1792–1875: Revivalist and Reformer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 53; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 33–4. Wright and

Historical Antecedents

Historians of Universalism trace the beginnings of its rise as a denominational force in America to 1770. Long before this, Universalist-minded immigrants imported the doctrine; they produced a few influential publications. But these were merely a portent. The rise of modern Universalism as an indigenous and powerful American ecclesiastical institution caught evangelicals in America off-guard. It appeared suddenly. It progressed swiftly. It centered in New England. The great Yankee migration swept Universalists and sympathizers westward. Denominationalizing Universalist missionaries soon followed. They were bold, energetic, and tireless.[14]

The Rise Of Universalism In America

Universalism came to wield substantial ecclesiastical influence. It also insinuated itself into the cultural fabric of the early republic. Its influence extended into the political, social, and economic realms. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, was an outspoken Universalist. The economic and political titan, Thomas Whittemore, shaped public opinion from his offices in Boston, especially through his *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*. Horace Greeley also shaped public opinion through his *New York Tribune*, and ran against Grant in the presidential election of 1872. The rise of denominational Universalism was, however, no simple matter. Denominationalization involved an attempt to coalesce various Universalist theological and social streams.

The seeds of denominational Universalism came to America when John Murray set foot on the Jersey Shore in 1770. Murray—an outsider to Congregationalism—formed a Universalist church and achieved recognized legal status in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The standing order in New England had begun visibly to crumble. Incessantly, Murray traversed New England and the Mid-Atlantic. There he promoted Universalism with an impulse toward its organization. Murray eventually moved to Boston, making it the centre of Universalism in America.[15]

Cheesebro are more careful. Wright, Finney, 22; Roy Cheesebro, "The Preaching of Charles G. Finney" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1948), 70–1. It was not a public debate. Finney delivered four lectures: two on the justice of endless punishments and two on the atonement. RD, 50–1. Caveat: Perciaccante deals with the Universalist phenomenon in Jefferson County at length. My work relies in part on hers. But she does not analyze the vignette in question. See Marianne Perciaccante, "Calling Down Fire: Charles Grandison Finney and Revivalism in Jefferson County, New York, 1800–1840" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1992); Marianne Perciaccante, Calling Down Fire: Charles Grandison Finney and Revivalism in Jefferson County, New York, 1800–1840 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[14] For the histories of Universalism, see Joseph Henry Allen and Richard Eddy, A History of the Unitarians and the Universalists in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894); Richard Eddy, Universalism in America: 1801–1886 (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1886); Richard Eddy, Universalism in America: 1636–1800 (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1884); Russell E. Miller, The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America 1770–1870 (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979); Ernest Cassara, ed., Universalism in America: A Documentary History of a Liberal Faith, 3d, rev. ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1997); George Huntston Williams, American Universalism, 4th ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2002); Charles A. Howe, The Larger Faith: A Short History of American Universalism (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993).

[15] On Murray see the histories noted previously, and John Murray, Letters, and Sketches of Sermons, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Boston: Joshua Belcher, 1812); John Murray, Records of the Life of the Rev. John Murray (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1816); John Murray, Universalism Vindicated: Being the Substance of Some Observations on the Revelation of the Unbounded Love of God, Made to the Patriarch, in the Field of Padanaram: Genesis, Xxviii. 14. and Confirmed by the Joint Suffrages of the Prophets and

Universalist sympathies also arose within New England Congregationalism. Charles Chauncy was the leading proto-Unitarian, Arminian Congregationalist. Chauncy published three pro-Universalist works anonymously. These appeared in the early 1780s, but Chauncy had entertained Universalism for several decades. Naturally, Chauncy had no interest in a new Universalist denomination. He faced off against Murray, but his importance to denominational Universalism ought not be minimized. His works effectively legitimized Universalism as an idea for a significant portion of New England Congregationalism.[16]

Stephen Marini has connected a third form of Universalism to figures such as Caleb Rich. The first awakening occasioned separatist movements. Among these a form of Universalism emerged. This Universalism was something of a frontier phenomenon, primarily scattered throughout the countryside of western New England. A Universalist church founded by Rich predates Murray's, but Richite Universalism lacked Murray's strong denominationalizing impulse. Insights into Richite theology are sparse, but his was an important cultural form of Universalism. Cultural forms such as this may help to explain the existence of entirely Universalist villages in northern New York.[17]

An educated Baptist of New England heritage, Elhanan Winchester formed the first Universalist congregation in Philadelphia with followers from the Baptist church under his care. He holds an ambiguous relation to denominational Universalism. Winchester lacked consistent dedication to the Universalist denominational vision, his society in Philadelphia never formally joined the Universalist convention, and his theology clashed with Murray's. Nevertheless, he itinerated throughout New England in support of Universalism. His influential *Universal Restoration* made its way westward. Perhaps most importantly, at the Second Universalist Convention in 1794 Winchester abruptly ordained another New Englander of Baptist heritage, Hosea Ballou.[18]

Apostles. : Delivered Some Time since to the People Who Statedly Worship the Only Wise God Our Saviour, in the Meeting House in Middle Street, Corner of Bennet Street. (Charlestown [Mass.]: Printed by J. Lamson, for the author, and sold by J.W. Folsom, in Union Street, Boston, J. White, in Court Street, and at various other places in town and country., 1798); John Murray, Letters, and Sketches of Sermons, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Boston: Joshua Belcher, 1812); John Murray, Letters, and Sketches of Sermons, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Boston: Joshua Belcher, 1813).

[16] For Chauncy's works, see [Charles] [Chauncy], The Benevolence of the Deity, Fairly and Impartially Considered. In Three Parts. (Boston: Powars & Willis, 1784); [Charles] [Chauncy], Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men: A Letter to the Friend of Truth (Boston: T. and J. Fleet, 1783); [Charles] [Chauncy], The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations Made Manifest by the Gospel-Revelation: Or the Salvation of All Men the Grand Thing Aimed at in the Scheme of God (London: Charles Dilly, 1784); Charles Chauncy, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ, the Seed of Abraham. A Sermon Preached at Boston, at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bowman, to the Work of the Gospel-Ministry, More Especially among the Mohawk-Indians, on the Western Borders of New-England. August 31. 1762. (Boston: John Draper, 1762), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N07132.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext; [Charles] [Chauncy], Salvation for All Men, Illustrated and Vindicated as a Scripture Doctrine, in Numerous Extracts from a Variety of Pious and Learned Men, Who Have Purposely Writ upon the Subject. Together with Their Answer to the Objections Urged against It. (Boston: Printed and sold by T. & J. Fleet, 1782).

[17] For Marini's works, see Stephen A. Marini, Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Stephen Marini, "The Origins of New England Universalism: Daughter of the New Light," Journal of Unitarian Universalist History 24 (1997): 64–75.

[18] For Winchester's work, see Elhanan Winchester, The Universal Restoration Exhibited in Four Dialogues between a Minister and His Friend, 2nd, with additions ed. (London: T. Gillet, 1792). For the literature, see Joseph R. Sweeny, "Elhanan Winchester and the Universal Baptists" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1969); Robin Parry, "Between Calvinism and Arminianism: The Evangelical

Following Murray's death, Hosea Ballou became the defacto head of the Universalist denomination until mid-century. Ballou's *Atonement* (1805) foreshadowed a widespread turn away from Murray's Trinitarianism and toward Unitarianism within the denomination. But he shared Murray's denominational vision. From Boston Ballou energized missionary efforts into the new West as never before.[19]

The Westward Migration Of Universalism

Historians of Universalism tend to limit their scope. Those who wish to preserve pride of place for denominational Universalism minimize the influence of Winchester, Chauncy, and Caleb Rich. Those who wish to bring the role of separatist Universalists to the fore emphasize the contributions of the Richites. To understand the expansion of Universalism in America it is crucial to view its rise in various veins. Denominationalizing Universalism was a crucial and potent force, but it was not alone. The question is not so much whether Caleb Rich or John Murray established the first Universalist Church in America. A better question seeks to understand the roles of the various forms in the westward movement of Universalism and in its rise denominationally, especially in the West.

Universalism gained an element of its power from its very diversity. I am breaking new ground in part, but reflection on Finney's accounts combined with what is known of the state of Universalism in Jefferson County in the 1820s suggests my assertion. From the force of Chauncy's influence among Congregationalists, it is reasonable to infer that among the immigrants from New England, Universalist sympathies made their way westward. Whitney Cross even referred to Universalism in New York State as a "Yankee Church." In the mid-late 1700s the Reverend Joseph Huntington, a prominent Connecticut Congregationalist clergyman secretly converted to Murrayan Universalism. It is reasonable to infer from this that Universalist sympathies resonated widely throughout Connecticut. Its tight-fisted, Presbyterian-like ecclesiastical system could squelch public expression, but Universalism found a home in the heart of westward-bound Connecticut Yankees. Winchesterite influence in central New York is demonstrated by the apparent ease with which a curious, youthful S. R. Smith obtained a copy of *Universal Restoration* circa 1810. As I suggested earlier, migration of Caleb Richite cultural Universalists may explain the presence of entire villages occupied by Universalists in the West.[20]

Universalism of Elhanan Winchester (1751–1797)," in All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann, ed. Robin Parry [Gregory MacDonald, pseud.] (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011), 141–70; Peter Hughes, "Elhanan Winchester," Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography, 2002, http://uudb.org/articles/elhananwinchester.html; Nathan A. Finn, "The Making of a Baptist Universalist: The Curious Case of Elhanan Winchester" (Evangelical Theological Society, San Francisco, 2011).

[19] For Ballou's work, see Hosea Ballou, A Treatise on Atonement; in Which, the Finite Nature of Sin Is Argued, Its Cause and Consequences as Such; the Necessity and Nature of Atonement; and Its Glorious Consequences in the Final Reconciliation of All Men to Holiness and Happiness (n.p.: Sereno Wright, 1805).. In the literature see the histories mentioned previously, and Ernest Cassara, Hosea Ballou: The Challenge to Orthodoxy (Boston: Universalist Historical Society, 1961), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89069656346.

[20] For Cross's reference, see Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 18. For Huntington, see Joseph Huntington, Calvinism Improved; or, The Gospel Illustrated as a System of Real Grace, Issuing in the Salvation of All Men (New-London, CT: Samuel

Finney's rehearsal of the encounter with S. R. Smith provides too little information to venture a precise reconstruction of Smith's first argument. It was probably Ballouan. This comports with Finney's recollection that it contained things "new to me." Smith's argument may have been Winchesterite, but this form was quite popular. It was present in central New York no later than 1810. Finney himself himself explored Universalism prior to his conversion. Finney's description of portions of Smith's first argument as "new to me" can hardly refer to a purely Winchesterite Universalism. Smith appealed to Murrayan Universalism in his second argument, when he detected the presence of Old Calvinist sympathies. Murrayan Universalism presented no new challenge to Finney; he was ready for it. Chauncyite Universalism closely resembled Winchesterite. It can be dismissed here. Cultural Universalism is likely eliminated by its longstanding presence in the region. Only Ballouan Universalism remains. It was a latecomer to Jefferson County.

The energies of Ballou began to gain momentum in 1805 following the publication of his *Atonement* and the death, shortly afterward, of John Murray. S. R. Smith was a well-known Ballouan Universalist. Based near Utica, for nearly a decade Smith had regularly traveled a circuit as far west as Rochester-to-be. Nevertheless, in spite of the vigorous efforts of its missionaries, Ballouan Universalism lagged behind the other forms; it made its way into provincial settlements such as Adams more slowly. Smith, Ballou, and associates remained persistent. For them, Universalists of any kind—including Universalists and sympathizers within the evangelical denominations—constituted a pool from which they recruited in support of a three-fold strategy: to create an organized Universalist denomination, to achieve the classification *Christian*, and to engender respect for the idea of Universalism within every other denomination. This strategy explains in part the tactics of S. R. Smith. Denominationalizers welcomed Universalism in any form when it would contribute to the larger objective. By the time Smith arrived in Adams, the other forms of Universalism were already there.

Theological Factors

American Universalist Theologies

Theologically, American Universalism developed along three lines: Rellyan or Murrayan; Chauncyite, commonly paired with Winchesterite; and Ballouan. Affirmation of future bliss for all humankind united these theologies. Such categories as theology proper, the classes of creatures destined for redemption, the nature of conversion and the role of the human will, and the nature of the atonement distinguished them. I describe each with an eye primarily on this last category.

Rellyan Universalists appealed to forensic imputation and union. John Murray imported this form to America. In the mid-1700s Relly was already wrestling with the problem of imputation. Relly, followed by Murray, thought that he had found in his notion of union a way to resolve the problem. Relly's theory had to do with what Christ accomplished in the atonement, the nature of its application, and the extent of its application. It is largely a traditional Calvinist view with the caveat that both the intent and the extent of the atonement are universalized. The atonement paid for all sin, not just the sins of the elect. God intended to save all mankind, not merely the elect. These two points are contrary to traditional Calvinism. Nevertheless, the Universalism of Relly and

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Green, 1796).

Murray was a Calvinistic Universalism, in which God was thought to have elected for reconciliation all humanity via union with Christ.[21]

Chauncyite or "Restorationist" Universalists appealed to the benevolence of God —understood as sympathetic love—over the long haul. Chauncy's notion emphasized the moral aspect of the atonement. It de-emphasized the idea of imputation and denied the traditional view by implication. Chauncy viewed the atonement as a crucial element in God's work of persuading each one to live up to his potential. This was an Arminian Universalism, where Arminian refers to a non-evangelical or non-Wesleyan emphasis upon human potential, which developed in New England during the eighteenth century. Chauncyite (and Winchesterite) Universalists appealed to the benevolence of God in making a case for the elimination of temporally bounded probation. God would work over each person without exception and without end until He achieved his goal. Each would turn to God of his own free will, although some would have to experience hellfire for a time.[22]

Ballouan Universalists entertained no notion of imputation. Ballou envisioned the atonement as reconciliation—nothing more, nothing less. Atonement referred to the entire process by which God was reconciling the world to Himself. The work of Christ the mere creature took in Ballou the lowest place among Universalist theologies. Ballouan Universalism was deterministic, but not Calvinistic. Ballou hated Calvinism in all its forms. Ballou imagined a form of conversion belonging purely to the realm of mind. For Ballou the God "imagined" by Calvinists was the perfect Satan (whose existence Ballou denied). Conversion occurred when one came to realize that the evil God of Calvin was not the real God at all. An ensuing peace of mind naturally followed upon the realization that no such place as Hell existed, and that death meant immediate release from the body and entrance into a state of bliss. Ballouan Universalism was, in my opinion, a purely naturalistic, occult Universalism. It placed upon God the onus for the origin of sin and its effects, and expected God to effect a solution as extensive as the problem of sin. Ballouan Universalism was the strongest force for Universalist denominationalism.[23]

Edwardseanism And Universalism: Finney's Theological Heritage

The most significant early response to Universalism in America occurred in New England among the followers of Jonathan Edwards. Their response centered on the atonement and resulted in modifications of the traditional Calvinist view. This modified view constituted a universal and vital component of the New England theology.[24]

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[21] For Relly's work, see James Relly, Union: Or a Treatise of the Consanguinity and Affinity between Christ and His Church (New York: The Society of United Christian Friends, 1759–1812). On Relly, see Wayne K. Clymer, "The Life and Thought of James Relly," Church History 11 (1942): 193–216; republished as Wayne K. Clymer, "Union with Christ: The Calvinist Universalism of James Relly (1722–1778)," in All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann, ed. Gregory MacDonald (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2011), 116–40.

[22] See the works of Chauncy and Winchester cited previously.

[23] See Ballou's *Atonement.* Within the growing denomination a controversy arose over Ballou's own view of immediate transfer to bliss. Many denominationalizing Universalists became restorationists, and the denomination as a whole became restorationist following Ballou's passing circa 1850. See the histories.

[24] See Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1907), 190; Edwards A. Park, "The Rise of the Edwardean Theory of the

Prior to John Murray's incursion into New England, Joseph Bellamy supplied a toehold for Rellyan Universalism. Bellamy was both peer and disciple of Jonathan Edwards, who graciously recommended Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated* (1750). In it Bellamy articulated a case for general atonement.[25] Two decades later Murray asserted that an atonement penal in nature in conjunction with an atonement universal in extent implied universal salvation. The Edwardseans would respond, but by then Bellamy's pervasive influence had rendered virtually untouchable the question of the extent of the atonement. The Edwardseans focused instead on its nature and its intent.

The Edwardsean response to Universalism centered on the atonement and touched many of the same categories emphasized much later by Finney. Finney's conceptual alignment with the Edwardseans demonstrates indebtedness to his New England heritage. It also highlights a remote but crucial aspect of Universalist influence on Finney himself. Universalist influence was shaping an essential component of Finney's theology nearly half a century before his conversion. Jonathan Edwards Jr. published the quintessential New England response to Universalism, but many other Edwardseans contributed to the response as well.[26]

The Edwardseans articulated several denials as they developed a New England theology of atonement; these denials parallel Finney's. The Edwardseans denied that the atonement was a literal payment for the debt of sin; the concept of payment belonged to the realm of metaphor. Finney denied in concert with his predecessors, that the atonement obligated God to save any. As Nathanael Emmons and other Edwardseans, Finney denied that Christ suffered the equivalent to the desert of all sinners and denied that Christ was punished at all. Also as Emmons, Finney held that the atonement produced neither satisfaction nor merit. With the Edwardseans, in the place of retributive justice Finney substituted public justice. In neither Finney nor his predecessors did the atonement effect the cancellation of sin or guilt.[27]

Finney's denials concurred with John Smalley's conclusion, that: "the righteousness of Christ doth not become, to all intents and purposes, the believer's own

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Atonement: An Introductory Essay," in The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks with an Introductory Essay by Edwards A. Park, ed. Edwards A. Park (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1859), vii–lxxx. For my work on Edwardseanism and Universalism I am heavily indebted to Robert L. Ferm, Jonathan Edwards the Younger 1745–1801: A Colonial Pastor (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976); Dorus Paul Rudisill, Doctrine of Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and His Successors (New York: Poseidon Books, Inc., 1971); Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology, Studies in Religion and Culture 4 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932); Gary D. Long, "The Doctrine of Original Sin in New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971).

[25] On Edwards's recommendation, see Edwards in the preface to Bellamy [i]—viii. On general atonement see Bellamy 1850 251—252. On an encounter between Murray and Hopkins, see Murray, Letters and Sermons, 1812, 1:106; Murray, Letters and Sermons, 1812, 2:39; Thomas Whittemore, The Modern History of Universalism (Boston: Thomas Whittemore, 1830), 322–5.

[26] For Edwards Jr. on Universalism, see Jonathan Edwards Jr., The Salvation of All Men Strictly Examined; and the Endless Punishment of Those Who Die Impenitent, Argued and Defended against the Objections and Reasonings of the Late Rev. Doctor Chauncy, of Boston, in His Book Entitled "The Salvation of All Men," &c (New Haven: A. Morse, 1790). For the collection of essays edited by E. A. Park, which contains the major Edwardsean responses, see Edwards A. Park, ed., The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks with an Introductory Essay by Edwards A. Park (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1859).

[27] For a fuller rehearsal of what is summarized here, see Bruffey, "Universalism and Finney," chapter five.

righteousness. . . . That there is not a strict and proper imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer . . . is plain from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, as far as they have any relation to this subject. . . . Our ill desert is not taken away by the atonement of Christ." Further, "'How should man be just with God?' By imputation it hath been supposed he might; but we have now seen that even through the atonement and righteousness of Christ, we can have no plea of not guilty.[28]" These terms, in which an inability to shake off guilt was framed, did not bode well for the future of sanctification in New England.[29] And the influence of Universalism had played a role in all these developments.

The New Haven Theology, New School Presbyterianism, And Universalism: Finney's Theological Milieu

New School Presbyterianism arose in connection with the spread of Congregationalist Edwardseanism into American Presbyterianism through cooperation between the two denominations under agreements such as the Plan of Union.[30] Edwardseanism, especially Taylorite modifications of Edwardseanism, formed the core of New School Presbyterian theology. New School Presbyterianism under that name did not exist until the 1830s, but the forces behind its rise were in operation by the early 1820s. Figures destined to become prominent leaders were known for their anti-Universalist stance as well as for their adherence to the governmental theory of atonement. A natural resonance between Finney and these men reinforced Finney's own theology of the atonement.

By the early 1820s, proto-New School Presbyterians in central New York were locked in deadly conflict with denominationalizing Universalists such as S. R. Smith and Dolphus Skinner in Oneida County. Some of these Presbyterians were also close friends of Finney's Princetonian mentor, George Washington Gale in Jefferson County, just to the north. Finney would find himself in Oneida County and in the company of John Frost, Noah Coe, and Samuel Aiken during his first widely publicized revival, the Great Western Revival (1825-1826), as it came to be called. Immediately afterward (1826-1827) Finney connected with Nathan S. S. Beman at Troy. Beman was a virulent anti-Universalist who became extraordinarily influential in the rise of New School

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[28] John Smalley, "Sermon I: Justification Through Christ, an Act of Free Grace," in The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks with an Introductory Essay by Edwards A. Park, ed. Edwards A. Park (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1859), 56; see also 55.

[29] We could also chase the similarities between Finney's affirmations and those of the Edwardseans, but the point has been made.

[30] Under the Plan of Union (1801) Presbyterians and Congregationalists coordinated missionary efforts in the West (central and western New York, Ohio, etc.). Newly formed congregations could choose to organize as either Presbyterian or Congregationalist. Most chose the Presbyterian polity although the Edwardsean theological impulse was the stronger. The system became known a "Presbygationalism" and its adherents "Presbygationalists." Because the Old School Presbyterians concluded that Taylorite modifications of Edwardseanism had entered Presbyterianism in part through the Plan of Union, the General Assembly rescinded the agreement retroactively in 1837, and excised the New School Synods. See 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, and Haffelfinger, 1868); George M. Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America, Yale Publications in American Studies 20 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

Presbyterianism. His *Lectures on Atonement* placed him clearly in the Edwardsean School and demonstrated the influence of Nathaniel Taylor upon his thought.[31]

Finney's theological solidarity with Edwardsean Presbyterians and Congregationalists was demonstrated beyond question at the New Lebanon Conference of July 1827. When Edwardsean revivalists from both East and West convened to discuss Finney's revivals, not a single theological question arose. Finney's theology was considered sufficiently Edwardsean to stave off any opposition on that front. Moreover, representatives from both East and West were scandalized by the prospect that Universalists might leverage any perceived division between the eastern and western revivalists. Theologically Finney was at home with revivalists from both East and West who were invested in the New England theology and who found themselves face-to-face with an expanding Universalist denomination in New England and New York in the 1820s and 1830s.[32]

The Atonement, Imputation, And Finney's Perfectionism

The rise of Universalism in America marked a crucial moment in the history of the early republic. Universalism developed in several theological strands. Edwardseans in New England responded to Universalism in its Chauncyite and Rellyan forms. Universalism expanded into the early West culturally, theologically, and ecclesiastically. Finney encountered it directly in these categories. Universalism exerted its influence on Finney not only through direct encounters, but also through its influence upon his theological predecessors as well as his contemporaries. Universalism was not the only theological influence upon Finney, but the varieties of Universalism in their social and theological forms all affected Finney to various degrees and in various ways. One of these ways involves the long term effect of Finney's reaction to Rellyan Universalism upon his view of sanctification.[33]

Universalism influenced the development of Finney's theory of sanctification in various ways. Both from experience and in concert with traditional Edwardsean responses to Universalism, the early Finney associated it with licentiousness. It was no good for making sinners holy. Finney connected Universalist licentiousness with the

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[31] See Gale's Autobiography for his friendship with pastors in Oneida County. See RD chapters 16-17 for Finney's connection to Beman. For Beman's work, see Nathan S. S. Beman, Four Sermons on the Doctrine of the Atonement (Troy, N.Y.: W. S. Parker, 1825), http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008731645. On Beman, see Owen Peterson, A Divine Discontent: The Life of Nathan S. S. Beman (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986).

[32] "Sufficiently Edwardsean" is the operative term. Two extraordinarily staunch Hopkinsians, William Weeks and Asahel Nettleton were present at the conference. Weeks was certain that Finney opposed the Hopkinsian notion of the Divine efficiency; under the influence of the westerner Weeks, the easterner Nettleton likely entertained similar suspicions. Yet both remained silent. The other participants from the East, having never heard Finney preach (except for those who may have been present the evening before the first day of the conference), and having heard no reports to the contrary from the trusted men of the West, likely assumed that Finney affirmed the Edwardsean doctrine of moral inability. The Churchill memoranda reveal, however, that by 1827 Finney clearly denied the notion of moral inability. No convincing evidence that Finney ever affirmed moral inability appears anywhere in the Finney corpus. Finney's strong affirmation of the governmental theory of atonement may have helped to offset concerns about his psychology of conversion and to foster acceptance among the Edwardseans as he made his way eastward. On the New Lebanon Conference, see Gary Hiebsch, "A Turning Point in American Revivalism? The Influence of Charles G. Finney's Memoirs on Historical Accounts of the New Lebanon Convention," Journal of Presbyterian History 76 (1998): 139–49. RD 217-231.

[33] Ballouan Universalism rose to late for inclusion in the early Edwardsean response.

doctrine of imputation. Finney's reaction to this component of Universalist theology laid the foundation for his later perfectionism. The version of governmental atonement adopted by Finney eliminated the possibility of forensic justification by denying the possibility of imputation. Over time, the implications worked their way out as Finney applied his rigorous logic to the notion of progressive sanctification under a system which in very fact contradicted the idea of irrevocable legal standing before God.

Finney viewed the orthodox doctrine of imputation and its concomitant, forensic justification, as a kind of trick. In the revised edition of his *Systematic Theology* (1851) Finney wrote:

> The relations of the old school view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, a return to personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to the law, cannot with them be a condition of justification. They must have a justification while yet at least in some degree of sin. This must be brought about by imputed righteousness. The intellect revolts at a justification in sin. So a scheme is devised to divert the eye of the law and of the lawgiver from the sinner to his Substitute, who has perfectly obeyed the law.[34]

In the same work, Finney referred twice to Joseph Huntington. The Old Calvinist Huntington had secretly converted to Rellyan Universalism decades earlier:

> If, as their substitute, Christ suffered for them the full amount deserved by them, then justice has no claim upon them, since their debt is fully paid by the surety, and of course the principal is, in justice, discharged. And since it is undeniable that the atonement was made for the whole posterity of Adam, it must follow that the salvation of all men is secured upon the ground of "exact justice." This, as has been said, is the conclusion to which Huntington and his followers came. This doctrine of literal imputation, is one of the strongholds of universalism, and while this view of atonement and justification is held they cannot be driven from it.[35]

In Old Calvinism God pronounced converted sinners righteous, irrevocably. Finney denied that God ever pronounced a sinner righteous; so did New School Presbyterians. In the New School God merely treated converted sinners as if they were righteous, albeit irrevocably. This view they shared with the Edwardseans. The early Finney affirmed it, but the perfectionist Finney denied that God even treated professing believers as righteous when they were sinning. In part for this reason the New School abandoned Finney. But both the standard New School view and Finney's perfectionist adaptation of it had their roots in the New England response to Universalism. Per Smalley, the atonement did nothing to remove guilt, and even the converted sinner could not plead not guilty. Finney affirmed this notion.[36]

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[34] *LST* 1851 567. Finney's entire lecture on justification appears online here: http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/Finney/Theology/st56.htm. I have not been able to locate online a version of the 1851 edition of Finney's *Systematic Theology* consisting of original images. The work of Richard Friedrich at truthinheart.com must be used with great care on account of errors and infelicities in the transcriptions. Friedrich's pagination often differs wildly from the original.

[35] *LST* 1851 565; see also 767.

Retention of guilt in the Edwardsean system of sanctification produced a great psychological strain. This consternation, I argue, was amplified irresistibly and exponentially under Finney's version of perfectionism. This theology "improved" the process of sanctification by creating crises. Revivalists found crisis useful for bringing folk to the anxious bench; for getting up a revival, for promoting holiness and thus happiness. The retention of guilt meant that something else must give, somewhere. Finney thus affirmed the necessity of personal holiness, not as a result of regeneration, but as necessary to virtuous or acceptable character. Justification as a pronouncement would occur only on judgment day, when the true character of each was revealed.[37]

Finney sometimes spoke of the believer's possession of the righteousness of Christ. But to what did he actually refer? Finney insisted that personal holiness was Christ's righteousness in the sense that the Holy Spirit induced the believer to adopt and to maintain—as far as it was maintained—a benevolent or perfect ultimate intention. In Finney, faith was the gift of God in the sense that for the elect God graciously dispensed sufficient moral suasion to effect the exercise of faith and to effect the maintenance of faith. Finney named it "gospel justification," but the term lay deep with Finney's Edwardsean heritage. Whenever the expression justification by faith appears in Finney, it refers entirely to this notion of gospel justification.[38]

Perfectionistic systems tend to involve hamartiological adjustments as a means of compensation. Finney located virtue and vice in the ultimate inclination of the will. Beneath all the blustering about sin and hell lay a disproportionately reductionist theory of sin. Strictly speaking, sin resided solely in an ultimate inclination of the will toward self; virtue solely in the ultimate inclination of the will toward the well-being of God and the universe. The virtue or vice of all other actions possessed only a derivative registration on the moral scale. This was Finney's perfectionism.[39]

Finney's perfectionism followed in part from the notion that Divine requirement implied human ability. This notion was *sine qua non* to Finney's perfectionism. Finney's sense of logical consistency forced his move. Scripture clearly required perfection (Mat 5:48). A failure to make that move would have implied the absurdity—in the logical sense of the term—the absurdity of his psychology of conversion, his practical soteriology.

But there was another factor. Finney's view of atonement functioned as another *sine qua non* for his version of perfectionism. The theory produced a denial of imputation and forensic justification, and an insistence that the converted sinner remained guilty. This theory was formed by Finney's predecessors in New England, under the influence of Universalism.

Conclusion

Finney did not invent his view of the atonement; he inherited it. Edwardseans in New England had crafted it largely in response to the rise of Universalism. At the time of Finney's conversion, Universalism was waxing strong in the region. Finney's direct encounters with it, combined with his perception of the results, further shaped and

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[36] See the previous quotation from Smalley.

[37] See in my dissertation, chapter 4.

[38] See in my dissertation, chapter 4.

[39] See in my dissertation, chapter 4.

hardened his view. Finney speaks in the *Memoirs* as if he developed his theology independently. It is possible that he did, but highly unlikely given his exposure to both Edwardsean and Princetonian theologies prior to his conversion.

In the *Memoirs*, Finney presented the case for his revivals as a lawyer. The testimony of independent witnesses is, of course, stronger than the testimony of witnesses who might have collaborated. Finney did not deny his association or sympathy with the New School, but he presented the development of his doctrine as an independent occurrence. The atonement ranked highly enough in his theology to merit special consideration. The implications of imputation based upon penal atonement are strong enough to have ruined Finney's entire system—especially his theory of sanctification. In order to undergird and safeguard the governmental view, Finney implied that he had arrived at it independently. At the same time, by maintaining this view, Finney aligned himself with the Edwardseans of New England as well as with New School Presbyterians. This alignment reinforced Finney's insistence that Oberlin lay within the mainstream of Edwardsean theology, and his insistence that the Oberlin Perfectionism was an ineluctable extension of Edwardsean thought.