NETTLETON VERSES FINNEY

THE SHIFT IN AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM 1820-1830

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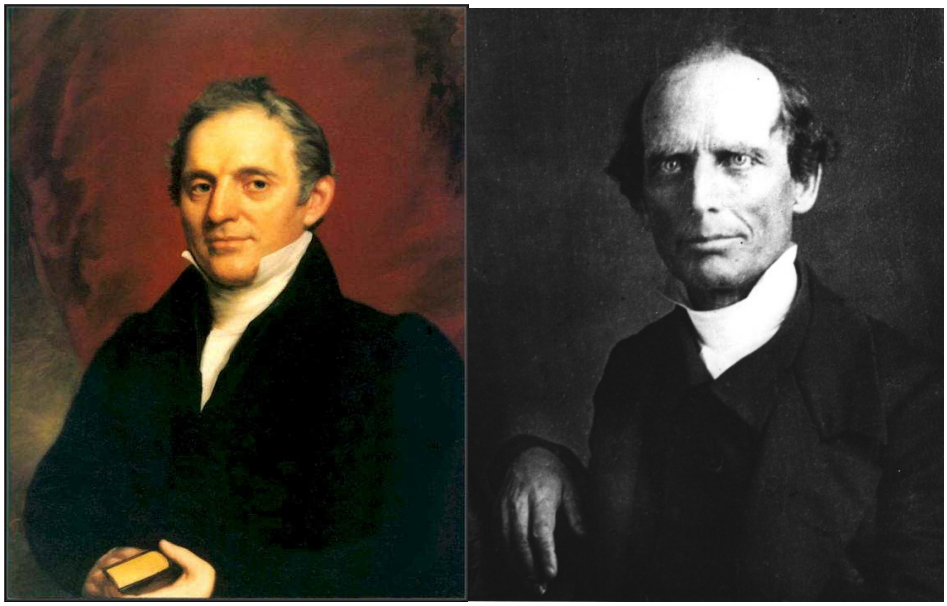

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Apology For The Book

Who could fail to be moved by reading the accounts of what God did in the years of the First Great Awakening (1725-1760) and the Second Great Awakening (1795-1830)? What God did in America! How many were saved! How the churches were strengthened! What days of glory these were. And who among us has not prayed "Oh God, do it again!"

Yet He hasn't "done it again" and that might be a good thing. Since 1830, there has been no spiritual awakening that can compare to either Awakening in scale, purity or power in America. There have been many saved in the years after the Awakenings. Dwight L. Moody is supposed to have been responsible for as many as a million conversions during his ministry. Despite these days of great evangelism and church building, there has been no revival that can be compared to the shakings of the 18th and 19th centuries.[1] We are still living off the vapors of those revivals. As of this writing in 2023, the United States is in its longest period without a national-scale revival. There have been sporadic, localized revivals, but nothing on a national scale.

That may be a blessing in disguise, seeing the damage that "revival" has done.

This revival drought has caused a major shift in philosophy toward revival and evangelism. This shift started in the mid-1820s as the lessons of the First Awakening were rejected for a new philosophy of the latter years of the Second Awakening. This shift in doctrine and orthopraxy has done irreparable harm to modern evangelism that we still suffer from today.

The burden of this book is to document this change and to chart its course through evangelicalism and Fundamentalism since. We want to study the rejection of the "Old Evangelicalism" and how it was replaced by the "New Evangelicalism" in the 1820s. We will then propose several observations and then seek to defend and promote a return to the classical Old Evangelicalism. This includes the following:

1. The First Great Awakening was a powerful revival under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, Charles Wesley, Samuel Davies, John Witherspoon and Gilbert Tennent. It had many problems, but it was basically sound in orthodoxy and orthopraxy.
2. There was initial attempt to corrupt the practice and doctrine of the First Great Awakening by John Davenport and his followers.
3. At the start of the Second Great Awakening, the philosophy and doctrine of revival that was laid down by the leaders of the First Great Awakening was revived and promoted by men like Timothy Dwight, Edward Griffin, Edward Payson, Gardiner Spring and Asahel Nettleton.[2]
4. There were two corruptions of the purity of this Second Great Awakening. The first one was the Kentucky camp meetings and the frontier Methodists around 1800. The second attempt was through the ministry of Charles Finney and his followers. As a result, the purity of the Second Great Awakening was marred by the

[1] Isaiah 9:3. The modern church has increased the nation (church attendance) but has not increased the joy (lack of revival). We live in a day of evangelism without revival

[2] These are some of the greatest men in American church history yet the average Christian knows nothing about them.

Methodists and by Finney and his followers. From this point on, their philosophy of revival became dominant, and the "old school" teachings of evangelism and evangelism and revival of the Puritans were rejected. The major shift promoted by the second-generation Methodists and Finney was from the idea that the work of revival was a sovereign work of God, but rather was to be initiated and promoted by human programs.

5. There was a shift from the power of the Spirit to the programs of man. This is a major doctrine of the theological system of New Evangelicalism. We thus make the proposition that Charles Finney, not John Ockenga, was the true father and developer of New Evangelicalism in its dependence on programs and technique rather than on the converting power of the Spirit. All Ockenga did was give a name to the movement that Finney birthed.

6. Finneyism became the major philosophy of evangelism and revival (some would say the "only" philosophy) with its dependence upon method and program. This idea became universal among evangelicals and later among Fundamentalists. Later revivals, from the Third Great Awakening of 1857 onward, have all been after the manner of Finney. As a result, they have been weaker and produced more error than the earlier revivals.

7. Those who called for a rejection of Finneyism and a return to a more classical understanding of the Old Evangelicalism and revival were viciously slandered and denounced as "enemies of revival," "hinderers of soul-winning" and men who had "no burden for souls" while in reality, they were simply jealous to maintain the purity of evangelicalism and revival. This happens still today.[3]

8. The major modern promoter of Finneyism has been the ministry and writings of John R. Rice and his newspaper *The Sword of the Lord*, and his influence upon modern Christianity in these areas has been harmful. I maintain that Rice and his followers in the modern Independent Fundamental Baptist movement (especially Jack Hyles and his followers) have done more to damage the Biblical understanding of evangelism and revival than anyone else in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

We seek to document this change in attitude and philosophy and offer means to correct it. How did we move from the noble Edwards to the pragmatic Finney in less than a century?[4] How did the "Old Evangelicalism" get replaced by the "New Evangelicalism" so quickly? We will seek to answer this question by a direct comparison between two contemporary evangelists who held the two primary views on this subject. First, we will examine the life and ministry of evangelist Asahel Nettleton. He is little known in American church history and this neglect is a crime. He was one of America's great evangelists, ranking with George Whitefield and Dwight L. Moody and should be so remembered. He was of the old school of Jonathan Edwards and the Puritans and carried their evangelism into areas of New England in the 1810s and 1820s, setting entire regions on fire for God.

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[3] Especially if your church doesn't have a bus ministry!

[4] We can also ask how did the church move from the greatness of the Philadelphia church age to the apostasy and carnality of the Laodicean church age within a period of about 20 years- 1880 to 1900?

In the early 1820s arose Nettleton's opponent, Charles Finney. Finney, who enjoyed little theological training by choice (unlike Nettleton who was trained in classical theology at Yale), rejected the principles established in the First Great Awakening and blazed his own trail. His creed was that churches ought not to depend upon the sovereignty of God to send a revival but should revive themselves when necessary by a use of carefully proscribed methods. Finney was not the first to adopt such thought as he was no doubt influenced by the excesses of the Kentucky camp meetings and the second-generation Methodists who preached during the frontier revivals around 1800.

With the ascent of Finney, the battle lines were drawn between the "Old Lights" of Edwards, Whitefield and the Puritans and the "New Lights" of Finney and the Methodists. Nettleton arose as the main spokesman for the Old School while Finney was by no means shy to speak for the new generation. Finney won the battle and his brand of pragmatic evangelism and "We can have revival now!" attitude prevailed over the old timers. Generations of future evangelists were out of the Finney mold while Edwardian and Whitefieldian evangelists were a thing of the past. Every revival after the Civil War
was based on Finney's philosophy. History is usually written by the victors.

With the influence of John R. Rice and the rise of J. Frank Norris and Jack Hyles and his Neo-Fundamentalism, a re-examination of evangelistic methods and revival philosophies is in order. Are we doing it right or could we be doing it better?[5] Why hasn't God sent a revival to this generation? Do we even know what a revival is? Would we know how to handle a revival if God sent one to us? Do Edwards and the Puritans have anything to say to us today? This burden to examine the effects of revivalism on this generation of evangelicalism and fundamentalism can best be described in the flyleaf notes of Iain Murray's book *Revival and Revivalism:*

> "Fundamental to this book's thesis is a rejection of the frequent identification of 'revival' with 'revivalism'. The author demonstrates that a common understanding of the New Testament idea of revival was prevalent in most denominations throughout the period 1750-1858. Revivalism, on the other hand, is different both in its origin and in its tendencies. Its ethos is man-centered and its methods too close to the manipulative to require a supernatural explanation...While the case against that teaching was argued almost universally by the leaders of the Second Great Awakening, their testimony was submerged beneath propaganda which promised a 'new era' if only the churches would abandon the older ways."

As a Bible-believing, Remnant Christian of this generation, I am grieved by the excesses and the pragmatism of modern evangelism. I seriously wonder if we even know what revival is. I have read the modern evangelists and have come away

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[5] I remember O. Talmadge Spence writing an article once entitled "Fundamentalism Needs a Moratorium" but I cannot locate this article. It could be summarized that the greatest need at this time is for pastors, evangelists, school presidents, missionaries, teachers, and church members to call a moratorium on all we are doing in the churches and schools and for about 30 days get alone with God crying out in deep repentance for all of our compromises and backsliding ways.

unsatisfied. I see method replacing Spirit.[6] I see pragmatism and "anything to win a soul" being pushed rather than depending upon the converting power of God. I see good pastors and evangelists being blacklisted who refuse to knuckle under to modern attitudes of revival and soulwinning. We have drifted far from the shore and have left the wisdom of our fathers behind. A return! Go back to the men who saw the revival and know how to handle it. Let us re-examine the thought of Edward Payson, Timothy Dwight, Jonathan Edwards, Robert Murray McCheyne and Asahel Nettleton. Let us lay their writings beside Charles Finney, John R. Rice, Jack Hyles or Jerry Falwell and see who is closer to the truth.

I realize that a book of this sort will be controversial. Some ideas will be promoted that may require a second thought and prayer. Some sacred cows will be attacked. Some things will be proposed that may sound radical but really are not. Every idea, observation and burden that will be expressed in this book has come from years of study, meditation and prayer. What is said is not done rashly but is the result of careful deliberation in studying the writings and ministries of Finney and his followers. I do not claim to have all the answers to the problems that will be discussed. I simply propose that I know where to go in order to find the solutions for these problems.

I would point men back to the Philadelphia period of church history, running approximately from 1700-1830.[7] These men had the answer. They knew how to do it. They were true divines, who knew their doctrines and also their devotions. The men of that age ought to be our mentors, guides and examples. It is these men and this period that I will hold up as the answer and antidote to revivalism and Charles Finney.

This book is also something of a personal testament on my part. I have been meditating on this issue since the early 1990s. I plainly identify myself with this historical remnant in opposition to the modern revivalists. Without apology, I would ally myself with the Reformers, the Puritans, the evangelical Calvinists (although I am not a Calvinist), George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Asahel Nettleton, Charles Spurgeon and men of a similar heart. This is not to say that I am in total agreement with everything they taught or did. But I hope that I have enough grace to appreciate a man when he is right on something and there is something in these groups and men that greatly appeal to my heart. It is my conviction that these groups and men listed above were right and that the revivalists who opposed them and their doctrines were wrong. I thus expose my presupposition at the beginning of this paper. I am not writing from a station of neutrality on the issue of church history, evangelism or revival. I hope that I am not "begging the question" in my assertions that will follow. I will freely inject my observations and beliefs into the narrative to follow as I fully intend this study to be something of a personal declaration on what I call "Classical Christianity."

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[6] Hebrews 4:1-10.

[7] I realize that most commentators on Revelation 2 and 3 would extend the Philadelphia period of church history to about 1900. But after the glory of Philadelphia comes the decline of Laodicea. It is my conviction that Charles Finney's ministry started that decline which would later develop into the Laodicean attitude of today. With the advent of Finney, Philadelphia ended. Laodicea may not have started with Finney but he is certainly responsible for laying its foundation. I would put the end of Philadelphia with the start of Finney's ministry at about 1830 but would not start Laodicea until about 1881 with the publication of the Revised Version of the Bible. That would leave a 50-year transition period.

In this corner stands an unknown divine, Asahel Nettleton. In the other, a contemporary, the man trumpeted as being the greatest evangelist of the 19th century, Charles Finney,[8] Allow them to meet on the field of God's Word and let us see who is closer to the truth of evangelism and revival. It indeed is "Nettleton Verses Finney."

After reading this book, some men, who should have really known better, accused me of being a Calvinist. For the record, I am not a Calvinist. I am a Bible-believing Baptist. I have stated there are some good things in Calvinism but there are many things I do not agree with. It is a limited, uninspired, man-made theological system. I endorse the ministry of the men in this book, not because they are Calvinist but because I believe they understood the true nature of evangelism and revival. Not all Calvinists believe as they did, and many non-Calvinists, like myself, do agree with these men.

This book started out in 1994 as a doctoral dissertation to be presented to Foundations Theological Seminary in Dunn, North Carolina. I was unable to complete my work there, having finished it at Maryland Baptist Theological Seminary in Elkton, Maryland in 1995.[9]

[8] John R. Rice called Finney "the greatest soul-winner in the 18th century" after Moody ("who lived in the 19th century"). Ignore Rice's error for Finney lived in the 19th century, not the 18th! (John R. Rice, The Power of Pentecost, page 234). Also called "the greatest preacher and theologian since the days of the apostles." (Louis Gifford Parkhurst, "Charles Grandison Finney: Preached For A Verdict." Fundamentalist Journal, June 1984, page 41.) Greater than Edwards or Whitefield or Wesley? Fred Barlow wrote "When you read the messages and the ministry of Charles Finney, you get the strange sensation that you are reading pages right out of the Acts of the Apostles...No American evangelist in his ministry ever more paralleled the apostolic preaching, passion and power of a Simon Peter or an Apostle Paul as did Finney." (Fred Barlow, "Charles Grandison Finney- Apostolic Evangelism." Biblical Evangelist, July 1967). Such statements, which have built the Finney mystique, need to be carefully analyzed.

[9] I attended Maryland Baptist Bible College from 1986-1995 and taught there as well, in the college and seminary, having set up its seminary program as academic dean. Unfortunately, the school is no longer in operation.

Chapter 1: The First Great Awakening

In our study of the Second Great Awakening, we must lay the historical foundation of the First Great Awakening. Although separated by about 60 years, the Second Awakening was largely dependent upon the First. By 1820, the Second Awakening had begun to abandon the practices and doctrines of the First. We want to examine that departure, but we must first understand what it was that Finney and his followers rejected.

Second-Generation Colonial America

New England from 1725 to 1740 was a spiritual disaster. There is no denying the piety of the early Pilgrims during the 17th century. We do not agree with their Covenant Theology or their religious intolerance, but they possessed a definite piety and depth of religious conviction.

Judges 2:10 defines what is called the "Second Generation Syndrome." After the first generation, which fought battles and made great sacrifices, passes off the scene, their children tend to be much weaker and their children weaker still. This is because the children are handed the benefits which their parents fought so hard for. The children did not have to fight or sacrifice or work to achieve what they have and thus had a harder time appreciating what they were given. This prosperity produces a spiritual laxness which eventually degenerates into apathy and apostasy.

This was the case in 18th century New England. Morals and spirituality had sunk to very low levels. Profanity, public drunkenness, debauchery, skepticism and neglect of the church house became increasingly common. The churches were also being weakened spiritually. Church discipline was neglected, and standards of conduct were lowered or abandoned. An occasional local revival temporarily halted such downward progress, but it would continue once the revival cooled off. As early as 1706, Cotton Mather wrote:

> "It is confessed by all who know anything of the matter...that there is a general and an horrible decay of Christianity among the professors of it...The modern Christianity is generally but a very spectre, scarce a shadow of the ancient. Ah! sinful nation. Ah! children that are corrupters: what have your hands done!...So notorious is this decay of Christianity, that whole books are even now and then written to inquire into it."[10]

It was still fashionable (and even socially necessary) to belong to a church and an increasing number of unsaved and carnal professors began to fill the churches.

Puritan New England maintained strict standards for participation in the Lord's Supper, saying that only those who had testified to a definite work of saving grace in their hearts could participate communion services. A testimony of religious experience was required of all who desired to be admitted to full communicant status in the

[10] Cotton Mather, *The Great Works of Christ in America*. Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, volume 1, page 413.

churches.

Such a situation was not acceptable to the unsaved masses who attended church. For them to be excluded from the Lord's Table was seen as a public scandal which exposed them to public shame. Demands arose for any "decent Christian" (this term carried a very broad definition) be allowed to participate in this church ordinance. Thus was born the Halfway Covenant of 1662, authored by Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards.

The Halfway Covenant allowed that baptized adults who professed faith and lived uprightly, but who had no conversion experience, might be accepted as church members. The children, baptized as "halfway" members, could not receive the Lord's Supper or participate in church elections. This dual conception of membership was forced on churches by declining attendance, and it opened the churches to unsaved members and worldly professors. Standards for conduct and adherence to creeds were downplayed. The Halfway Covenant served not to lead men into full relationship with the church but to encourage them to remain content with their halfway status. Solomon Stoddard, who was instrumental in the development of the Covenant, taught that no one can know if he is one of the elect, so the church must go by visible, outward signs. These signs of election were a person's acceptance of the creed and his willingness to seek sanctifying grace through worship and communion. The church did not have the right or the means to determine the conversion experience of each church member, so to be safe, everyone had to be admitted who made a profession of faith. As bad as the Halfway Covenant was, it did get people into the churches where they could be preached to and where the revival could affect them. But the motivation of adopting this practice was largely based on maintaining attendance at the church services. It was America's first attempt at "church growth".

With an unconverted membership in place, an unconverted ministry could not be far behind. Men who entered the ministry as a mere vocation (or because they could find no other vocation) began to outnumber the God-called men who entered the ministry as a divine calling. By Jonathan Edwards' day, the majority of New England churches were infected by the Halfway Covenant and were stocked with unsaved members pastored by an unsaved minister. Knowledge of the New Birth was limited among the people.

In 1739, Samuel Blair settled at Fagg's Manor in Chester County, Pennsylvania and observed of the residents "The nature and necessity of the new birth was but little known or thought of. The necessity of a conviction of sin and misery by the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to the conscience in order to bring a saving closure with Christ was hardly known at all to the most."[11] This observation was typical of most villages and towns in colonial America before the Awakening.

Things were no better in the southern colonies. The Church of England held the region south of Maryland in an iron grip of religious intolerance and spiritual apathy. Anglican preachers were just as dead as New England Halfway Covenant preachers and the morals were no better. America was spiritually asleep, but the wake-up call would be a loud and powerful one.

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[11] Iain Murray, Revival and Revivalism: *The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858*. Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, 1994, page 4.

Forerunners of the First Awakening[12]

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time and location of the start of the First Awakening in the colonies. Solomon Stoddard saw revivals in his church in 1679, 1683, 1696, 1712 and 1718. In each wave, the young people were the most affected. A 1721 revival in Windham, Connecticut resulted in 80 additions to the church in 6 months. Yet these were not solid doctrinal revivals for they seemed to be based on a concern for salvation by works, which taught men to help themselves to the means of grace that was in the church.

The "official" start of the First Great Awakening is usually traced back to 1726 and the preaching of Theodore Frelinghuysen. To say Jonathan Edwards started it is incorrect, although he was certainly the God-appointed match that lit the brush. But the First Great Awakening is certainly larger than Jonathan Edwards.

Theodore Frelinghuysen (1691-1748)

Frelinghuysen, a New Jersey Dutch Reformed pastor, sparked a major controversy which led to a large number of conversions. He was accused of preaching the "heresy" of the need for the new birth. Frelinghuysen was a solid evangelical in a day when such doctrines were unfashionable. He was severely criticized by the leadership of his denomination and by many of his own church members. He was denounced as a schismatic and heretic and was taken to court on numerous occasions. A 246-page *Complaint* was drawn up against him. Yet many were converted under such doctrines. Frelinghuysen sparked a revival of evangelical preaching which would breed the Great Awakening. It also sparked a revival in the area around New Brunswick, New Jersey.

William Tennent (1673-1746) and the Log College

Tennent began his ministry around 1720 and majored on the same themes as did Frelinghuysen. Tennent pastored Presbyterian churches at Bensalem and Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. He was a man of extensive learning and spirituality who likewise attacked the dead-orthodoxy of his membership. He demanded a new birth experience of his people for full church membership and was criticized as severely as Frelinghuysen.

Tennent began his ministry in a period in American history when piety was very low, especially among the Presbyterians. Conditions in New England churches were no better. The Presbyterian preachers were theologically orthodox, holding firmly to the Westminster Confession and were outwardly moral, but did not preach on a personal relation to Christ. This grieved Tennent and others of a similar heart who sought as he did to inject a vital, living piety back into colonial Christianity. For upsetting the theological apple cart, he was opposed and persecuted within his synod.

[12] Biographies of these men can be read in *The Log College* by Archibald Alexander.

Most reformers tend to suffer such things as they seek to awaken the dead within their churches.

Tennent was a supporter of the ministry of George Whitefield. When Whitefield visited Philadelphia in 1739, Tennent was there to welcome him. In this, Tennent bucked the general attitude of his synod toward Whitefield, which opposed him.

Tennent had four sons who were all called into the ministry. Fearing the lack of spirituality in the colonial schools of the day, Tennent home-schooled them. He built a log cabin in his backyard and trained his own sons for the ministry. His enemies labeled his school as the Log College in derision. George Whitefield thought much of the potential of the Log College and the educational ministry of Tennent. He wrote:

> "The place wherein the young men study is a log house about twenty feet long and nearly as many broad, and to me it seemed to resemble the school of the old prophets, for their habitations were mean...All we can say of most of our universities is that they are glorious without. From this despised place, seven or eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth..."[13]

The Log College was the first of the literary and theological institutions of American Presbyterianism and eventually evolved into Princeton University. In the Log College, Tennant taught his sons Greek, Hebrew, evangelism, personal work and the Bible.

Samuel Blair operated a similar college in nearby Chester County, Pennsylvania. Both men fed their students steady doses of evangelicalism which served them well in the Awakening to follow. Most of the leaders of the Awakening were either graduates or supporters of these kinds of schools.

Problems arose with the Log College because of what the synod of Philadelphia termed "educational defects."[14] It could be considered as an issue over accreditation. Or it could have been jealousy since the Log Colleges were producing better and more evangelical ministers than the established colleges. Most promoters of Biblical revival likewise seem to be out of the mainstream of current Christianity.

Tennent's four sons and the early graduates of the Log College were despised by the Synod of Philadelphia because of their support of Whitefield and the revival. Graduates of the Log College include his four sons, Samuel Blair, Samuel Finley (later president of Princeton), John Rowland and Charles Beatty.

Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764)

Gilbert was the eldest son of William Tennent. He was trained at Log College by his father William and later taught there. He might be called the Firebrand of the First Awakening, more so than Whitefield. He sparked controversy with a sermon "The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry", aimed at unsaved pastors. The beginnings of the Awakening can probably be traced to his ministry.

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[13] John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1891. "Tennent, William", volume 10, page 276.

[14] This sounds like modern criticisms of our Bible colleges and institutes!

Like his father, Tennent was a supporter of Whitefield and frequently accompanied him in his evangelistic work. His popularity was second only to Whitefield. There were not two more dissimilar men to work together than Whitefield and Tennent yet they were good friends and co-workers. They complimented each other since each was strong where the other was weak. Unlike the mellow-voiced Whitefield who commanded the emotions of his hearers by use of subtle inflections, dramatic pauses and effective modulations, Tennent, lacking all of these, could only flail away at his hearers. His pugnacious Scotch-Irish temperament lacked the tact and gentleness needed for persuasion. Whitefield never lost control of himself in his preaching while Tennent would often get so agitated that he would babble. Tennent's preaching was referred to as "alarming and awakening to careless sinners." Whitefield, having heard one of Tennent's sermons said "...never before heard I such a searching sermon...Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged at his preaching."[15] A certain Rev. Price of Boston described his preaching as "both terrible and searching...By his arousing and spiritual preaching, deep and pungent convictions were wrought in the minds of many hundreds in Boston...more people made inquiry of the local ministers in the week following Tennent's message at the Old South Church in Boston than all of the previous 24 years."[16] Yet in his private conversation, he was mellow, scholarly and dignified.

Tennent had no sympathies for those who opposed the New Lights who promoted the revival. He often was very short and severe with these ministers who opposed a personal faith and the necessity of a definite conversion experience. He was very vocal and impassionate in his defense of the revival, although he mellowed in his later years. He was called a "public spirit", who needed no encouragement to engage in exerting himself in open debates.

Tennent was a vocal critic of the Halfway Covenant and its deadening effects on American Presbyterianism. His most famous sermon was entitled "The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry" and it drew blood among the Old Lights. Tennent went on the attack, condemning preachers who dared to preach Bible truth when they were personally ignorant of them. These men were not necessarily immoral (for most of the Presbyterian ministers were outwardly moral), but they were lost. Tennent compared these unsaved preachers to Pharisees in their traditions and ignorant zeal and to Judas in their office-seeking and preaching for money. Only a Gilbert Tennent could have preached such a powerful message in such a fearless manner. He "preached mad" and the reaction was as to be expected.

Samuel Davies

Samuel Davies (1723-1761) was the successor of Jonathan Edwards as the president of Princeton. His overall ministry was relatively short but was powerful in its influence. He was called both in his day and in ours "the most accomplished preacher America ever produced.."[17] Davies was the product of the "Log College" operated by

[15] A. Alexander, Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College. Princeton, NJ: J. T. Robinson, 1845, page 41.

[16] McClintock and Strong, "Tennant, Gilbert", volume 10, page 275.

[17] Murray, page 3.

Samuel Blair. Converted at age 15, he was already well into his ministerial preparation when he arrived at Blair's school.

Upon graduation, Davies worked as assistant to evangelist William Robinson. This allowed Davis to observe revivals first-hand. Davis witnessed revivals in southern Maryland and in northern Virginia which influenced his later ministry.

Davies was pastoring at Hanover, Virginia in 1748. A year later, a powerful revival had hit among both the Europeans settlers and their slaves. It was so strong that it was taken notice of in New England. Edwards wrote of it. This was probably one of the earliest outbreaks in the South during the First Awakening. Davies then brought evangelical preaching to Virginia and helped spread the revival into the southern colonies.

Upon the deaths of Jonathan Edwards and Aaron Burr, Davies was called to the presidency of the College of New Jersey (later to be known as Princeton) in 1759. He served the last 18 months of his life here fulfilling his burden to train and educate evangelical ministers who would support the "New Light" revival principles.

George Whitefield (1714-1770)

George Whitefield has been rightly referred to as the Evangelist of the First Great Awakening. He did not start it but he poured the fuel upon the fires.

Whitefield was an early member of Wesley's Holy Club at Oxford University. Whitefield was distressed, as the Wesleys were, at the lack of piety and divinity among the "divinity students" at Oxford. The Holy Club was an attempt to inject piety and devotion back into Anglican ministers and Whitefield was an early supporter of such intentions.

As were the Wesleys, he was a member of the Church of England. Unlike the Wesleys, he adopted an evangelical form of Calvinism in contrast to their evangelical Arminianism.[18] This caused a division yet both Whitefield and the Wesleys remained close to each other throughout their lives.[19]

Whitefield made seven preaching trips to America, starting in May, 1738.[20] Besides preaching, he also engaged in raising funds for an orphanage in Georgia. The orphanage gave Whitefield the opportunity to preach up and down the colonies and fuel the revival. Without a doubt, he was the catalyst of the revival.

Like Wesley in England, Whitefield was forced to take up field preaching because many churches closed their doors to him in opposition to his manner, style

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[18] I do not like to the term "Arminian" for there is really no such doctrine. It is really nothing more than a modified and moderate form of Calvinism promoted. The teachings usually attributed to James Arminius by his Calvinist opponents were not taught by him. Arminius did not teach that a believer could lose his salvation, which is usually the one doctrine that is attributed to “Arminians”. Arminius was a moderate Calvinist who did have problems with unconditional election.

[19] It is interesting how modern Calvinists of the more intolerant sort play up this disagreement between Wesley and Whitefield. The Calvinists will only give one side of the controversy, yet Wesley's position is seldom promoted. We suspect modern Calvinists who assign all Arminians to hell make a greater deal of this controversy than Wesley or Whitefield ever did.

[20] Whitefield was financially responsible for an orphanage in Georgia and was under constant threat of being imprisoned for such debts. Much of his American preaching also involved raising money for his orphanages. See Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, volume 1, pages 452-462.

and Methodism. The crowds who heard him preach were so large that no building could hold them.

Opponents of the revival made Whitefield their scapegoat. Since Whitefield was emotional and produced emotional results among his hearers, the established ministers in both America and England set themselves against him and other like-minded ministers. They were styled "New Lights" while those who held to Halfway Covenant theology and the status quo were the Old Lights." Criticism abounded regarding the enthusiasm and lack of dignity and emotional restraint in New Light meetings. No doubt some of their concerns were justified as there were some excesses in the Awakening, as there will be in any revival. Whitefield did not support such emotional outbursts in his meetings and sought to discourage them. The motivation of these criticisms was more rooted in simple opposition to the upsetting influence of the revival upon the churches.

It was not so much Whitefield's education (which was more than adequate) or spirituality (which was of a superior nature) that enabled him to have such an impact in America, but the force and content of his preaching. Whitefield was a thorough evangelical, preaching often and forcefully on the new birth both in England and America. Saints and infidels alike remarked how they were all stirred by his gift of oratory.

Jonathan Edwards and the Awakening

The First Great Awakening was fanned by but not started by Jonathan Edwards in 1734 at his church in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards had witnessed with regret the modification of the old-line Calvinism that he believed had made New England great. Edwards cast a wary eye toward the doctrine of human ability in salvation which could lead to what was commonly mis-called Arminianism. To combat it, he preached a series on "Justification by Faith Alone". These messages were a call back to the doctrines that all men deserve hell and that salvation comes not from human merit or work but solely from the grace of God.

Edwards was taking aim at the Halfway Covenant and its foundation in human merit and church membership for salvation. The Covenant had left Edwards with a church of professing, moral "Christians" who had no working knowledge or practical experience of the New Birth. They were content and comfortable in their Calvinistic election, infant baptism and church membership under the Covenant. Edwards was determined to shake that false confidence and to return Calvinistic orthodoxy to New England. In 1734, he had started a series of strong and uncompromising messages on "Justification by Faith", demanding the need for Holy Spirit conversion and the New Birth. Results began to be seen by December of 1734 as God began to awaken Edwards' members to their spiritual condition.

When the revival hit, the results were definite and dramatic. There were many "surprising and unexpected" conversions as Edwards would put it. It started with the conversion of a frivolous young woman, then by many young people. In six months, 300 of Northfield's 1,100 residents were converted. The converts ranged in age from 4 to 70. The revival began to spread to neighboring towns and other congregations,

that were in the same spiritual morass as Edwards' church, were also awakened. By March 1735, most of Central Connecticut was in revival.

By May 1735, the revival began to decline around Northampton, although the work continued into 1736 in other areas of Massachusetts and Connecticut. By 1737, the revival had come to a halt. Such spiritual excitement can only be sustained for so long before the people begin to tire. This is why repeated and frequent revivals are to be desired rather than a continuous and sustained revival. Most of the residents of Northampton had either been converted or reclaimed. Few remained who were not under conviction of their sin, although certainly not everyone in the town was saved.

The Revival Continues

The effects of the 1734-1735 revival lingered after the revival itself has ceased. There was a general expectation that if God had done it once, He probably would do it again. He did. The next general wave of revival came in 1739 and 1740 to both Connecticut and New Jersey. Later in the 1740s, the revival began to spread into the southern colonies. Samuel Blair marked the second wave as starting in the spring of 1740 in southeastern Pennsylvania. Whitefield marked it as beginning in 1739. Davies saw the shakings begin in Virginia in 1745. The second wave was every bit as powerful as the first but also more widespread in its coverage.

Results of the Revival

By 1760, as many as 50,000 may have been converted out of a New England population of 340,000 (almost 15% of the population). There was an earnest desire to hear God's Word that replaced the spiritual apathy of before. There were prolonged and serious bouts of conviction and a holy reverence and fear of judgment among both saint and sinner. An unconverted ministry was no longer tolerated. Genuine conversion experiences for preachers was now demanded. The revival also sparked a new missionary interest, embodied in the ministry of David Brainerd among the colonial Indians.[21]

As in any revival, there were negative results and problems. Most studies of revivals neglect these problems, thinking that all the results of revivals are good. But such is not the case. Many denominations split into the "New Lights" (those who supported the revival) and the "Old Lights" (those who opposed it). The Baptists and Presbyterians splintered the most. Methodists and Lutherans did not splinter nearly as much.

We now make several necessary and important observations about how the Holy Spirit worked in the First Great Awakening.

1. It started in preaching to dead and apathetic Christians and church members. Revival always starts in the churches with Christians being awakened. Evangelism did not spark this revival, but the revival sparked evangelism.

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[21] Brainerd's ministry among the Indians can be traced back to his days at Yale during a period of revival (1740-1741). Brainerd was expelled from Yale for disrespecting a professor but the effects of the revival on him personally were instrumental in his missionary activity.

2. God used both Calvinists and Arminians (and those who claimed neither system) in the revival. The Lord did not confine His work to a single theological system nor did He examine a man's doctrinal position when He used him. This is clear as God used the Arminian Wesley and the Calvinist Whitefield both in a mighty way, in spite of (not necessarily because of) their respective theological systems. The Arminians were the followers of the Wesleys and were more active in England than in America. No doubt some Calvinists, who can attribute no good to “Arminianism” will cringe at such an observation, but the historical record will bear it out.

3. The revival came in waves with periods of expansion and rest. It was not a continuous event but ebbed and flowed.

4. Localized revivals were cyclical, frequent, powerful.

5. There were no "altar calls", "mourner's benches" or "inquiry rooms" to deal with converts. These tools were unknown in the 18th century and would not be developed until after the Second Great Awakening. No evangelistic “method” was used. Men simply preached, and the Holy Spirit did the work in the hearts of the hearers without an invitation. Most of the day would usually be spent in personal work with those under conviction who would come to the preacher to talk with him.

6. There was much struggling with sin by those who came under conviction and many travailed literally in their new birth. The preachers did not stress immediate conversions but realized that many people would need to struggle over their sins for a period of time before a genuine conversion took place. This explains why there were so many more quality conversions as compared to later revivals. The watchword was quality of conversions, not quantity.

7. The target of the preaching shifted from the head to the heart. Sermons in pre-Awakening New England were scholarly and aimed at the intellect. The emotionalism of the revival lowered the gun to the heart. This caused a shift in the sermon from scholarly to emotional, from the head to the heart. Experience-based conversion became all-important to the revival preachers and evangelists. As a result, emotional preaching would become the norm in evangelism and the more scholarly form would gradually fade out of popularity.

8. There was greater lay-participation in the churches than ever before. The Awakening has the effect of a social leveler. It put an emphasis on individual responsibility as each man had to stand before God alone. This made the Awakening essentially democratic and gave a new importance to the "common man." It would weaken the autocratic parish form of church government and shift that power to local churches. The Great Awakening developed into a "people's movement." The Methodist "lay exhorter", the untrained, unordained and uncalled "preacher" who would be so influential in the future Kentucky revival would develop from this concept.

The power of the revival was impressive. William Robinson, ministering during a 1745 revival in Somerset County, Maryland, wrote of the people crowding into freezing church buildings and sitting for hours on end in attendance to the preaching. But we do need to note a major and important complaint by Edwards after the initial revival was over. The revival itself did not last long. It was like an explosion. There was a loud, initial noise and a lot of powder but then it was over. Six months after the revival had hit Northfield, Edwards complained that he could find few, if any lasting results of it. It was almost as if a revival had never taken place. Apathy and coldness quickly replaced the

earlier revival. The results were maintained and nurtured and thus were lost in a short period of time.

"Methods" of First Awakening Ministers

We readily admit that we are not living in the 18th century. Any attempt to turn back the clock and revive all the methods and orthopraxy of that age is not practical for the 21st century. Yet we must realize that many of the principles which made up their methods is applicable for any age. We do need to examine their "methods" since these will come under attack and come into disrepute in the Second Awakening.

This prejudice extends even to the present day. What was it of Edwards and Whitefield that made them so successful that was later rejected? This school of preachers saw that the Holy Spirit has appointed means to be used for the advancement of the gospel, mainly the teaching of the Word of God accompanied by earnest prayer. No human endeavors can ensure or guarantee success. God never promised to bless in proportion to the activity of His people. Revivals were not brought about by any fulfillment of conditions or a formula. These men did not "start" any revival. They would have heatedly opposed any such notion that they were the cause of any work of God. We first notice that their successes in the First Awakening was not dependent upon their methods. Their methods flowed from the revival and was not seen as the cause of it.

This thinking was totally reversed in the Second Awakening under Charles Finney. Finney understood his revivals as being caused by his “New Methods”. Edwards and his followers never made such an assumption. Public invitations were unknown up until about 1800 and the Kentucky Revivals. The men would preach evangelistically but would offer no public invitation to come forward and immediately accept Christ. The way of salvation was clearly set forth during the message so those in attendance knew what they had to do. The preacher would leave it in the hands of the Holy Spirit to drive the message home in conviction. The day after the service would be the time for the inquirers to seek out the preacher for spiritual help. This would often occupy an entire day. Door-to-door evangelistic visitation was not widely practiced. Edwards did not do it and Whitefield was never in one area long enough to do it. The bulk of visitation was pastoral visitation. There was no evangelistic music as the "gospel song" would not be developed until after the American Civil War. Strong hymns of the faith were sung or the Psalter was used. We will consider how revivalism altered the hymnal in a later chapter.

One "method" that did arise was a great increase in the frequency of preaching services. During a revival, people demanded daily, almost constant church services. With an increase in the work, ministers took to their pulpits to seize the opportunity to continue to press the claims of Christ upon the population. More religious excitement and interest produced more frequent and longer services. The widespread excitement also produced the need for itinerant evangelizing. Men would be eager to take the revival fire into neighboring areas.

The office and ministry of the itinerant evangelist was re-discovered during the Awakening. Wesley and Whitefield would pioneer this forgotten ministry. Yet there was opposition to itinerant evangelists like Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent and James

Davenport. First, it was a novelty. No one in America had witnessed such a form of non-settled ministry. Puritan New England believed in a settled ministry and Whitefield totally upset that doctrine. Increase Mather attacked itinerant ministries by declaring "To say that a "Wandering Levite" who has no flock is a Pastor, is as good sense as to say, that he that has no Children is a Father."[22]

Secondly, pastors saw them as invaders into their parishes who sought to undermine the authority of the settled pastor. Too often, the charge was true, especially in the case of the followers of James Davenport. The younger evangelists, caught up with the revival fire and under the influence of Davenport, would seek to stir up a congregation to the same revival pitch, whether the pastor supported such practices or not. Yet there were still problems in managing and dealing with the revival. There were early attempts at some form of man- centered management of the revival. Solomon Stoddard tried to teach Edwards how to manage his revival so as to produce converts. Jonathan Parsons, a pastor at Lyme, Connecticut, whose congregation had been visited in 1731 confessed that he had been too optimistic in counting his converts and too hasty in admitting them to the Lord's Table.[23]

[22] C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800*: Strict Congregationalists and Separate Baptists in the Great Awakening. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987, page 9.
[23] Ibid., pages 6,7.

Chapter 2: Jonathan Edwards and the Religious Affections

To understand the extent of the shift in the theology of evangelism and revival from the Old Evangelicalism to the New Evangelicalism from the First to the Second Great Awakening, it is necessary to study the theology and writings of Jonathan Edwards. Although there are many divines who wrote on similar matters and with similar conclusions, Edwards is the standard. Understand him and you understand the prevailing theology of the First Great Awakening and of the Old Evangelicalism.

The controversies of the Second Awakening centered around which camp (the revivalist/New Evangelical camp or the Old Evangelical camp) had the better understanding of Edwards. All factions (except the Methodists, the Baptists [to some extent] and those involved in the Kentucky revival) appealed to Edwards to bolster their position. What did Edwards teach regarding the signs of a true work of God, called revival? Edwards' views on the revival are summarized in *The Religious Affections,* which we will outline and summarize in this chapter.

In the book, Edwards explores what makes a true conversion experience and how it may be separated from a false conversion. This was a continual burden to the men of the First Awakening, to make sure that the people who were professing salvation truly enjoyed a work of divine grace in their hearts. There was a constant concern that those who were making professions were not genuinely converted. Edwards first deals with the theology of evangelism and revival in a negative manner, listing what does not necessarily constitute a genuine work of conversion. There was much false piety and zeal during the days of the First Awakening and Edwards wrote *The Religious Affections* to help Christians to distinguish between true and false conversions. Below is the summation from *The Religious Affections*, taken from the subject heads as Edwards presented them.

What Are No Certain Signs That Religious Affections Are Truly Gracious Or That They Are Not?

1. It is no sign, one way or the other, that religious affections are very great, or raised very high. If there be a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections. If true religion in the hearts of men be raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will be raised to a great height.

2. It is no sign that affections have the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they have great effects on the body. There were many accounts of physical "jerks" and "gyrations" in the First Awakening, but they were not the rule and they were generally downplayed. All affections whatsoever have in some respect or degree an effect on the body. Great effects on the body certainly are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual.

3. It is no sign that affections are truly gracious affections, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent and abundant, in talking of the things of religion. It must be remembered that unsaved men can talk a good religion! True conversion lies not in the tongue but in the heart.

4. It is no sign that affections are gracious, or that they are otherwise, that

persons did not make themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength. This would be a major problem in the Western Revivals during the Second Great Awakening. It was believed that if there was a great move of the Holy Spirit then it would be accompanied by a great deal of religious excitement. Much excitement equaled a strong work of God where little outward emotion meant just the opposite. In order to at least give the impression of revival or to "prime the pump" and help the Spirit out, some emotional excitement was generated within men themselves. It was believed that if the Holy Spirit would not revive you then you must revive yourself by whipping yourself up into a state of frenzy. This Edwards warned about.

5. It is no sign that religious affections are truly holy and spiritual, or thatthey are not, that they come with texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to the mind. Edwards stresses that Satan can use and abuse Scripture. A man can find a text to justify anything he wants.

6. It is no sign that affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an apparent of love in them.

7. Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another is not sufficient to determine whether they have any gracious affections or no.

8. Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the affections by this, that comforts and joys seem to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience, in a certain order. As it is God's manner of dealing with men, to "lead them into a wilderness, before he speaks comfortably to them," and so to order it that they shall be brought into distress and made to see their own helplessness and absolute dependence on His power and grace, before He appears to work any great deliverance for them, is abundantly manifest by the Scripture. It is no evidence that comforts, and joys are right because they succeed great terrors and amazing fears of hell.

9. It is no certain sign that the religious affections which persons have are such as have in them the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they dispose persons to spend much time religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship.

10. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections by this, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God.

11. It is no sign that affections are right or that they are wrong, that they make persons that have them exceeding confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate.

12. Nothing can certainly be concluded concerning the nature of religious affections from this, that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give of them, are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity and win their hearts. Having considered what does not necessarily constitute signs of true conversion, Edwards then considers those signs that do manifest salvation.

What Are The Distinguishing Signs Of Truly Gracious And Holy Affections?

1. Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious do arise from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine. Notice that Edwards emphasizes the spiritual elements of revival. He took a low view of manmade and man-generated religious excitement.

2. The primary ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest.

3. Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things.

4. Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.

5. Truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.

6. Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation. There will be a squelching of pride in true revival. No one will take the credit for bringing it about. True revival is not necessarily shouting and jumping about but is rather marked by people crawling under the seats in conviction of their sin!

7. Religious affections are attended with a change of nature. A profession without a change of nature is no conversion at all. A profession of faith cannot be considered genuine unless it is accompanied by a definite change in the life of that person for the better.

8. Truly gracious affections differ from those affections that are false or delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with, the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ. No arrogance in a revival! No haughty, proud, "holier-than-thou" spirit in those enjoying a revival.

9. Gracious affections soften the heart and are attended and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit. A holy modesty in the worship of God is one sign of true humility. Neither will there be a spirit of condemnation on the part of those in the revival. If other areas are not enjoying similar blessings, prayer will be made for them. They will not be condemned as cold-hearted or inferior in their spirituality.

10. Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion.

11. Another great and very distinguishing difference between gracious affections and others is, that the higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments increased. On the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.

12. Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian patience. The main evidence, according to Edwards, of a true work of God in the heart would be a profound consciousness of sin and need produced in the heart of the affected. This would be the case on the part of both saint and sinner. Religious excitement and fervor, while it may lawfully accompany a revival, is not what is to be sought for. Emotions can be manipulated by eloquent preachers, but true conviction over sin and sinfulness cannot be so manufactured. Whenever a profession of conversion is not accompanied by holiness of life it must be understood that the

individual concerned is not yet a Christian.[24]

Edwards would give the following summation of the marks of the Spirit's work in the heart:

1. It causes a greater esteem for Christ.
2. It operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom.
3. It promotes greater regard for the truth and divinity of the Bible.
4. It brings men to the light of truth.
5. It excites love to God and man.[25]

Edwards' Soteriology

Edwards was Calvinistic in his understanding of the order of salvation, or what steps the conversion process goes through. In his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, he outlines a three-step salvation process:

1. The first step is characterized by fear, anxiety and distress at one's sinfulness in the sight of a holy God. Edwards would write "Persons are first awakened with a sense of their miserable condition by nature, the danger that they are in of perishing eternally, and that it is of great importance to them that they speedily escape, and get into a better state...Some set themselves seriously to meditate on those things that have the most awakening tendency, on purpose to obtain convictions; and so their awakenings have increased, till a sense of their misery, by God's Spirit setting in therewith, has fast hold on them."
2. The second stage is the realization of the absolute dependence on the sovereign mercy of Christ.
3. Lastly, those upon whom grace is bestowed experience the third stage of conversion, namely a sense of relief from their distress and a sense of joy at being accepted of God.[26] [27]

It would be this very philosophy and theology that Charles Finney would reject a century later. He would reject the second point, regarding the sovereignty of God in salvation, placing the total responsibility on the sinner for his salvation.

The Personal Ministry of Edwards

In today's understanding of revival and revivalism, Edwards would seem to be the last man to be any authority on the subject. Edwards would qualify as a revivalist preacher. He was shy, quiet, retiring (but not aloof as has been charged) and scholarly. He was a preacher of low and moderate voice. He preached with no agitation of body or anything else to excite attention except his great solemnity and

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[24] Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*. Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, 1987, page 257.

[25] Ibid., page 234.

[26] C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800: Strict Congregationalists and Separate Baptists in the Great Awakening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987, page 13.

[27] I do not know if Edwards would have held to the standard Calvinistic teaching that regeneration precedes faith. I would assume he did, and this is a teaching I do not agree with, which is one reason why I am not a Calvinist.

and seriousness in dealing with holy things. He was hardly a revivalist preacher. Edwards, by his nature and personality, would have been incapable of "stirring up a crowd" with homelitical theatrics![28]

Other evangelistic methods of Edwards are not compatible with modern revivalism. Edwards did not visit from house to house because he believed he could do more good conversing with persons under religious impressions in his study where they might be sure to be allowed easy access to him. Edwards' revival ministry was not promoted by visitation. This is not to infer that Edwards had no burden for the lost, for to make such a charge would be ridiculous. Edwards simply believed in-home visitation was not a good method of dealing with those under conviction. He preferred them to come to his study where they may discuss spiritual matters with him. This practice was highly successful because it showed who was truly serious about salvation. Someone trifling with the Holy Spirit would probably not be inclined to visit the preacher in his study, while someone else who was struggling under deep conviction of his sin would deliberately seek the preacher out for help, even at an unseasonable hour.

Edwards and others like him emphasized the sovereignty of God in giving revival. Edward's definition of revival was that is was a "sovereign and large giving of the Spirit of God, resulting in the addition of many to the kingdom of God."[29] Other leaders of the First Awakening had similar understandings of revival. There were no conditions to revival. They stressed that revival was a work of God but they were not fatalistic in believing the Church should just sit back and do nothing while waiting for the blessing. Edwardean pastors and evangelists were diligent preachers and zealous prayer warriors. Even in the 40-years wilderness period between the two awakenings, they still gathered for times of united prayer. They preached hoping that God would rend the heavens and come down. He did again near the turn of the 19th century.

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[28] In just about every account of Edwards (especially with regards to his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”), Edwards is portrayed as a leather- lunged, hell-fire screecher, not unlike some modern revival preachers. Yet he was a scholarly and quiet preacher, not at all how he is painted to be in such modern literature. This attempt to turn Edwards into a slobbering, spitting and pulpit-pounding evangelist is motivated by an attempt for these revival preachers to try to identify with Edwards by re-making him in their own image. This would better justify their own practices and beliefs. Yet Edwards would have little to do with them. This same practice is also heavily employed on the memory of Charles Spurgeon, by these same men.

[29] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 374.

Chapter 3: James Davenport: Forerunner to Finney

There cannot be a true work of God without a Satanic attempt to corrupt of hinder it. In the First Awakening, the attempt was made through the ministry of James Davenport. Davenport is important to study because his ministry prefigured that of Charles Finney in many ways, especially in his denunciations of those who refused to support him and the authority he took upon himself to single-handedly rewrite evangelistic orthopraxy. As far as I can tell, Finney never claimed to have been directly influenced by Davenport but there can be no doubt as to the similarity of their philosophies and ministries.

Problems of the Awakening

As the Awakening progressed, its leaders began to see fanaticism arise. There were occasional reports of jerking, fainting, crying out and other physical manifestations. A debate arose as to whether such gyrations were genuine or were something to be avoided. Edwards wrote against them, saying that such physical excesses were not necessary to validate a genuine conversion experience. Whitefield saw them in a few of his meetings and also discouraged them. The need for control over excesses became apparent early in the revival. But others, especially the itinerant evangelists who were hungry for visible and tangible results of their preaching, resolved to do all they could to encourage and multiply them. But the more conservative men might have been able to keep such outbursts under control had it not been for Evangelist James Davenport.

Davenport's Career

James Davenport sprang from a noted and distinguished New England family. Cotton Mather gives a biography of Rev. John Davenport, his grandfather who helped to found New Haven and later pastored there, in his work *The Great Works of Christ in America*.[30] According to Mather, the elder Davenport was a man greatly used of God in New England and highly spoken of.

James Davenport started off well spiritually. He was a companion of Whitefield and the Tennents but was badly influenced by his pastor on Long Island. News of the revivals which followed Whitefield had reached Oyster Ponds, Long Island, where Davenport lived and held his church membership. Davenport rejoiced at the great works of God and betook himself to special prayer with regards to it. He asked for God to teach him how to respond to it and to show him what he could do to assist in it. Davenport's pastor, Rev. Jonathan Barber, engaged himself in similar prayer but reported that God had given him an "impression" based on Habakkuk 2:3 regarding an even greater outpouring of the Spirit than what was currently being enjoined. Barber decided that the anticipated revival should start immediately and that he had to do everything in his power to bring it along. Barber first preached his revelation to his own people and town through house-to-house visitation.

[30] Volume 1, pages 88, 321-331.

Barber then took the apostolic advice to go out as an itinerant evangelist with no money nor change of apparel nor shoes. It is obvious that Barber was beginning to go to extremes, and he was having an impact on Davenport. It was not long before Barber began to claim direct illumination by the Spirit. Barber then went to Rhode Island to meet Whitefield. Whitefield was impressed enough with him to take him to Georgia and make him the superintendent of spiritual affairs at the Bethesda orphanage. It seems Whitefield was taken in by the outward early piety of both Barber and Davenport.

How much of this "inner light" of Barber rubbed off on Davenport? He may not have been too unsympathetic to doctrines of inner and direct illumination by the Holy Spirit due to his friendship with David Ferris. Davenport and Ferris attended Yale together and both belonged to a "holy club" there. But Ferris became a Quaker and promoted the "Inner Light." How much of this Davenport accepted is not known but it would account for his later claims of being directly illuminated by the Holy Spirit.[31]

With Barber gone, Davenport took up his mantle. He started off by assembling the Barber's old congregation in his house and preached to them for 24 hours straight. This led to exhaustion, and he was forced to his bed for several days. No doubt this spell of physical exhaustion did further damage to his mind. He had earlier in his life endured a nervous breakdown and it seems he never fully recovered from its effects.

Upon his recovery, Davenport was back at it. He saw 20 people "converted" through his preaching and it went to his head. He had done one miracle in converting 20, now he claimed to be able to do others. The opportunity came in requesting special prayer by him for a woman who was insane and dumb. Davenport fasted and prayed for her recovery and specified a day on which she would be totally healed. On the day appointed, the woman died, and Davenport rejoiced. He claimed this was the answer to her prayer in that the Lord healed her by relieving her of her infirmity by death. The misfire did nothing to harm Davenport's reputation.

Davenport began an itinerant ministry in 1740. This was a critical point in the Awakening as the debate over the physical manifestations was at full tilt. Davenport weighed in on the side that encouraged such manifestations. Davenport seemed to have developed the idea that a man of his success and power should not be confined to Long Island, but he must get out into the harvest field at large and assist in the revival. He got this injunction through another supposed direct revelation from the Holy Spirit. He went to Philadelphia in 1740 to make the acquaintance of Whitefield and the Tennents and became fully persuaded of New Light Presbyterianism. He then accompanied Whitefield on a preaching tour in the Philadelphia-New York area.

Later, Davenport preached throughout Long Island and began to make his way through Connecticut and Rhode Island with impressive results. Whitefield was impressed at Davenport's ministry.

The turning point seemed to occur in August 1741. Davenport was at Lyme, Connecticut and applied to the local pastor, William Hart, for permission to preach in his church. Hart asked Davenport if it was his custom to publicly denounce ministers who were not as zealous or supportive of the revival as being unconverted and Davenport replied that it was. Hart was afraid that Davenport might condemn him as unconverted from his own pulpit and refused him permission to speak. This “act of persecution” was the excuse Davenport needed. He said to his attendants "Come, let

[31] Goen, page 20

us go forth without the camp, after the Lord Jesus, bearing his reproach. O, 'tis pleasant to suffer reproach for the blessed Jesus! Sweet Jesus![32]

The next day, four local preachers, including Hart, called upon Davenport to inquire as to his plan of proceeding. They found it impossible to talk with Davenport. Davenport condemned them and prayed for their conversion with them present.

Davenport then made his way to New Haven. En route, he stopped in every church and demanded of the pastor his salvation testimony. If the pastor refused to give it for whatever reason, Davenport denounced him as unconverted. Davenport believed he had been given a special divine commission to investigate the spiritual states of all ministers and he undertook this unusual ministry with great zeal.

He then arrived in New Haven, the site of his grandfather's labor. The town was still enjoying the lingering effects of a recent revival. Davenport may have visited Yale and conversed with some of its faculty and students. This visit turned out to be disastrous to a young student named David Brainerd. It was Davenport's custom to condemn men he considered unconverted or in a low state of grace and many of the students at Yale took up this spirit, including Brainerd. Men unmoved by the recent revival were looked upon in a form of disgust. Brainerd made a passing remark regarding the lack of revival spirituality of one of his teachers in a modified spirit of Davenport and was expelled for it. Brainerd confessed his fault, but Davenport had indirectly ruined his studies at Yale through his censorious spirit.

The New Haven authorities began to move against Davenport. Davenport was accused of inflaming extreme religious passions among children and was contributing to a spirit of disorder through the character of his ministry. He also denounced local pastor Joseph Noyes as unconverted. Davenport and his co-workers were hauled before the court. A riot nearly broke out. A mob threatened the sheriff if he should harm Davenport. The local militia had to be called out to protect the Assembly that was examining the irregularities of Davenport's ministry.

The Assembly condemned Davenport for his "natural tendency to disturb and destroy the peace of this government."[33] Yet they attributed it to his mental instability and gave him a lenient sentence. They did nothing to him but order that he be sent home by force. No doubt the incident gave Davenport and his followers a martyr's complex for being so "persecuted."

Davenport didn't stay home for long. He was determined to preach in Boston, which he did in June of 1742. He went to church in the morning at Charlestown but realized that afternoon that the minister was unconverted. Davenport spread his revelation regarding this unknown minister which alarmed his fellow ministers around Boston.

The next day was an association meeting of Boston area pastors and Davenport probably attended. The meeting passed a resolution regarding Davenport's conduct and ministry. It came to the same conclusion as the New Haven Assembly had, that Davenport was suffering from mental problems. Davenport was then barred from the Boston churches. Davenport's reaction was to take to the fields as had Whitefield. He took to Boston Common and set up a street meeting to denounce the ministers who had signed the resolution as unconverted. After

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[32] Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening, Banner of Truth*, Carlisle PA: page 236.

[33] Ibid., page 240.

this meeting, Davenport and his followers then marched through the streets of Boston, where they sang at the top of their voices in a most disorderly fashion. This crowd was little better than a mob and a riot very well could have erupted. This resulted in Davenport being deported from Boston.

In March 1743, Davenport was invited to help organize a church in New London, Connecticut. He came to New London armed with a dream to purify and perfect the congregation from their evils. By now, Davenport, physically exhausted and mentally agitated, was way off his rocker. At New London, he declared to the congregation that they needed to be purged from their love of their wigs, cloaks, breeches, hoods, gowns, rings, jewels and necklaces. All these articles were collected and committed to the flames. Then a catalogue of "unsafe" religious books was distributed to be committed to the flames, including the works of John Flavel, Benjamin Colman, Joseph Sewall, Jonathan Parsons and Increase Mather. As the smoke of the books ascended, the crowd declared that the smoke of the torment of these authors and others who died in the same belief was now ascending in hell.

Davenport's Retractation

The book-burning was Davenport's last act of fanaticism. It seems that the book burning incident had finally revealed to him regarding of his own personal mental instability.

Davenport was never physically healthy, and his illness added to his mental problems. Better health brought more mental stability and he was able to analyze his past ministry. He asked other ministers to point up his errors to him and now he was ready to listen. In the summer of 1744, he published a retraction of his errors. In this document, Davenport apologizes for the following:

1. His method of condemning ministers he thought to be unconverted.
2. Urging Christians to leave churches pastored by men so denounced by him.
3. Doing things and initiating programs without obvious Scriptural support. This would have to do with his "direct impressions."
4. Encouraging untrained and inexperienced men to exhort."[34]

Davenport then spent the last four years of his life in quietness, dying in 1757.

A Sample of Davenport's Preaching

A Davenport meeting on July 18, 1741 in New London, Connecticut yielded the following account: "Divers women were terrified and cried out exceedingly. When Mr. Davenport had dismissed the congregation, some went out and others stayed; he then went into the broad alley (aisle), which was much crowded, and there screamed out, "Come to Christ! come to Christ! come away!" Then he went into the third pew on the women's side, and kept there, sometimes singing, sometimes praying; he and his companions all taking their turns, and the women fainting and in hysterics. This confusion continued till ten o'clock at night. And then he went off singing through the streets."[35]

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[34] Ibid., page 251.

[35] Goen, page 21. This sounds like a typical, modern Charismatic service.

Davenport's Influences

Davenport was a forerunner of some of the modern Charismatic heresies. He taught that revivals such as the First Awakening would restore miraculous gifts to the churches and would bring a restoration of "apostolic Christianity." None of the mainline leaders of the revival ever promoted such doctrines. Samuel Davies saw revival as bring salvation to a larger number of the lost and giving Christians a greater conception of the glory of their Redeemer.[36]

He took outward manifestations of sinners to be evidences of salvation. Bodily agitations and outcries in services he took as marks as the Spirit's saving work. This idea grew in popularity. Davenport used a very bold form of emotional evangelism. He would often shout at the top of his lungs in his services "Come to Christ! Come to Christ!."[37]

Opponents to Davenport were condemned as unconverted men. When pastors did not recognize his "divine commission" nor heed his warnings, Davenport would denounce the preacher as unconverted and demand the church separate from him. He denounced pastors who opposed him as "Pharisees", "letter-learned" and spiritually dead. He went by visions, trances, inner impressions and direct impressions from texts.[38] Davenport judged the salvation experience of every minister he met, condemning those whose accounts did not satisfy him or those ministers who refused to comply.[39]

By 1742 Davenport had slipped into an extreme form of millennialism by teaching the end of the world was very near. He claimed as a basis for this revelation that it was directly revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.[40]

According to Davenport, if a preacher appears zealous, pretends uncommon holiness and succeeds in producing a considerable number of apparent conversions, no one must say a word to guard people against the influence of his errors, however gross and dangerous they may be. No one may oppose any of his measures or even withhold his cooperation on pain of being counted an enemy of revivals and hindering the work of God.[41]

Davenport's influence was greatest in eastern Connecticut, and it was disastrous. Churches were split over the issue of supposedly unconverted ministers and the methods of the followers of Davenport. It would be in this area that Asahel Nettleton would commence his evangelistic labors 70 years later with amazing results.

Davenport was also held responsible for the general decline in religious education in New England. By the Second Awakening, religious education was nearly extinct in New England.[42] New England preachers blamed Davenport and his public

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[36] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 23.
[37] Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, page 224.
[38] Porter, Ebenezer, *Letters on Revival*, Banner of Truth, pages 250-1.
[39] Tracy, page 236.
[40] Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, page 225.
[41] Tracy, page 245.
[42] W. E. Sprague, *The Life and Sermons of Edward D. Griffin*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1839, 1987, volume 1, page 99.

denunciation of ministerial education to be the cause. Hyper-emotional Christianity which depends upon immediate impressions of the Holy Spirit and highly charged preaching has no need for any form of scholarship. It takes no education to scream like a banshee and to whip congregations into a frenzy.

Fanaticism does not require scholarship to breed or spread, although Biblical scholarship would seem to keep it in check.

Chapter 4: The Second Great Awakening: Preliminary Considerations

The time period of the Second Great Awakening is usually given as stretching from 1792 through 1840. It followed in the wake of the spiritual declension which occurred after the First Great Awakening. The Second Awakening was much stronger, covered a wider area, lasted longer and left a stronger impression on the American Church than the First Awakening.

Before we undertake this chapter, we must notice the relative lack of records from this period. For some reason, the First Awakening has received most of the attention from historians while the Second Awakening (with the exception of materials relating to Charles Finney) has been neglected. In May 1994, I spent an enjoyable day in the Duke Theological Library in Durham, North Carolina, reading through back copies of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* which is the single best source of records for the Second Awakening. But why the lack of material? Joseph Bradley, a Baptist pastor in Albany, New York, wrote in 1818 "Within a few years, the churches have been so constantly favored with refreshing streams of salvation and large additions of members, that they seem to view these manifestations so common, that they have neglected to give information to the world that the Lord is among them of a truth."[43]

The Spiritual Decline in America

Spiritual conditions between 1775 and 1795 were very similar to what was experienced in America in the years leading up to the First Awakening. While the First Awakening may have prepared Americans for their Revolutionary War, independence from England brought a spiritual decline. Deism and Skepticism, imported from France and promoted by Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson, had infiltrated America. Schools that had been founded to train preachers had fallen into deep apostasy by the turn of the nineteenth century. In Virginia, it was said that every educated man was either a skeptic or an avowed unbeliever.[44] As a result, the churches were losing membership and influence.

H. T. Spence summarized the spiritual conditions after the American Revolution thusly:

> "Then the American Revolution swept our country with clear evidences that our country was back into spiritual lethargy. Drunkenness was of epidemic proportion; fear reigned on the streets of the cities; the Methodists and Baptists fell prey to the times; ungodliness flooded the country; and churches were once again being emptied. Many pastors had gone for years without taking in any new members; denominations were contemplating merging because of the diminishing number of parishioners; even John Marshall, the chief justice of the United States, wrote to Bishop Madison of Virginia and said, 'The church is too far gone ever to be redeemed.' Thomas Paine's writing of *The Age of Reason*

[43] Joseph Bradley, *Accounts of Religious Revivals in Many Parts of the United States from 1815 to 1818*. Wheaton: Richard Owen Roberts, 1980, page 77.

[44] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 114.

was conquering the minds of American leadership and the college academic world. On college campuses, many of which were birthed in the providence of God for the purpose of training godly ministers, there was a dearth of believers. By the 1770s it is reported that Harvard did not have one believer in the whole student body; Princeton boasted of only two. Student riots were common; students were burning Bibles. Many eyewitnesses of that time stated that Christians were so few on campuses that they met in secret and kept their minutes in code so as to avoid persecution."[45]

There was a period of revival in northern New England, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, Canada in 1779 and 1780 where Henry Alline was the primary figure. This may be considered as a continuation of the First Awakening rather than as a precursor to the Second and it had its problems. The Davenport-type exhorters were busy during this period, typified with emotional preaching. Calvinism continued to be chipped away. The Quakers, Universalists and Shakers benefited from the activities of this period. This shows that revival not only helps the orthodox churches but heretical groups also benefit from the religious excitement.[46]

It is important to make the proper division in the Second Awakening. There was an Eastern and Western Revival, and they were not similar. In the East, the revival was centered in the colleges and spread into the churches. It was characterized by orderliness, scholarship, divinity and restraint. The influence of Jonathan Edwards was still felt and respected in New England and in the Mid-Atlantic region. Since this was the region of the First Awakening, the churches had experiences in revival and remembered how to conduct themselves.

The Eastern Revival hit the colleges hard, where the work was needed most. Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, Amherst College, Dartmouth College, Williams College and Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut were all visited by the Holy Spirit.

The Western Revival, centered in Kentucky, was entirely different. The revivals on the frontier, although powerful but quickly degenerated into serious errors which continue even to this day. It would be to the Western revivals and not the Eastern revivals that men like Charles Finney would look to for inspiration and instruction. Because of the scope and importance of the Western Revival, we will study it in depth in the next chapter.

The churches were also suffering theologically. Unitarianism was beginning to wax strong, and Arminianism was beginning to decline into Arianism.[47]

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[45] H, T. Spence, "Revival in the End Time, Part 1", Straightway, Foundations Bible College, Dunn, North Carolina, Volume 32, Number 2, March/April, 2004, page 4.

[46] G. A. Rawlyk, *Ravished By The Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988, pages 46-49.

[47] W. E. Sprague, *The Life and Sermons of Edward D. Griffin*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1839, 1987, volume 1, page 101.

The Start of the Second Awakening

Due to the size and scope of the Second Awakening (it was much wider in geographic scope than the First Great Awakening), it is difficult to pin down a specific date and location as to its origin. The official date of the "end" of the First Awakening is usually given as 1740 but there were occasional revivals after that date. Edward Griffin dated it as starting in 1798 in Connecticut but there were occasional stirrings as early as 1792. By 1802, the revival was well underway with reports coming from Vermont to Kentucky to Georgia regarding the divine visitation.

Connecticut was the center of the Eastern Awakening, with seasons of revival in 1799, 1807, 1808, 1812, 1815, 1816, 1820, 1821, 1825 and 1826. Ten years of nearly continual revival also occurred in Vermont, Western Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

A revival hit the church of Edward Griffin in Newark, New Jersey in 1807. He describes it:

> "The first feelings which denoted the extraordinary presence of God and the actual commencement of a revival of religion, were awakened, perhaps in every person that was present. It was no longer doubtful that a work of divine grace was begun...The appearance was as if a collection of waters, long suspended over the town, has fallen at once, and deluged the whole place. For several weeks, the people would stay at the close of every evening service, to hear some new exhortation; and it seemed impossible to persuade them to depart, until those on whose lips they hung had retired."[48]

As a result of this revival, 97 people joined Griffin's church in one day and over 200 more joined overall, including drunkards, apostates, infidels and those who were "lately malignant opposers." Edward Payson saw 42 added to his church in Portland, Maine in 1810 with another harvest in 1814 and 1816. In the 1816 revival, members of Payson's church had to stay home to make room for the crowds. Seventy-two joined the church during that year. Payson saw more revival in 1822 and in the year of his death, 1827. Gardiner Spring recorded five seasons of revival under his ministry from 1812 to 1834.

The Birth of the American Foreign Missions Movement

The crowning glory of the Eastern Revival was the birth of the American Foreign Missions Movement. It was started by Samuel J. Mills, a Connecticut farmer who responded to the call to preach and attended Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Mills led a group of fellow-students comprised of James Richards, Francis Robbins, Harvey Loomis, Gordon Hall and Luther Rice, known as the Society of the Brethren, which engaged in prayer and theological discussion in a maple grove. One day en route to such a meeting, they got caught in a thunderstorm. They took refuge under a haystack where they had their usual prayer

[48] Murray, page 202.

meeting. But God moved into this haystack prayer meeting and especially burdened them for foreign missions. After the meeting, they stood to their feet and declared "We can do it if we will", in taking the gospel to the heathen. They then resolved to become America's first foreign missionaries and they signed a pledge to that effect. Henceforth, they became known as the Haystack Group. Nearly every Protestant and Baptist mission board traces its roots back to the Haystack Group.

After graduation, many of them transferred to Andover Seminary, which continued the tradition of Jonathan Edwards against the Unitarianism of Harvard. While here, they were joined by Adoniram Judson, Samuel Newell and Samuel Nott. Under the leadership of Judson, they formed the "Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions." Judson, Mills, Nott and Newell presented themselves before the General Association of the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts on June 28, 1810, where it was decided to form a foreign missions society, known as the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It all consummated in 1812 when Adoniram Judson and his wife arrived in Burma (after unsuccessfully trying to get into India) as the first American foreign missionaries. This was a direct result of the Second Great Awakening.

Early Methodology

The question naturally arises as to the means and methods that were used during the early years of the Second Awakening (before 1820). It is obvious that the same philosophy and theology which the First Awakening was built upon provided the foundation for the Second. Prayer and preaching were seen as the great means God used to bring revival and to spread the gospel. Other means were used but they were always subservient to prayer and preaching. The men of the Second Awakening were careful not to interfere in the work of the Spirit through their own devices or programs. Gardiner Spring said, "Revivals are always spurious when they are got up by man's device and not brought down by the Spirit of God."[49] The men deliberately avoided trying to produce excitement in their meetings, preferring to have the Holy Spirit do the strong but quiet work of conversion in the heart.

Edward Payson was one of the earliest men to try to promote a revival by human means. During an 1816 revival in his church, he confessed: "Some time in February, I began to hope for a revival; and after much prayer for direction, and, as I thought, with confidence in God, I took some extraordinary, and perhaps imprudent measures to hasten it. But the event did not answer my expectations at all."[50] In this, Payson admits that the biggest hindrances to the revivals his church experienced was himself and the means he tried to use to promote and manage it.

There seemed to be no discernable pattern as to the outpourings of the Spirit during the Second Awakening. For example, Connecticut enjoyed seasons of revival in 1807-8, 1812, 1815-6, 1820-1 and 1825-6. Why these years and not others?

Nothing new was being done in terms of methodology. It cannot be traced to

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[49] Ibid., page 201.

[50] Asa Cummings, Memoir, *Select Thoughts and Sermons of the Late Rev. Edward Payson, D.D*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1846, 1987, volume 1, page 360.

Any special methodology, such as the "protracted meeting" for that was not introduced into Connecticut until 1831. Other parts of New England experienced similar cycles of revival, but no one could predict when and where the revivals would hit. This simply highlights the sovereignty of God in His determinations regarding the timing and locations of revivals. No program of man could bring a revival. The revivals did not correspond to any special programs enacted by any preacher.[51]

Major Leaders in the Second Awakening

The major figures in the Second Awakening would include Ashael Nettleton, Edward Griffin, Edward Payson, Gardiner Spring, Lyman Beecher, Timothy Dwight and William Sprague. These are some of the greatest preachers in the history of the American church. They men had frequent contact with each other through the years and encouraged each other in their works. They were evangelical Calvinists and either Presbyterian or Congregational. These men would have been remarkable in any age.

All of them made Christ, and not their ministries, their first concern. They aimed to live as near to the throne as possible and to know Christ in private. But they were also humble men, distressed with their own personal states. They had low views of themselves while others were lauding them. They also possessed a pilgrim heart regarding the things of this world. Nettleton once wrote "The milk and the honey lie beyond this wilderness world.[52] With such a spiritual attitude and maturity, it is small wonder why God was so pleased to use these men and others like them in the manner He did.

Of course, there were many other men involved and they must not be forgotten or neglected. A good reference to consult is *Accounts of Religious Revivals in Many Parts of the United States from 1815 to 1818* by Joshua Bradley. He has details of men and moves of God during the “peak” of the revival.

We will now examine the lives and ministries of some of these leading men of the early years of the Second Awakening.

Timothy Dwight (1752-1817)

The Spirit visited New Haven in 1802 under the presidency of Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards. Dwight was no mean theologian but a godly divine. He taught many of the leaders of the Second Great Awakening, including Asahel Nettleton, William Sprague, Gardiner Spring and Lyman Beecher. It may be said that from his base at Yale, Dwight helped to orchestrate the Second Great Awakening from 1795-1815. Like these men, Dwight was a moderate Calvinist, somewhat more modified in his Calvinism than his grandfather Edwards. Yale reached its spiritual zenith under him.

The revivals at Yale College gives a good sample of the conditions in the schools that were supposed to be training ministers. With the general waning of

[51] It is human nature to want to “help God out” when He starts moving like this.

[52] Bennet Tyler and Andrew Bonar, *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton*. Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, 1845, 1975, pages 131-2.

revivals and Christianity in New England, deism and skepticism seized the schools. By 1790, Yale was apostate and was wholly given over to French Deism. There was but a mere handful of professing Christians in the student body, mainly in the lower classes. Discipline was slack with intemperance, profanity, gambling and licentiousness common. Students proudly referred to themselves as "Voltaire" (in "honor" of the infamous French atheist) and other atheistic philosophers and boasted of their infidelity. The college church was almost extinct. There were fewer than 12 professing Christians in the entire student body of over 200 in 1795.

Enter Timothy Dwight, the new president of Yale and grandson of the great Jonathan Edwards. Dwight came to New Haven in 1795 and declared immediate war on the infidelity. He was as wise as a serpent in his attacks. He knew he could not alienate the students and still hope to convert them, so he first gained their respect through his scholarship and spirituality by displaying true Christianity before them.

The students had always complained that the faculty feared entering into debates with them on religious subjects. When they challenged Dwight to just such a debate, he accepted. The subject agreed to was "Is the Bible the Word of God?" The gauntlet was laid down and Dwight challenged the students to do their best. After six months of debate and discussion, Dwight had totally demolished every argument that infidelity could throw at the Scripture. The students were beaten, and they knew it. The Yale skepticism had been dealt a head wound. Dwight then followed up his victory with a series of chapel messages on systematic theology and on moral issues. By 1802, the revival that Dwight desired came and the student body was largely converted from their beloved unbelief to evangelical Christianity. Even during the semester break, when it was feared that the conviction would wear off, the students continued on in the awakening and it grew and spread in these off-months. Other revivals followed at Yale in 1808, 1813 and 1815.

Edward Dorr Griffin (1770-1837)

Griffin was great admirer of Jonathan Edwards and William Cowper. A 1790 graduate of Yale, he. pastored in New Hartford, Connecticut (1795-1801), Newark, New Jersey (1801-9 and 1815-21 and 1837), Boston (1809-15). He also served as a professor at Andover Theological Seminary from 1809-1811 and as president of Williams College in 1821. His ministry was visited with powerful revivals and his diary provides valuable first-hand accounts of such awakenings. He was also one of the most accomplished theologians of his day.

Griffin took to the offensive against the New Haven Theology of Jeremy Taylor, which was later adopted by Charles Finney. He saw it as a clear deviation from the Old School Theology regarding the nature of regeneration.

Griffin was a highly educated theologian who had few equals in his generation. His intellect, culture, refinement and scholarship were not a hindrance to evangelism and revival, but rather worked as a check and a safeguard against the excesses that the ill-trained tend to bring into revivals.

Edward Payson (1783-1827)

Payson was one of the few evangelical preachers of the Second Awakening to graduate from Harvard. He was one of the most illustrious of American divines who possessed a towering intellect. He was known to weep under preaching at age 3 and was a good reader at age 4. When he entered Harvard, it was said that he read every book in the college library. He pastored the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine from 1807-1827. Known as the "seraphic Payson" for his holiness of life and tenderness of heart. He would often weep while preaching. Yet he was very uncompromising in his preaching, being very pointed and direct in his applications.

Payson was born in Rindge, New Hampshire. Before he took his pastorate in Portland, he spent several years as a schoolteacher and headmaster in the same city. His pulpit preaching was startling and uncompromising. Over 700 joined his church in the 20 years he was in Portland.[53] [54]

William Sprague (1795-1876)

Sprague was educated at Yale and Princeton. He pastored in Albany, New York for 40 years. Sprague made many contributions to the church with his pen. He wrote the classic *Annuals of the American Pulpit*, which took 17 years of work. It was something of a register of preachers indexed according to denomination up to 1855. He also left us valuable biographies of Edward Dorr Griffin and Timothy Dwight.

Gardiner Spring (1785-1873)

Spring was also Yale-trained but never came under any serious religious impressions while there. The 1803 revival at Yale did little to move him. Instead, he resolved to study law. Spring finally did surrender to the ministry and studied at Andover Theological Seminary. He pastored the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City from 1810-1873, a period of 63 years! He witnessed frequent revivals from 1814 to 1834 while at New York. His education was tremendous and his readings in theology was extensive. He was a devout and staunch Calvinist. As such, he was against what he called "spurious revivals" and to all sensational devices of "vagrant" evangelists. He was a strong supporter of missions and worked with the Baptists and their missions agencies.

Lyman Beecher (1775-1863)

His father was the best-read man in New England. A graduate of Yale, where he studied under Timothy Dwight. He pastored on Long Island, Litchfield, Connecticut (1810-26), Boston (1826-1832) and Cincinnati (1832-50). He was also a man of deep intellect. Beecher was one of Nettleton's closest friends and also criticized Finney and

[53] McClintock and Strong, "Payson, Edward", volume 7, page 850.
[54] I have Payson's Memoir and Sermons. Highly recommended.

his new methods. He once threatened Finney that if he ever had the thought of coming to Boston, he would stand at the city limits and bar him from the city by force. But by 1827, Beecher had switched loyalties and allied himself with Finney. We discuss these events in chapter 7.

Revival Understandings in the Second Great Awakening

How did the men who preached from 1792-1820 come to understand revival? From what they saw and from their observations of how God worked, they developed a very thorough understanding of revivals.

They understood revivals to be events that occurred without warning and in a spontaneous manner. No one expected it when it hit. There was no outward reason for the revival occurring when and where it did. No special programs were enacted nor were any special "evangelistic meetings" enacted to help bring it about. It was generally understood in the East that God sent revivals in a spontaneous manner as to time and location in accordance with His sovereignty.

There was no account of any physical manifestations or outcries in the East. Griffin says that although emotions were strong in the revivals, the people affected did not express outcries, distortions of body or any symptoms of intemperate zeal. He recorded that the people would sit in the services with a great solemnity.

People were too deeply impressed to weep. A major problem Edward Payson observed in the revivals in his church was the "animal excitement" that was mixed in with them. Payson said the more holy we were, the less we would have of animal excitement and the feelings should be repressed, especially in a revival.[55]

The subject of the revival preaching was not overly harsh or negative. Griffin says that "little terror was preached, except what is implied in the doctrines of the entire depravity of the carnal heart.[56] Inordinate preaching on hellfire and damnation was unknown in the Second Awakening. The preaching was uncompromising in its demands for holiness and the new birth, but the preachers did not "turn up the heat" when the Spirit came but kept preaching the doctrines that they were already preaching.

There was some opposition to the revival recorded. This is not to be unexpected as sinners and those who refuse to yield to the working of the Spirit would naturally be expected to oppose the work. Yet such opposition was not widespread.[57]

The revival had a special impact on children. Griffin records that by 1800, many schools had been awakened. Families, especially fathers, were especially strengthened during these seasons.

There was a general reformation of morals and sobriety of conduct observable in towns affected, especially among the young people. Instead of festivities, the young people would assemble at the church and request a sermon.

It was generally agreed that in the awakenings from 1792-1820, God promoted the work and not man.[58] Every feature of the revivals proved themselves to

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[55] Cummings, 1:263.

[56] Sprague, 1:37.

[57] Ibid., 1:49.

[58] The Lord can always promote His work without man's help.

be a work of God and not man.

There was a renewal of an overwhelming sense of the holiness of God. No immodesties of conduct in church were tolerated or attempted. Griffin relates one such service at Newark, New Jersey in 1803: "In every prayer through the day and evening, and almost in every individual petition, I had a distinct sense that God was too holy to suffer such polluted creatures to approach him but through the blessed High Priest...I had an awful sense of his majesty and holiness, and sin appeared, as being against such a God, more dreadful than ever ".[59]

The next observation is that there was an increased demand for services and preaching. Griffin records "for several weeks, the people would stay at the close of every evening service, to hear some new exhortation; and it seemed impossible to persuade them to depart."[60] After these services, the people would be greatly affected, weeping for hours on end.

An increase in prayer was noted. Griffin remarks on private societies for prayer being formed. The revival of prayer was never witnessed by these men before. There was also a revival in orthodoxy. As mentioned earlier, Unitarianism and a form of Arianism had invaded New England, displacing the evangelical Calvinism of the First Awakening. The revival brought a return to the old orthodoxy, although it did not squash the heresies. Apostasy continued to wreak havoc in New England, but the revival did give it more competition. Edward Griffin noted that nearly all the students who joined the church connected with Andover Seminary were "staunch Edwardeans", or followers of Jonathan Edwards.[61]

What Sparked the Revival?

It is difficult to say what man or event gave birth to the Second Great Awakening. No doubt we must attribute much of the cause and credit to the sovereignty of God but that does not mean that men were idle. In the 1780s and 1790s, there were a remnant of men who were greatly distressed over the great falling away of these years and gave themselves to much prayer about it and made pleas and exhortations for revival, reformation and recovery a major burden of their preaching. H. T. Spence observed:

> "A remnant was praying in America for God to change the hearts of men. A Scottish minister in Edinburgh named John Erskine wrote a little book entitled *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom*. There were other men like Isaac Backus, a Baptist preacher in New England, who sent out a plea for prayer to be given regularly in behalf of a move of God among His people. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale, was used of the Lord to bring an awakening and revival to that college that by this time was filled with agnostics and atheists."[62]

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[59] Ibid., 1:74.
[60] Ibid., 1:92.
[61] Ibid., 1:107.
[62] Spence, ibid.

Men like Dwight, Nettleton and Griffin became “leaders” in the Awakening because they were leading the charge in praying for it and preaching for it, which explains why they were so prepared for the revival when it finally came.

Chapter 5: The Western Revival

The revival in the West was totally different from the Eastern revival. In the East, divinity, doctrine, decorum and Biblical scholarship were stressed. In the West, divinity and theology were rejected to emphasize emotion and experience. The perceived

"formality" of New England was also rejected and was replaced by a "freedom of the Spirit" in worship.

Conditions in the West

At the end of the eighteenth century, "The West" referred to areas of Kentucky and Ohio, which had only recently been opened to settlement. As in many frontier areas, live was difficult. There were few if any churches. Morals were low. Drunkenness was rampant as well as lawlessness. Christianity was mocked. Atheism and deism were the major "faiths". Several of the early settlements in Kentucky were named after French infidels; LaRue, Bourbon, Rousseau, Altamont. The circuit riders and missionaries faced a daunting task due to these conditions and the sparseness of the population.

The Start of the Revival

The conditions described above made for ripe conditions for a divine visitation. The Western Revival started in 1797 in Logan County, Kentucky. It was widespread by 1801. The revival hit hard and fast on the frontier. The main feature was the development of the "camp meeting", a protracted series of outdoor meetings which sometimes would last weeks. As many as 20,000 people would attend the meetings.

Unlike in the East, the Western revival was marked by "unusual physical phenomena", such as "slayings in the Spirit", "holy rolling" and "dancing". There unknown in the East, where the revival was rational and scholarly. The revival in the East was fueled by divines. In the West, it was the circuit-riding preacher who often did not enjoy the benefits of seminary training. This was because the stress was on a "felt religion" over a theological one. Since education on the frontier was primitive at best, learning and scholarship were in short supply among both clergy and laity. This forced the emphasis off doctrine since few people had the educational background to appreciate it and few ministers had the educational training to preach it. Something everyone could understand was feelings and experience, so this took front place.

The Western Revival was where the "new methods" that Charles Finney would later popularize and standardize were born and developed. Since the West did not have the established teachings and traditions of New England, it was more open to such experimentation. The level of training and education of the ministers in the West was generally inferior to those in the East which contributed to an inability to accurately analyze the events and methods used.

The Western Camp Meetings

The most important and influential element of the Western revivals was the camp meeting, which was invented in Kentucky and was a product of the revival. It is

interesting that camp meetings did not arise in New England or along coastal areas, but was rather imported from the west.

By 1800, awakenings had begun to shake the infidelity in Kentucky. The frontier missionaries and circuit riders were largely responsible. Their direct and fearless preaching against the social sins of the area was blessed by God and many came under deep conviction of their sin. Many conversions resulted, and the Presbyterian churches reported increases in membership and in attendance to the communion services.

It was at these communion services that the revival took off. The first such revival communion service took place in June 1800 at Red River, Kentucky. James McGready, John Rankin, William Hodge, William McGee and John McGee (a Methodist) came together with their congregations for a solemn three-day communion service. All was orderly until the third day when the Methodist John McGee began to get carried away with the spirit of the service. On that final day, McGee began to exhort the throng that "there was a greater than I preaching" and that they should "submit to him." Immediately the congregation began to cry out and shout.[63]

Astonished pastors who witnessed this agreed among themselves that the Lord was beginning to move, and they scheduled another sacramental service for late July 1800 at Gasper River, Kentucky. The crowds were tremendous with some coming from distances of up to 100 miles distant. Continuous preaching began and by the end of the third day, the emotion of the crowd could not be contained. The entire assembly was being shaken by the power of God.

The 1801 Cane Ridge Meeting in Bourbon County, Kentucky, seems to be the birthplace for the camp meeting concept although the Red River and Gasper River communion services should also be considered as camp meetings, although they were not referred to as such. The camp meeting was a protracted "revival" meeting held in a large outdoor location to accommodate the crowds. It started as an orthodox Presbyterian communion service under James McGready (1758?-1817). McGready had witnessed the powerful revivals in Virginia of 1787- 89 and was well experienced in what to do and what to expect in such conditions. (McGready was thrown off balance by the early excesses of the camp meetings but later regained his spiritual footing and opposed them) So many attended as a result of the revival that the attendees were warned that they should be prepared to camp on the grounds. Wagons and tents were brought in to provide the necessary accommodations (hence the idea of a “camp” meeting). The communion observation would stretch into days to service everyone who desired to take part. From this point, the communion service took on a life of its own. Baptists and Methodists took part. As many as 21,000 people arrived for the meeting and temporary tent villages were laid out. These large numbers made keeping order and patrolling theological orthodoxy nearly impossible.

The camp meeting now became a fixed feature of frontier life due to the success of the Cane Ridge meeting. The revival work in Kentucky centered around such meetings. At first, the meetings were orthodox. Yet with such a large number of participants and a lack of qualified preachers, this situation could not last. It was inevitable that excesses would develop in such a situation. With the fanaticism of

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[63] Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformers*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987, page 7.

James Davenport still fresh, the preachers did all they could to keep the meetings orderly. The tide was too powerful to stem. All revivals begin with profound convictions of sin and sinfulness. Many are suddenly brought to the truth who were once in a very dead and cold state. Such numerous and sudden conversions may be accompanied by some physical manifestations, such as falling or crying out in services. This occurred many times during the First Awakening. A revival, by its very nature, is an emotional response to the hearing and application of the truth of God. But the course of a revival, together with its purity and resulting fruit, is related to how such emotional outbursts are handled by its leaders. The men of the First Awakening and the Eastern Second Awakening discouraged such displays while the Western Revival encouraged it. Once the idea gains acceptance that the degree of the Spirit's work is to be measured by the degree of outward emotional and physical manifestation (as what happened in the West), fanaticism is the inevitable result. Any attempt to discourage or control such emotional outbursts and physical gyrations will be condemned as an attempt to stifle the work of the Holy Spirit. Such men will be denounced as "anti-revival men." This attitude started in the West and was brought east by Charles Finney.

In keeping with the spontaneous and emotional style of the camp meeting, McGready and his fellow preachers knew that the attendees would have little patience for deep theology. The Eastern congregations were well versed in the deeper things of God and the Eastern ministers were up to the challenge. But the frontier people had little time or patience for deep theological thinking. This was due to the harder life they lived and the constant struggle for survival during those early frontier years. The preachers then gave the people what they wanted- an emotional escape from the hardships of frontier life. That is exactly what the camp meeting provided.

Keith Hardman gives two reasons why the camp meeting had to be so emotional.

> "The hard-bitten character of the pioneer demanded a far more exuberantly emotional religion than many back in the settled East would have liked. It was natural that frontier dwellers would demand this; that they would cry aloud in wrestling with their guilt, and that they would laugh and jump and shout with joy when they had purged their souls. Two factors combined to bring about unchecked emotionalism at times. The bleak hardness of pioneer life was one, with its absence of restraint and sparsity of social contact. Second was the fact that in the camp meetings the traditionally slow cycle of conviction, despair, repentance and release was inevitably compressed into a few days, and pent-up feelings when finally released could be explosive."[64]

Church was used as an escape from the hard realities of frontier life as well as functioning as entertainment and social gatherings instead of worship and instruction in righteousness. This is a major source of error in churches. When the justification for a local church's existence shifts from worship to entertainment, then the purity of that church is married.

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[64] Ibid., page 9.

Since the congregation would demand such emotion in their religion, they would also demand an emotional preacher. The scholarly and quiet preacher would have no place out west. The demand was for the leather-lunged "hell-fire screecher" who would portray hell in vibrant colors as to make the women cry out in fear. Jonathan Edwards and men like him would have been a failure had they preached in Kentucky.

Western Excesses

And the problems did come. They included "falling" or "being slain in the Spirit." People would "drop dead" as if they were shot. They would lie on the ground, unable to move for as long as an hour. As many as 800 people fell in one service. Yet many of these who were "slain" proved to be but temporary converts who soon returned to the world.[65]

Then there was "the jerks" and twitching. These were physical manifestations that affected a few attendees of the camp meetings but were certainly part of the same problem. There was also excessive crying aloud in the meetings, including shouting at the top of one's voice for no apparent reason.

The Exhorters

These excesses were fueled by a number of young, impetuous, immature, self-called "preachers" who took it upon themselves to promote any and all forms of excesses, thinking them to be genuine works of the Spirit. They were caught up in the excitement of the moment and it carried them away. They were likened to a "parcel of boys who suddenly tumbled out of a boat, who had been unaccustomed to swim, and knew not the way to shore. Some fixed upon one error, and some upon another.[66] The older and wiser men who struggled to keep these manifestations under control were defeated by the sheer numbers of the people who were falling under the spell of the emotionalism. Many of the younger breed came to believe as Davenport had before them that a new age of the miraculous had dawned, invalidating the need for a regular clergy and ministry. This new breed, called and equipped directly by God and armed with visions, dreams and new revelations, would take care of the revival. The old crowd need not concern themselves with it unless they were willing to submit to the "new order". Orthodoxy and orthopraxy[67] were discarded for a "new freedom." A theological romanticism was was born where there were no restraints, the ideas of the past discarded and innovation the fad of the day. The old theological words and terms invented by the

"theologians" (a term used as an insult) were replaced by "Bible words." The theologians had obscured the truth from the people by making Bible truth needlessly complex. The new preachers corrected that. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ, spoke for many when he said that stripping away the accretions of

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[65] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 167.

[66] Ibid., page 170.

[67] "Orthodoxy" is "straight thinking". "Orthopraxy" is "straight practice"

theology and tradition would restore peace, harmony and vitality to the church.[68] In other words, doctrine and earnestly contending for the faith were sacrificed for evangelistic results.

This is where the Methodist exhorter came from. McClintock and Strong,[69] define "exhorters" as "a class of lay persons licensed in the Methodist Episcopal Church to exhort, not to preach...The duties of a exhorter are 'to hold meetings for prayer and exhortation wherever opportunity is afforded." G. A. Rawlyk, defined exhorters as "a complex mix of personal testimony, introspective prayer, both articulated and unspoken concern for the spiritual welfare of one's friends and neighbors, tears, sobs, and often other forms of frenzied emotional behavior."[70] The exhorters would circulate through the crowd, concentrating their efforts on those who were under obvious signs of deep conviction, doing all they could to get the sinner to go to the altar and be saved. An exhorter was a lay preacher with little or no education, no training and no ordination. Caught up in the heat of the revival, they took it upon themselves to preach and to encourage sinners to come to Christ, sometimes taking all night to do so. All preaching was extemporaneous. Prepared texts were not used. This practice grew from the lay participation in the First Awakening. Individual spiritual responsibility was one of the doctrines which emerged from the First Awakening, and this placed emphasis on a personal religion. Individuality led to a form of spiritual democracy where all men were equal despite differences in education, gifts or piety. A "people's movement" had developed from the First Awakening which created such a spiritual atmosphere. On the frontier, where individualism, Jacksonian democracy and Jeffersonian distrust of established institutions flourished, the idea of a lay ministry was readily accepted.

Such an "exhortation meeting" that occurred in the 1779 revival in Maine is related thusly:

> "They wrought themselves up to complete frenzy, even to frothing at the mouth, dancing, stamping and whirling around. These last were generally females, who would continue till they fell prostrate on the floor in a state of complete exhaustion. This was called going into a trance, or spiritual state, and as they said, holding communion with God...When the trance ended, they usually came to their feet with a spring or a bound...darting at once before some individual sinner, to whom they had a special message, assailing them with a torrent of invectives, such as calling them devils, children of the devil, sinful, lustful, artful devils, men of sin, anti-Christs; not forgetting to remind the poor culprit of each and every known fault, or deviation from the path of right."[71]

New Englanders considered exhorters to be a great threat to orderly religion because they engaged not only in private encouragement to the brethren but also in authoritative public discourse much like the ministers. Although the exhorters were "raw and unskillful in the word of righteousness", they spoke very boldly and soon became preferred by the uneducated frontier people rather than the "letter-learned

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[68] Ibid., page 175.
[69] *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature,* volume 3, page 394,
[70] Rawlyk, page 111.
[71] Ibid., page 47.

rabbis, scribes, pharisees and unconverted ministers."[72] They were unschooled, uneducated, untrained and uncontrollable.

During the First Awakening, Andrew Croswell, a Connecticut New Light pastor, at first supported exhorters but later repented, saying, "I have seen reason to alter my judgment, particularly with reference to exhorters. For though I was the first in New England that set them up, I now see, too late, that the tendency of their ways is to drive learning out of the world, and to sow it thick with the dreadful errors of Anabaptism, Quakerism and Antinomianism."[73]

Antinominism arose from the practice as a spirit of lawlessness prevailed in the camp meetings. Authority was ignored, established practices and doctrines discarded and every man began doing that which was right in his own eyes.

Jonathan Parsons also warned his congregation of the dangers of the exhorters as early as 1742. One excess of these early exhorters was that everyone was doing it, including women, children, servants and Negros.[74] During the 1807 revival in Nova Scotia, children took to exhortation and developed a realization of the popular power they could acquire through exhortation. Children, ranging from ages 7 to 16, saw in the revivals an excellent opportunity to assert their own sense of worth and self-importance in a society that relegated them to positions of subservience. Children exhorters, who conducted disorderly meetings, often would roam the streets at night singing, praying and preaching. During services, they would commandeer the preaching.

The adults, wanting to hear sermons and not exhortations, had to use force to restrain their children. The children resisted surrendering the practice of exhortation (and the power it gave them), believing their practices to have been sanctioned by the Holy Spirit.[75] Exhorting also gave women an excuse to preach. Women preachers arose as exhorters, claiming as the children, that their preaching was sanctioned by the Holy Spirit.

Benjamin Colman placed the responsibility of the exhorters on James Davenport. Davenport's *Retractation* of 1744 did not defuse the ministry of the exhorters or discourage them in the least. Colman gave his impression of the exhorters as "Many poor and miserable exhorters...have sprung up like mushrooms in a night and in the morning thought themselves accomplished teachers and called of God to be so."[76]

In the camp meetings, anyone was welcomed to sing, pray aloud, exhort or preach, regardless of orthodoxy or training. It was all "as the Spirit directed." The Presbyterian Synod that had authority over the Kentucky meetings attempted to examine the men who promoted this new teaching, but these men withdrew and formed their own synod, avoiding the defrocking which was sure to come.

Western Inventions

[72] Goen, pages 28-29.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., page 31 and Rawlyk, page 112.
[75] Rawlyk, page 123.
[76] Goen, page 31.

Although the camp meeting was started by the Presbyterians, the Methodists soon took the concept over as their own. Methodism then became the dominant force on the frontier and was responsible for the development of several practices while later would be used in Finneyite revivalism.

The Kentucky Methodists began keeping records of the number of professed converts in their meetings, something never practiced or promoted by either Wesley or Whitefield. How these converts were counted or who qualified as a convert to be counted is not clear. Most of the Methodist itinerants counted those who showed signs of conviction as converts. The danger of this practice becomes obvious. Men began to be judged by the number of converts they reported. In order to appear more spiritual in the eyes of the brethren, padding such reports became commonplace. Converts then became numbers to be reported, mere fodder to inflate the image of the preacher and his ministry. Evangelism then shifted from a one-on-one dealing with the sinner to a wholesale matter where people were saved "*en masse*."

The Altar Call

Other practices were developed by the Methodists. They perfected the "invitation" or "altar call" so familiar today. The origin of the public invitation is uncertain but the earliest notation of its use in America goes back only to 1798. Iain Murray records the account: "Jesse Lee recorded in his journal for 31 October 1798: 'At Paup's meeting-house Mr. (Francis) Asbury preached on Ephesians 5:25,26,27...I exhorted, and the power of the Lord was among us...John Easter proclaimed aloud, 'I have not a doubt but God will convert a soul today.' The preachers then requested all that were under conviction to come together. Several men and women came and fell upon their knees, and the preachers for some time kept singing and exhorting the mourners...two or three found peace.' In 1801 another Methodist in Delaware reported 'After prayer I called upon the persons in distress to come forward and look to the Lord to convert their souls. Numbers came forward."[77]

The invitation was not originally used in the Kentucky camp meetings. The Presbyterians did not introduce it. It arose under the influence of the second-generation Methodists. In the zeal and desire to secure a large number of quick conversions, it is not difficult to understand how the practice could have been adopted and promoted. What better way to get a headcount of those under conviction than to get them to come to the altar in public? It also made for an impressive sight to see so many sinners weeping at the altar. It would have added to the excitement of the meetings. It also served to "increase the stock" of the preacher who was "responsible" for so many going to the altar. Nobody at first equated "going to the altar" as an act of conversion but it was only a matter of time before those who did go forward were considered converts. Preachers began to plead for people to "come to the altar" with the same fervency as they urged them to repent and believe.

The altar call was also developed to try to help those under intense conviction of their sins get through it. If such people would simply arise and go to the altar, they would be released from their convictions and be saved. This was in reaction to the sometime prolonged periods of intense conviction many went through.

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[77] Ibid., page 185.

The altar call was designed to shorten the period of this conviction. Extended periods of conviction were frowned upon in the West. The New Englanders showed patience with sinners in this state, rightly understanding that the labor pains of the new birth sometimes last for an extended period of time before the actual birth. But the impatience of the Western Methodists shows through in their desire for quick and easy conversions.

Methodist evangelist Peter Cartwright is a good example to see in how the Methodists used the public invitation. "Speaking of a camp meeting in 1806 Peter Cartwright said 'The altar was crowded to overflowing with mourners...young ladies asked permission to set down inside it. I told them that if they would promise to pray to God for religion they might take a seat there'. He shared services with a fellow preacher, after they had settled procedure in advance: 'Said he to me: "If I strike fire, I will immediately call for mourners, and you must go into the assembly and exhort in every direction, and I will manage the altar. But if I fail to strike fire, you must preach; and if you strike fire, call the mourners and manage the altar. I will go through the congregation and exhort with all the power God gives me."[78]

Cartwright came to the point of believing that parents who hindered their children in going to the altar at the invitation were actually hindering the salvation of their children.

The Kentucky Revival Comes East

The camp meeting and its associated doctrines and practices quickly spread east under the promotion of the Methodists. Western evangelists came east and carried the developments of the Kentucky revival with them. By 1807, the Methodist camp meeting had reached the Chesapeake Bay region, complete with altar calls and exhorters. (Other elements of the Western revival, such as the mourner's bench, had reached England by 1807).[79] Joshua Thomas, who later became a Methodist exhorter on the lower Delmarva peninsula (which includes Maryland and Virginia east of the Chesapeake Bay as well as the entire state of Delaware) and on the islands in the lower Chesapeake Bay, describes the Pungoteague, Virginia Camp Meeting of 1807.[80] In the description, we can see the similarities between the earlier Western meetings and the later Eastern ones.

> "There were a great many tents in a circle round, and seats for people to sit on. There was a place built up with boards for the preacher to stand when he preached...Pretty soon they had preaching, and the most singular looking man I ever saw was the preacher that time. His name was Lorenzo Dow, and it was while he was preaching...(a) woman became happy and shouted aloud, when he said 'The Lord is here! He is with that sister,'..(she was) clapping her hands and saying 'Glory! Glory!' A good many people commenced crying and

[78] Ibid., page 186.

[79] Murray, page 226.

[80] During this period, the Delmarva Peninsula was known as the "Garden of Methodism".

some fell on the ground, others were talking to them, and telling them to look to Jesus, and *it was very soon a time of great confusion*." (italics added)[81]

Thomas speaks of the Methodist altar call and mourner bench already in wide use by the Methodists in the East at this time. He also says many were falling down and there was much crying out in the meetings. "On Sunday morning there was a great meeting and many professed to be born from above. They shouted all over the ground *and many fell and lay as dead on the earth*; when they recovered, they to praise God wonderfully."(italics added)[82]

Eastern Reaction to the Western Revival

News began reaching the Eastern churches about the Western revival. There was initial rejoicing that such a power and visitation had come to the frontier, but this quickly changed to concern as news of the excesses and new inventions broke. Eastern preachers at once saw that much of what was happening in the West was questionable at best. They began to fear the extremism that had marred the First Awakening under the hand of James Davenport. Based on this determination not to suffer a new generation of Davenports to arise and based on their holy jealousy for pure revivals, many of the Eastern preachers warned against the errors filtering east.

Democracy and Revivalism

The American Revolution and the establishment of American democracy may have provided the cradle for such errors to spawn. A very limited democracy had been created in 1787 with the passage of the Constitution.

American democracy really came to maturity during the presidency of Andrew Jackson during the 1830s.[83] This relationship with the advent of Finney and the rejection of theological orthodoxy is no accident. Democracy, Democrats, Andrew Jackson, Charles Finney and revivalism are all related. And it was the development of this democracy that the Founding Fathers feared so much. By the 1820s, their nightmare had come true, as populist democracy had seized American culture and the American church.

Democracy is defined as a political philosophy of majority rule, the dictatorship of the 51%. We suffer from this today in our current age of "poll-driven politics". Whatever the majority says is deemed to be correct. It soon made its way into society and into the churches. The authority of the individual was stressed along with the belief that the majority was always right. This was always more popular on the frontier than in New England or in the cities. Populism became the cane rod of all things, including theology. If the people (or better yet, the "mob") accepted something, then it became right. This led to a rejection of an educated ministry on the frontier. In the religion of Democracy (and a religion it is), every man has a right to pass judgment on anything himself and he

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[81] Adam Wallace, *The Parson of the Islands: The Life and Times of the Rev. Joshua Thomas*. Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1861, page 77.

[82] Ibid., pages 87-88.

[83] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality*. Front Royal VA: Christendom Press, 1952, 1993, page 7.

is not accountable to anyone. The individual must be accommodated. Uneducated people then began to challenge the theologian. The divine was no longer needed as the people and the exhorters, who were popular among the people, were now in charge of determining orthodoxy and orthopraxy.[84]

While many of such people thought that they were merely fulfilling the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, they were in reality being controlled by demagogues who knew how to manipulate public opinion. Emotions that have been stoked to fever pitch by revival were especially easy to manipulate. If orthodoxy and the Old Guard intended to stand in the way of "the people" then "the people" had every right to turn them out of positions of spiritual authority.

This attitude in the churches was a reflection of America in the early 19th century. Methodism became so popular and grew so rapidly because it accommodated this new mood where tradition and the learning of the past was discarded for the "new." The Methodists criticized the past with its theology and creeds as being beyond the common man's understanding. Their appeal to the "simple Bible", shorn of its theological difficulties, made the old traditional doctrinal preaching look unnecessary. James McGready, who rejected the shift brought about by the Kentucky revival, summed up the spirit of the day: "Feeling, not thinking became the rule for too many professing Christians."[85]

We have already mentioned President Andrew Jackson as one of the men responsible for the growth of revivalism. Jackson had no direct theological bearing upon it but his presidency created a favorable political and social climate for the new orthodoxy to grow. Jackson and his Democrats were the political and social liberals and progressives of that day (1830s), just as they are today. Jacksonian Democracy was openly hostile to orthodoxy Christianity because it was seen as part of the old, aristocratic system which tended to keep people in bondage to priestcraft.

Jackson and his administration were continually charged with being antireligious or atheistic, and rightly so, for they were.[86] (Many of the professed agnostics and atheists of the day were active supporters of Jacksonian Democracy.)[87]

Jackson himself was no friend to Biblical Christianity. His presidency took an official "hands-off" approach to religion, invoking the mythical "separation of church and state" philosophy. But despite the official neutrality from Jackson, his friends and fellows saw their chance to dismantle as much of the old order in America as possible.[88] They took the hammer to every social and political institution that had been erected since colonial days. Religion was also attacked, as free thought, agnosticism and atheism now became fashionable. Men like Tom Paine (whom Jackson admired) were hailed as Democratic heroes. This attitude of political atheism was warned about in the *American Monthly Magazine*: "Incorporating itself with national politics, in order to acquire favor

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[84] America was never a true "democracy" but rather has always been a constitutional republic, but the American form of government has been weakening steadily into more of a democracy since 1865 and the defeat of the limited government of the Confederate states.

[85] Murray, page 189.

[86] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson*. New York: Book Find Club, 1945, page 353.

[87] Ibid., page 356.

[88] Does this not sound like the current (as of this writing0 Obama Administration with their slogan of "Hope and Change?" There is no new thing under the sun when it comes to political slogans.

among the populace, it (atheism) marches under the banner of political reform...It declares a war of extermination upon the established institutions of religion and government. It dominates all religion priestcraft, all property a monopoly, and all jurisprudence an organized fraud upon the liberties of mankind."[89]

Charles Finney was part of this revolution. Finney was certainly not an atheist, but he was just as determined to destroy the old orthodoxy as the Jacksonian Democrat was determined to overhaul politics. It would be better to say that Finney was caught up in the tide of Jacksonian Democracy. The Jacksonian Democrats made it fashionable to attack the established orthodoxy. Finney was able to get away with his assault on orthodoxy because it was socially acceptable to do so during the Jackson administration. He might not fared as well in another age.

Jackson was the first "frontier" president and was hailed by the Westerners as their hero. He would go to Washington and demolish the old order of the Eastern Establishment. "The People" have their voice now, who set the tone for a revolution in American society. Revivalism would not have made any progress unless the right social and political atmosphere had been first established. The "Democratic Revolution" under Jackson, with its open desire to tear down that which was old and erect that which the people desired was exactly what revivalism needed. This brand of democracy was called "a branch of atheism"[90] and for good reason. The people were being used by the atheists to destroy the old American order, all under the guise of public opinion. The Democrats would constantly attack the clergy of indulging in priestcraft. If the Democrats, which professed to represent the "common people" of America (as they still do today), attacked the old order of the clergy, then what message would that send to those people, especially those in the West, about an organized and educated ministry? If the President and Congress rejected the old clergy, then the common people could as well. Revivalism was the outlet to vent those frustrations.

The progress and influence of democracy in a country can be described as followed: "There is a mass rebellion against the elites, the deification of youth, the ever mounting expropriation of the well-to-do until they begin to defend themselves, whereupon the masses select a "leader" whose task it is to protect "the people"; we see the bodyguards paid by the demagogue, the flight of the wealthy and of the intellectuals, the rejection of democracy by the desperate upper classes as a result of this development, the evolution from "protection" to tyranny, the spoliation of the temples, the militarization of the masses, the recruiting of criminals into the police force, the provocation of military conflicts in order to impose emergency measures at home and thus a stricter national discipline, finally purges and a mounting wave of corruption."[91]

This speaks well of the attitude of revivalism towards traditional orthodoxy. It hated the theologians and divines of ages before. It detested the intellectual

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[89] Ibid., page 351.

[90] Ibid., page 353. If 51% of the American people were to agree to banish Christianity and make America a secular state, what could you say about it if you believed in democracy? How could you oppose it?

[91] Kuehnelt-Leddihn, pages 12-13. I am aware that this author was a Roman Catholic, but his analysis is still accurate, in my opinion. Proof of this is that we see these exact conditions in the United States today as we degenerate from Constitutional Republic to democracy to dictatorship.

achievements of the "clergy". It chose the young exhorters with none of the vices of training, education or divinity to be its champion. The mission of the exhorters and young evangelists was to uproot as much of the old theology and divinity as possible. It did so with the full blessing of a changing society. When the defenders of the old order tried to defend themselves, they were vilified all the further for hindering progress.

All this demonstrates how democracy can be the enemy of orthodox Christianity. Those who put public opinion above the Bible cannot be trusted to protect or promote religious liberty or orthodoxy. Christianity thrived under monarchy and popery. Later, it grew under communism. But Christianity has suffered under democracy as under no other political system. American Christianity thrived in the colonial period and during the first 50 years of the American Republic. But as soon as Andrew Jackson, with his populist Democracy, gained power, the attacks upon the tried-and-true doctrines and practices delivered orthodoxy a head wound from which it has yet to fully recover. Satan has no more powerful weapon against the truth than "public opinion" and "the People."[92]

Blame Thomas Jefferson, Too

The anti-institutional philosophies of Thomas Jefferson also cooperated with Jacksonian Democracy to undermine the established order in the churches during the Awakening. His Republicanism and support of the ideals of the French Revolution laid a foundation of distrust of any and all traditional and "elitist" institutions, and that included the Church. Jefferson's hatred of John Calvin is well-documented and one reason for that hatred is that Jefferson saw Calvinism and Calvinistic churches as "stifling" the free expressions of the soul of man in areas of religious and philosophical inquiry.[93] It was seen as too rigid, too dogmatic, too inflexible and too controlling by the revivalists and that the Calvinistic system would be a hindrance to the current revival.[94] Revivalist preaching was generally optimistic in its views on soteriology (as would be promoted by Charles Finney, that conversion was nothing more than an act of the will) and this also went contrary to standard Calvinistic teachings on the total depravity of man. If man was so depraved and if he had to be regenerated before he could believe, the entire revivalist evangelistic preaching style would be undermined.

Calvinism was also seen as too controlling and this also went contrary to the absolute refusal of revivalists to be controlled by anyone. If God had called them, then no institution, secular or sacred, had any claim over them and could assert no control over their activities. Traditional churches (Calvinist and otherwise) usually insisted on some form of ecclesiastical order and control over their ministers to ensure orthodoxy and orthopraxy, but the revivalist preachers would have none of it.

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[92] The Church of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 was a "people's church" and it was severely criticized by the Lord. Notice it is not called "The Church at Laodicea", the formula used to identify the other six churches of Revelation 2 and 3, but it is called the "Church of the Laodiceans" as if it belonged to them and not to the Lord. Further remarks are in my *Pilgrim Way Commentary on Revelation*, which can be downloaded for free at www.pilgrimway.org.

[93] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Yale University Press, 1989, pages 170-176.

[94] Despite the fact the First Awakening and the early years of the Second Awakening were dominated by Calvinists.

Jefferson envisioned a nation that would not be dominated by the elites as was done in Europe. He desired a nation where the common man would not have to battle the upper classes to have his say and live his life and this vision was transferred into the spiritual realm by the revivalists. Uneducated and unlettered exhorters and preachers would level the ecclesiastical playing field. This also encouraged an outright rejection of any and all traditional and historical doctrines that were deemed to be "anti-revival" and these men did not fear to talk against the "traditions of the elders". They waxed very bold against any form of "ecclesiastical tyranny and control" over the Spirit of God and the revival.

One prong of the revivalist assault on Calvinism was in reality an attack upon any form of systematized theology. Calvinism was simply a scapegoat as the true target was any form of organized theology and any theological preacher. A heavy emphasis on theology was seen to be detrimental to evangelism and revival.[95] The common people had no head for such doctrines.[96] Emotional, hysterical preaching with lots of stories and gyrations was seen as the superior means of converting souls and that manner of evangelistic preaching was promoted.[97]

In summation, the anti-clericalism of Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution and the popular democracy of Andrew Jackson were both well-suited to the revivalists and the New Evangelicalism where the desire and goal was to destroy any and all ecclesiastical institutions, tear down the elites and to elevate the "common man".

Splits and Sects in the West

The influence of the younger men in the Kentucky camp meetings led to a serious split among Presbyterians. The younger men anointed themselves with something of an air of holy superiority and wasted little time in denouncing those who did not see the light. The depth of the false theology and orthopraxy coupled with the lack of ministerial training of the new leaders allowed several groups to split from parent organizations and sects to develop. The Presbyterians divided with the new group styling themselves as the Cumberland Presbyterians. This group was lead by Barton Stone in respond to a realization that the Presbyterian Calvinism and emphasis on sovereignty was out of balance. The Cumberland Presbyterians emphasized man's responsibility over the sovereignty of God.

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[95] While involved in a prison ministry in Elkton, Maryland in the late 1980s, our group was criticized by the Southern Baptist chaplain who commented our zeal but complained that we were preaching doctrine to the inmates and that they simply couldn't handle it. My response was "if we are preaching on salvation, isn't that doctrinal? What exactly are we supposed to be preaching?"

[96] My seminary teacher, O. Talmadge Spence, of Foundations Bible College of Dunn, North Carolina, was often confronted with people who said that while they appreciated his doctrinal preaching, they couldn't understand it, it was too deep for them and that they had no head for theology. Spence would respond "You may not have a head for theology, but do you have a heart for it?"

[97] Modern revivalists still promoted "loud, leather-lunged preaching" over quieter, doctrinal preaching. This is the basis for modern preaching that involves "preach the house down!" and "just let 'er rip!". One modern Baptist evangelists brags that when he preaches, he likes to "bring the BOOM to the room!"

Many of the Presbyterians who deviated from the orthodoxy and discipline of their synod later drifted off into grosser forms of error. One of them became a Quaker and others wound up in the Disciples of Christ. Others became Shakers."[98]

The "Church of Christ" sect was formed under Alexander Campbell. It was a split off the Baptists over the issue of baptism and baptismal regeneration. What is important regarding the "Campbellites" is that they were the forerunners of several schismatic groups who all claimed to be a restoration of "First Century Christianity."[99] All creeds and statements of faith (most of them dating from the Reformation) were rejected. Kentucky produced a desire to return to apostolic simplicity in worship and the theme was taken up by the sects as a justification for their existence. This also included the Cumberland Presbyterians and the Marshallites. Mormons and Shakers were similar, but they merely claimed to be the custodians of such lost truth rather than reviving it.

The Methodists were untouched by division in Kentucky, mainly because nearly all of them supported the radicalism of the young preachers. Methodism did not have the strong intellectual history that the Presbyterians

The chaos that the Western Revival had degenerated into can be expressed by Philip Schaff, who remarked "Every theological vagabond and peddler may drive here his bungling trade."[100]

Now we will not deny that revival did come to the West for it certainly did. But we note how that even revival can cure error, nor is it a safeguard against all manner of evils. In the East, a well-trained leadership weeded out the excesses early and promoted orthodoxy. Thus, the Eastern revival remained pure and strong until Finney began his ministry. The West enjoyed a pure revival for only a brief time before it was corrupted. If the frontier had enjoyed a trained clergy, the errors would have been kept to a minimum.

Summation

This shift caused by the Western revival brought about a corresponding shift in the theology of revival. If camp meetings and altar calls could produce the same number of "converts" as revivals, what was the difference between them? Could a revival ritual replace a real revival? The Methodists and their supporters believed so. After all, God had set His seal on their work with a multitude of conversions. To question the results bordered on blasphemy. The seemingly miraculous new revival techniques were spread across the land with apostolic zeal. Revivalism had thus been born. It would be Finney who would legitimize it in New England, where it would meet its fiercest opposition.

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[98] Murray, page 170.

[99] This is impossible since we cannot reproduce the conditions of the first century which made the apostolic church possible. You will sometimes hear Pentecostal groups claim "We do everything just like they did in the bok of Acts!" Does that including people dropping dead for lying to the Holy Spirit, as happened in Acts 5?

[100] Cited in Murray, page 174.

Chapter 6: The Revival Ministry of Ashael Nettleton

The ministry of Ashael Nettleton is all but unknown in modern American church history. This is a crime of omission for the name and ministry of evangelist Ashael Nettleton ought to be regarded in the same manner as the names of Whitefield, Moody, Torrey or Sunday. He is perhaps the most important evangelist of the Second Awakening. Charles Finney is more widely known but Nettleton is without a doubt the more scriptural. He was definitely of the Old School, a Puritan born out of time, who struggled in vain to preserve the old, time-honored orthodoxy of the Puritans, Whitefield, Edwards and the First Awakening against the onslaught of Charles Finney and the Kentucky revivals. In the next chapter we will consider the ministry of Charles Finney. That chapter will be much longer than this one for the simple reason that there is much more material on Finney. His books have never gone out of print while material on Nettleton is often difficult to come by.

Early Life and Education at Yale

Nettleton was born on April 21, 1783 in North Killingworth, Connecticut. He was saved as a result of the 1801 revival at Killingworth, Connecticut under Josiah Andrews. Nettleton entered Yale in 1805 and was much influenced by the godly president Timothy Dwight. Dwight prophesied that Nettleton would be one of the most useful men this country has ever seen.[101]

Nettleton always had a strong desire for foreign missions. Along with Samuel Mills, Nettleton was one of the first Americans to desire to be a foreign missionary, only to be denied such a ministry. Nettleton very well could have been one of the Haystack Group, which launched the American foreign missions movement. His early success in evangelistic work and later illnesses prevented him from following up on his missionary desires.

A revival came to Yale in 1807-8 and Nettleton was much affected by it. He was already saved so he spent much of his time counseling with fellow-students who were under conviction. It was this practical field work that would influence his later manner of dealing with sinners who came under conviction in later revivals that God sent under his ministry.

Evangelistic Ministry

After his graduation and ordination, Nettleton started evangelistic work. Since he was a missionary at heart, he refused to consider any calls to a settled pastoral ministry but sought out an itinerant one. Nettleton looked upon the ministry of an evangelist as a good training ground for a prospective missionary. He was so successful in his evangelistic ministry that he was urged to delay his missionary ambitions. Later evangelistic success and a bout of typhoid fever sealed his fate- he would not go to the foreign mission field. He had to surrender to stay home.

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[101] Tyler and Bonar, page 41.

Nettleton deliberately sought wilderness areas in which to work, so he went to eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island. This area had once been spiritually prosperous in the early days of the First Awakening but had since been hurt by fanatical sects led by James Davenport. Davenport and his followers had destroyed scores of churches throughout this area with their errors. In most of these towns, religion was very low and the churches cold, desolate and divided. Many of them did not have a pastor.[102]

Nettleton was something of a sensation due to his early success. He was determined to work with local pastors in his meetings, which was something of a new concept. Nettleton determined to avoid one of the problems in the First Awakening in which some evangelists ran roughshod over the established pastors. His results were nothing short of amazing. In nearly every town he preached, God visited the area with a spiritual awakening. Starting in the fall of 1812 until 1833, Nettleton saw no fewer than 60 individual episodes of local church revivals. Three hundred were saved at Salisbury, Connecticut in the winter of 1816. When Nettleton had arrived at the church, there was no pastor and only 17 male members. Seventy were saved in Torrington, Connecticut.

Seventy-one people were saved in Waterbury, Connecticut and 118 people joined the church. Eighty-four people were added to the church in Upper Middleton, Connecticut in the fall of 1817. The church at Ashford, Connecticut saw 82 people join as a result of Nettleton's ministry. Fifty-nine people joined at Eastford, Connecticut as well as at Bolton, Connecticut, where most of the new members were young people.

Nettleton preached to 1,400 people at Malta, New York in the summer of 1819. One hundred and three were saved at Stillwater, New York and 118 were converted at Ballston, New York. One hundred and fifty came to Christ at Galway, New York and 50 more at Amsterdam, New York. Two hundred sinners openly wept at one service in 1819 at Saratoga Springs, New York. Two hundred more were saved in the fall of 1824 during a preaching tour of Eastern Connecticut. Seventy-two people were born again at Jamaica, New York in 1826.

Nettleton's Preaching

Nettleton dealt very extensively and very doctrinally. Nettleton preached to the conscience and not to the passions. Because of this, Nettleton's revivals were said to be purer and stronger than even George Whitefield's, with less fanaticism and a smaller proportion of temporary converts. In three words, Nettleton's mode of ministry can be referred to by "thoroughness, caution and discrimination."

Nettleton was of the "Old School" of Jonathan Edwards in his revival theology. His meetings and ministry reveal many similarities with the men who preached during the First Awakening. His meetings were marked by great solemnity and order. There was no wildfire or emotional excesses. Nettleton deliberately discouraged such displays and outbursts. There was a deep and clear conviction of sin on the part of the hearers, resulting in very strong conversions. The churches he ministered in were not divided but strengthened. Orthodoxy was elevated, and the fruit was permanent.

[102] This is still a spiritually desolate area.

Nettleton was not a fiery and emotional preacher. He was rationalistic and quiet, but very forceful. Nettleton was never graceful as a preacher, but his plain, outspoken and serious ministry gripped the hearts and minds of the hearer. His hearers tended to forget about the speaker and become engrossed in the message. He was a preacher, not an entertainer.

Nettleton was very conservative yet Biblical in his "methods" during his meetings. He viewed any "new methods", especially those of Charles Finney, with suspicion. After all, these "old methods" which he followed had worked a century earlier. God had not changed, and the need had not changed, so why change the philosophy and method? Nettleton insisted that all human means are utterly powerless unless made effectual by the agency of the Holy Spirit. When God sent revival, it was due to human agency but rather upon divine sovereignty.

Bennett Tyler, Nettleton's biographer, describes his style and substance of preaching.

> "His revival topics were systematically and admirably arranged...A full believer in the total depravity of the human heart (which at once set him at variance with Finney, who rejected the doctrine, believing that men sinned because of their misuse of the will rather than any inherent sin nature) he arraigned sinners as rebels against God and made the threatenings of the law thunder in their ears as but few preachers have the power to do. With him, acting as an ambassador of Christ, there was no such thing as compromise. The rebels must throw down their arms and submit unconditionally or he would give them no hope of pardon. Hundreds, if not thousands, can witness what a terrible dissector he was of the joints and the marrow...He was sure to strip them of all their vain excuses and deliver them over to their consciences to be dealt with according to law and justice. He preached what were called the hard doctrines with great plainness, discrimination and power...The passions he never addressed nor were his discourses at all calculated to excite them. Any outbreak of mere animal feeling he was always afraid of, as tending to warp the judgment and beget false hopes."[103]

To what did Nettleton attribute his success? His talent or preaching or methods? No, but rather "Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight". This was the only answer he was disposed to give. He attributed none of the glory to himself nor his "methods." He never held the idea to churches that they could "get up a revival" or that they could have a revival at any time. It depends on the sovereign interposition of God.

Nettleton never adopted the anxious seat nor any of its kindred measures that Finney promoted. He never requested persons to rise in the assembly to be prayed for, or to signify that they had given their hearts to God. He never encouraged women to pray and exhort. He did not encourage loud praying, nor of young converts to take charge of meetings. He did not denounce cold ministers or professors who opposed him. He considered such measures to mar the purity of revivals and to promote fanaticism and delusion.

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[103] Ibid., pages 376-7.

Nettleton taught that doctrine was very important to revivals. The purity of revivals depended greatly on the faithfulness with which the doctrines of the Cross are preached. When the standard of orthodoxy is lowered, the danger of delusion is increased, and the character of revivals is injured. He was aware that popular excitements without doctrinal instruction (or with false doctrinal instruction) may be called revivals and that zeal without knowledge may glory in the multiplication of its converts. But such excitements are no blessing to the Church. Purity of doctrine determined the purity of a revival. Thus, there was an urgent need for solid and qualified teachers to teach the new converts and to make sure that the doctrine was not corrupted by the revival.

His personal work with sinners took a threefold approach:

1. Secure the confidence of the individual.
2. Lead him gradually to a consideration of the importance of religion in general.
3. Then to a consideration of his own spiritual state.

Nettleton also made use of home visitation, personal conferences and inquiry meetings and much follow-up instruction to new converts.

After conversion, Nettleton did not have too much contact with the convert. He believed that a great deal of conversation had a tendency to confuse the mind and to dissipate, rather than to deepen religious impressions. He would converse with them long enough to keep the subject before their minds and to correct any false notions which they might have imbibed. He was desirous that they should be much alone, engaged in reading the Scriptures, serious meditation and prayer. He did take great pains to instruct young converts in the fundamental principles of Christianity. Special instructional meetings were held for such purposes.

Nettleton and The Pastor

Unlike many evangelists of his day and even of the present hour, Nettleton never set himself up as a rival to a pastor. He sought to be a "pastor's friend", an aid and helper to churches. He saw himself as an assistant to settled pastors. He never elevated himself above the pastoral office. Nettleton learned that evangelists are in danger of mistaking false for true zeal and of being betrayed into great indiscretions. The errors of the evangelist may cause many evils which will extend through many generations. Nettleton became deeply impressed with the importance of a settled, pastoral ministry. Without it, people remain unsettled and are liable to fanaticism. Because of Davenport's ministry and influence, many people had violent prejudices against settled pastors and all regular ecclesiastical organizations. But Nettleton saw them as necessary to preserving the purity of revival and its fruits. An evangelist may be used to kindle such a work of God, but it remains to the pastor to supervise it. Nettleton was afraid to kindle fires where there was not some spiritual watchman near to guard and watch against wildness. Nettleton admitted that some were saved by wildfire, but more harm was done than good.

Nettleton developed great respect for the pastoral office. He was convinced that without a settled ministry, there could be no rational prospect of building up the

churches or of enjoying genuine revivals of religion. Evangelists are not to weaken pastors but to strengthen them and this was his intent in every town he preached.

Nettleton did possess high standards for ministers and especially pastors. This was no doubt a carryover from his ministerial training at Yale and his education under Timothy Dwight. Nettleton had four requirements for ministers: piety, talents or gifts, scholarship and discretion.

Nettleton submitted himself to the authority of the pastors. He considered the pastor to be the primary spiritual advisor of his immediate area and would not enter such an area without the invitation and support of the pastor. What a world of difference between Nettleton and the Finneyite evangelist John R. Rice! Everything Nettleton promoted in terms of the relationship between pastor and evangelist and the subordination of the evangelist to the pastor Rice rejected. As did Finney and the exhorters, Rice promoted the evangelist over the pastor. Rice continually maintained that the office of evangelist was more important than the pastorate because the evangelist supposedly "wins more souls" than the pastor.[104] Nettleton, as the orthodox evangelists before him, did not set himself up in competition with pastors. The evangelists who came after him, in the mold of the exhorters, Finney and later Rice, sought to push aside the old, stodgy pastors who were stuck in their ways. They must yield to the new generation of up-and-coming revivalist evangelists who could "bring home the bacon" and produce the revivals. This attitude weakened local churches as the dignity of the pastorate was diminished.

Controversy With Charles Finney

The most notable and documented period of Nettleton's ministry occurred in the winter of 1826-7 when he made an open confrontation with Charles Finney over his theology and New Methods of evangelism. We will discuss this controversy in more detail in the next chapter.

The reason why Nettleton and others of a similar heart gave Finney such stiff opposition was because he feared a revival of the fanaticism of Davenport. The reports reaching Nettleton regarding Finney's work greatly concerned Nettleton because he immediately understood that Finney was relying on manmade methods to stimulate revival rather than relying on the power of God. Finney also had a personality and attitude very similar to Davenport's in that both men were not reluctant to openly denounce impenitent sinners and their own opponents in the most vulgar terms. Nettleton had seen the results of such a ministry during his early evangelistic tour of Eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island, which had been destroyed by Davenport's influence. He saw what such a ministry did to churches and he was determined to do all in his power to prevent it from happening again. Nettleton was not alone in this determination. The majority of orthodox New England pastors shared in Nettleton's concern, but it was Nettleton who acted as the main point man against Finney.

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[104] See John R. Rice, *The Evangelist*. Murfreesboro TN: Sword of the Lord, pages 14-51 for Rice's teaching on this. This is spiritual pragmatism, that God blesses what works and blesses the man who can get results, regardless of the methods used.

Some biographers and historians have attempted to suggest that the true motivation behind Nettleton's opposition to Finney was jealousy. Nettleton had been the most well-known evangelist prior to 1825 but had since been superseded by Finney. Keith Hardman, in his biography of Finney, puts forth this theory, as did Finney himself. Yet the testimonials of Nettleton given by those who knew him (such as Bennett Tyler) rebuke such a notion. Nettleton was not jealous at having been eclipsed by a younger man but was concerned at the younger man's manner and method. We shall also discuss this in more detail in the next chapter. Nettleton clearly said that his motivation of entering into the controversy with Finney was because "I learned that they had adopted and defended measures which I have ever regarded as exceedingly calamitous to the cause of revivals."[105]

Bennett Tyler reproduces a letter that Nettleton wrote to a Mr. Aiken after his second meeting with Finney. To get Nettleton's true position of the danger of Finney's methods, we will reproduce a portion of it below. It is dated January 13, 1827.

> "Seven years ago, about two thousand souls were hopefully born into the kingdom in this vicinity (Troy, New York)...with comparative stillness. But the times have altered. The kingdom of God now cometh with great observation...There is doubtless a work of grace in Troy. Many sinners have hopefully been born into the kingdom, but it has been at an awful expense. Many of our first ministers have visited the place, to witness for themselves...Some of them have heard a number of sermons. After giving credit for preaching much truth, they uniformly say 'I never heard the names of God used with such irreverence.'...The church in Troy is greatly divided...some are beginning to attend worship by themselves. But the worst is not told. The spirit of denunciation which has grown out of the mode of conducting the revivals at the west, is truly alarming. We do not call into question the genuineness of those revivals, or the purity of the motives of those who have been the most active in them. You, doubtless, are reaping and rejoicing in their happy fruit. But he evils to which I allude are felt by the churches abroad; members of which have gone out to catch the spirit, and have returned, some grieved, others soured, and denouncing ministers, colleges and theological seminaries...Some ministers and professors of religion have been to Troy from the surrounding region on purpose to catch the flame and have returned home saying 'We do not want such a revival as they have in Troy.' The evil is running in all directions. A number of churches have experienced a revival of anger, wrath, malice, envy and evil speaking (without the knowledge of a single conversion) merely in consequence of a desperate attempt to introduce these new measures. Those ministers and Christians who have heretofore been most and longest acquainted with revivals are the most alarmed at the spirit which has grown out of revivals in the west. This spirit has, no doubt, greatly deteriorated by transportation...The friends of brother Finney are certainly doing him are certainly doing him and the cause of Christ great mischief. They seem more anxious to convert ministers and Christians to their peculiarities than to

[105] Tyler and Bennett, page 355.

convert souls to Christ...*Brother Finney himself has been scarcely three years in the ministry*[106] *and has had no time to look at consequences. He has gone with all the zeal of a young convert without a friend to check or guide him*...He has gotten ministers to agree with him by 'crushing' or 'breaking them down'. The method by which he does it is creating a necessity, by getting a few individuals in a church to join him and then all those who will not go all lengths with him are denounced as enemies of revivals. Rather than have such a bad name, one and another falls in to defend him...Some men say 'I have been fairly skinned by the denunciations of these men and have ceased to oppose them to get rid of their noise."[107]

Several issues concerned Nettleton. First, he notices Finney's inexperience. In 1827, Finney had been in the ministry only for three years. Finney was being very dogmatic for a man of little experience. Nettleton never denies that Finney saw revival and that some good was being done, but at what cost? And what of this most unchristian attitude of vitriolic denunciations by Finney and his circle heaped upon those who would not fall into line with them?

Later Work

Nettleton's health broke in 1822 after a bout with typhoid fever. He never fully recovered, and his vigor also suffered. He was weaker physically but emerged stronger spiritually, his mind just as energetic.

Nettleton was also something of a musician who desired to get good music into the churches. He edited two hymnals, *Village Hymns* and *Zion's Harp*. Both are full of classical hymns.[108]

In 1843, he helped form the Connecticut Pastoral Union in which opposed New Haven Theology (a moderation of New England Calvinism) and the ministry and doctrines of Charles Finney. He also was involved in the founding of the Theological Institute of Connecticut at East Windsor, which later moved to Hartford and was renamed Hartford Theological Seminary. He was offered a professorship but refused, preferring to occasionally lecture.

Testimonals

No one was better qualified to give counsel on the errors Finneyism or true revival than Ashael Nettleton. He was a true Edwardean evangelist. Francis Wayland, president of Brown University from 1827-1855 considered Nettleton to be one of the two best preachers of his generation. He was a solid doctrinal preacher.[109]

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[106] Finney had the training of a Bible College junior when he started his ministry.

[107] Ibid., pages 342-346, emphasis added.

[108] *Village Hymns* can be obtained today if you look hard enough. It is all text with no music. The meter of the hymns were given for singing. I recommend them.

[109] Porter, page 256

Samuel Shepherd called him "eminently a man of prayer."[110] It was also said of Nettleton that "neither Caesar nor Napoleon ever studied the art of war with greater assiduity than he did to the heavenly art of winning souls to Christ."[111]

An estimated 25,000 souls were saved under his ministry and at least 70 churches experienced revival.[112]

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[110] Ibid., page 257.

[111] Tyler and Bonar, page 376.

[112] Porter, page 262.

Chapter 7: The Ministry of Charles Finney I: Finney's Ministry

What is wrong with this statement?

> "When Charles Finney was converted and filled with the Holy Ghost the American churches were in a sickly state. Most churches were either Hyper-Calvinistic or Universalist...apathy prevailed."[113]

Or this?

> "One hundred years ago, God raised up a voice so cutting, that it penetrated the hardened hearts of sleeping churches. The Christians were shocked and angered by such piercing words. God was crushing the believers by the voice of Charles G. Finney and a tremendous revival swept over our land."[114]

The problem is that both statements are totally false! By the time Charles Finney began his ministry in the mid-1820s, America was still enjoying the benefits of the powerful revivals which rocked the country in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. Finney started his work late in the Second Great Awakening and almost missed it, getting in on about the last few years of it. The majority of American churches were in no way hyper-Calvinistic[115] nor Universalist nor apathetic. Most modern revivalist historians and Finney apologists ignore the powerful ministries of Nettleton, Griffin, Payson and Dwight. Charles Finney has been raised to the level of a hero and a personality cult has been erected around him.

We must turn our attention to the man who was in reality responsible for the destruction of the foundation that had been set by the First Awakening and the leaders of the Second Awakening in the East. This man is Charles Grandison Finney. While he is not wholly responsible for developing what would later be known as the "New Measures", he is responsible for promoting and popularizing them in the East.

Finney and his influence must be studied and analyzed because he is totally almost universally lauded as the man who sparked and fueled the Second Awakening, which is clearly untrue. John R. Rice, founder of the *Sword of the Lord* and a devotee of Finney, called him "the greatest soulwinner in the 19th century" after Moody."[116] Louis Gifford Parkhurst, writing in Jerry Falwell's *Fundamentalist Journal*, referred to Finney as "the greatest preacher and theologian since the days of the apostles."[117] Fred Barlow, writing in the *Biblical Evangelist*, said of Finney:

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[113] Homer Duncan, cited in Murray*, Revival and Revivalism*, page 298. Duncan also displays the usual misunderstanding of what "hyper-Calvinism" is.

[114] Jack Chick, *The Last Call: A Revival Handbook*. Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1978, page 3.

[115] Hyper-calvinism is the teaching that we have no responsibility or duty to preach the gospel to the lost. The Gospel Standard Baptists of England are of this thought as they oppose "duty faith" as they call it. Primitive Baptists are also in this group. It does not reflect standard, "mainline" Calvinistic teachings on evangelism.

[116] John R Rice, *The Power of Pentecost*. Murfreesboro TN: Sword of the Lord, 1949, page 234. How does he qualify that remark?

[117] Louis Gifford Parkhurst, "Charles Grandison Finney: Preached For A Verdict." Fundamentalist Journal, June, 1984, page 41. This is just a cringe statement of a man wrapped up in a personality cult.

"When you read the messages and the ministry of Charles Finney, you get the strange sensation that you are reading pages right out of the Acts of the Apostles...No American evangelist in his ministry ever more paralleled the apostolic preaching, passion and power of a Simon Peter or an Apostle Paul as did Finney."[118]

Such claims must be searched out and examined. After a careful reading of Finney, of his own works and biographies of him, I must reject the high praise heaped on Finney. Instead, I would go so far as to charge Charles Finney of marring the Second Awakening and of being the first true New Evangelical.[119] These claims will be discussed in this and following chapters.

Was Finney the greatest soulwinner of the 19th century? He is responsible for many professed conversions, yes, yet his evangelism is inferior to that of the preachers who ministered early in the Second Awakening, including Nettleton. Was he the greatest theologian since the days of the apostles as Parkhurst claims? Certainly not. Other men far surpassed Finney in terms of theology.

Promoters of Finney simply refuse to deal with Finney's doctrinal problems, including his Pelagianism and teaching of entire perfection.

Early Life and Ministry

Charles Finney was born in 1792 at Warren, Connecticut. This was an exciting period in the history of Connecticut as it was enjoying occasional but powerful revivals. It was of these years that Edward Dorr Griffin could write "We saw a continued succession of heavenly sprinklings at New Salem, Farmington, Middlebury and New Hartford...until 1799. I could stand at my door in New Hartford and number fifty or sixty contiguous congregations laid down in one field of divine wonders, and as many more in different parts of New England."[120]

Finney was a lawyer known for his high intelligence and sharp legal mind.[121] After his conversion, he felt that he should go and plead the cause of the Lord before sinners and thus abandoned his law practice. In 1821, Finney joined the Presbyterian church pastored by George Gale in Adams, New York. While there is no doubt that his law training had afforded him a fine education and mental discipline, he suffered from a near total lack of theological preparation. He entered the ministry with little preparatory study. He had been saved only three years when he started his ministry. He thus had no more ministerial training than a Bible College junior and probably even less ministerial experience. Finney started as an assistant to his pastor in Adams and studied under him. Finney was licensed by his presbytery in 1823 and started missionary work in Jefferson County, New York. Finney went out with the zeal of a young convert but, as Nettleton observed, no friend or guide to check him.

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[118] Fred Barlow, "Charles Grandison Finney- Apostolic Evangelism". Biblical Evangelist, July 1967.

[119] Fundamentalists have always treated New Evangelicalism the same way a Calvinist treats an Arminian or as a Covenant Theologian treats a Dispensationalist. It is ironic them that Fundamentalist promoters of Finney are really promoting the first New Evangelical.

[120] Porter, pages 151-2.

[121] Lawyers make good preachers if they are fully submitted to the Holy Spirit and to the Scriptures.

Finney continued his frontier missionary work in upstate New York with noticeable results. In 1825, Gale convinced him to relocate into a more populated area. Finney then concentrated his ministry around Utica, New York. It was in this region that a revival broke out in 1825 and lasted into 1827. Finney cut his teeth in revival work during this time and was deeply influenced by the things he witnessed.

Finney's Rejection of Established Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

By 1826, Finney was beginning to reconsider the things he had been taught by Gale regarding revival and evangelism. Gale was an Old School Presbyterian who would have supported the doctrines and practices of the First Awakening. As a Presbyterian, Finney would have been taught the evangelistic philosophies that were accepted by the Puritans and the men of the First Awakening. Gale also held to these ideas. But Finney began to have doubts.

From the start, Finney had rejected what he called "the traditions of the elders" both in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Despite his lack of theological training, Finney felt qualified to totally reject the theology and teachings of some of the greatest minds in Church History. In 1835 Finney publicly conceded that he was preaching a "new theology of conversion" although he had begun to turn aside long before that. Nettleton had realized it much earlier.

Finney was preaching that conversion purely the result of the sinner's decision with little if any influence of the Holy Spirit. Finney had rejected any and all forms of Calvinism (including the moderate, evangelical type of the revivals) with its emphasis upon the converting work and power of the Holy Spirit. Under Finney, salvation became a simple exercise of the will. The Holy Spirit did not figure into the transaction. The inducing of that decision was the responsibility of the preacher aided by the Holy Spirit, then any measure that would bring the unconverted to the point of instant and absolute submission had to be good.[122]

Finney, as later revivalists, had an optimistic view of the condition of the natural man. Finney's saw the sin problem with man was in his will, not in his nature. Man is a sinner not because of an inherited sin nature from Adam but because the man had a problem with the will in that he was wrongly exercising it. He rejected the depravity and deadness of man in sin. Finney thought that if a man could be brought to “will to believe”, he would. Finney preached with no consideration of the sin nature of man. Man was not naturally at enmity with God through the fall and sin nature of Adam- he just has never exercised his will toward God. This is pure Pelagianism. Do the promoters of Finney realize they are promoting a heretic? Or do they overlook these heresies simply because of his numbers and results?

Finney did not pretend to teach a slightly modified form of old doctrine, although he did occasionally appeal to Jonathan Edwards to try to bolster his doctrinal position. He often tried to assert that men like Edwards would have supported his new measures.[123] In his *Memoirs*, page 48, Finney admits he repudiated all the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, including the vicarious nature of the atonement of

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[122] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 246.

[123] Albert Dod, "On Revivals of Religion" in *Essays, Theological and Miscellaneous Reprinted from the Princeton Review*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1847, page 138.

Jesus Christ in the interests of preaching revival: "These doctrines I could not receive. I could not receive my teacher's views on the subject of atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will or any of their kindred doctrines."[124] In the interest in preaching and promoting revival, Finney rejected any and all Bible doctrines he judged would hinder such work.

Finney's War on Orthodoxy

Unlike the Western-Revival Methodists who influenced him, Finney sought to rewrite doctrinal standards of the churches. The Methodists of the Western Revival never bothered themselves much with doctrine, but Finney was more intellectual, and he put much emphasis on theology- his brand of theology.

Wherever he went, Finney was eager to turn churches away from the old dogmas to his newer ones. Finney wrote "Wherever I found that any class of person were hidden behind these dogmas, I did not hesitate to demolish them to the best of my ability."[125] He waged a constant crusade to change these "old-fashioned" doctrinal standards. Not only was Finney an evangelist but also functioned as a missionary of his "New Divinity" of the New Haven Theology.

Finney thus rejected Calvinistic doctrines of the sovereignty of God in conversion, the total depravity of man in sin and the indwelling sin nature in man. To Finney, man was a sinner merely due to his wrong use of his will rather than any inherent sin nature. We was waging war on the Old Evangelicalism and anything that even hinted of tradition and clericalism.

Finney's New Methods

With a change in doctrine came a resulting change in method. Finney came to believe that revivals could be produced by following a set of rules. Finney maintained that it was the right and duty of ministers to adopt new measures for promoting revivals.[126] It was deemed impossible for God to bring about reformations but by these new measures.[127]

Finney's New Measures were directly inspired by the Methodists of the Western Revivals. Finney portrayed in his *Memoirs* that these new measures sprung on him suddenly as if under divine revelation but is clear they were adopted from, or at the very least, influenced by, the Western Methodists. Finney had praised the Methodists as practicing the best form of evangelism.[128] Finney was clearly in the group of the Kentucky revivalists and not of the more rational, traditional, Calvinistic and doctrinal New Englanders. Finney encouraged every type of Western-style emotionalism.[129]

We will first consider the revivalist methods he employed and why Nettleton opposed them.

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[124] Rick Miesel, "What We Need Is Revival?", Biblical Discernment Ministries Letter, March 1992, page 1.
[125] Charles Finney, *Charles Finney: An Autobiography*. Old Tappen NJ: Revell, 1876, 1908, page 46.
[126] Charles Finney, *Revival Lectures*. Grand Rapids: Revell, n.d, page 312.
[127] Dod, page 149.
[128] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 258.
[129] Ibid., page 242.

1. Praying for Sinners By Name

Nettleton gave his observation of the practice of mentioning sinners by name in public meetings:

> "The practice of praying for people by name, in the closet, and the social circle, has no doubt had a beneficial effect. But as it now exists in many places, it has become in the eye of the Christian community at large, an engine of public slander in its worst form. I should not dare, in this solemn manner, to arraign a fellow-sinner before a public assembly without his own particular request."[130]

It seems that this practice went beyond simply saying "pray for so-and-so that he would be saved." People were holding up these sinners before the community at large and requesting prayer for them in such a manner as to suggest that they were guilty of some heinous sin. It would be like saying "Pray for so-and-so that she would give up her prostitution" in a public meeting. Such prayers need to be made, but do we need to give a complete case history on the sinner? Do such prayers need to be made openly?

Openly naming sinners in prayer meetings was not practiced in the First Awakening nor in the early years of the Second. For example, Edward Payson of Portland Maine detailed how his prayer meetings were conducted:

> "Members of the church and others, if they think proper, present notes requesting prayers for the conversion of any friend or relative for whom they feel anxious. No names are mentioned. The notes are placed in a small box by the door, and afterwards handed to me to be read."[131]

2. Usage of Great Familiarity in Prayer

Finney was accused of being far too familiar with God in his public prayers. Nettleton described it as "this talking to God as a man talks to his neighbor...telling the Lord a long story about A. or B. and apparently with no other intent than to produce a kind of stage effect."[132] Nettleton observed with much regret at the rapid degeneration of the spirit of prayer under the hand of Finney. "That holy, humble, meek, modest, retiring form, sometimes called the Spirit of Prayer, and which I have ever regarded as the unfailing precursor of a revival of religion, has been dragged from her closet, and so rudely handled by some of her professed friends, that she has not only lost all her wonted loveliness, but is now stalking the streets in some places stark mad."[133]

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[130] Tyler and Bonar, page 351.
[131] Cummings, 1:251.
[132] Hardman, page 84.
[133] Tyler and Bonar, page 352.

3. Encouraged Women to Pray Aloud In Meetings

Nettleton commented on this practice: "Whoever introduces the practice of females praying in promiscuous assemblies, let the practice once become general, will ere long find, to his sorrow, that he has made an inlet to other innovations."[134]

While Finney did encourage women to pray aloud in his meetings, he did not allow or encourage women preachers. Yet the exhorters, as we have seen in chapter 5, certainly did. Many exhorters were women who anointed themselves with the same authority to preach and exhort as the men.

4. Use of the Anxious Seat

The anxious seat was usually a bench set in a public place (usually at the front of the church) where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, be made the subject of prayer and be conversed with individually. Finney admitted its design was philosophical, not theological.[135] We would today say it was psychological. When the sinner came forward, a few minutes would be spent in personal conversation in order to learn the state of mind of the individual in order to remove their difficulties. The goal was to get each of them to promise to give their hearts to God.[136]

Finney saw the anxious seat as vital to evangelism because it served to make conversions quick. Finney was too impatient for sinners to wrestle with conviction for days, weeks or even years as in the old days. He wanted instant conversions and instant results. If a man will not get saved at the anxious seat, Finney believed the Holy Spirit would forsake him there.[137] Thus Finney taught that a person must come to the anxious seat to be saved.[138] The anxious (or mourner's) bench came to be regarded as a veritable mercy-seat where grace is supposed to abound, as though the Spirit of God manifested His saving and sanctifying power there as nowhere else .[139] Finney defended the anxious seat because so many were being saved as a result of its use. It worked, or at least it seemed to produce results, therefore God must approve of it.[140] In Finney's system, the anxious seat was seen to fill the same need for a public testimony as baptism did in the early church.[141]

The mourner's bench also satisfied the evangelist's need to be able to demonstrate public results of his ministry and preaching. It was easy to count how many "came forward to get saved" and such figures could then be reported to demonstrate how effective and "Spirit-filled" the evangelist was. It was harder to do that if everyone was getting saved in their seats.

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[134] Ibid., page 348.
[135] Finney, *Revival Lectures*, page 303.
[136] Ibid., page 296.
[137] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 246.
[138] Dod, page 124.
[139] Porter, page 203.
[140] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 283.
[141] Dod, page 126.

There was much public opposition to the use of the anxious seat. Charles Spurgeon was concerned about the emphasis of stream-lining conversion into a speedy business. It was like getting people “saved” on an assembly line. He wrote "I am glad to see instantaneous conversions, but I am more glad when I see a thorough work of grace, a deep sense of sin and an effectual wounding by the law." He also observed that it is a motion of the heart and not a motion of the feet to come to Christ. Many came to Christ in body by going forward to the anxious seat but never came in heart .[142] Horatius Bonar remarked on usage of anxious seats to multiply conversions "Our whole anxiety is, not how shall we secure the glory of Jehovah but how shall we multiply conversions?”[143] There were fears that the anxious seat would be used to psychologically twist a sinner under conviction. The sinner is under conviction but is now forced to come forward where his condition is made known in public. This would force him into a position of making some sort of public profession. It scared many away from any profession because they did not want to be held up to ridicule.

5. Called on Converts to Stand in Meetings and Give Public Testimony That They Had Given Their Hearts To God

This was a forced public testimony that a newly converted sinner had accepted Christ. While public testimonials are necessary, they should not be forced, especially on men who had just been saved. It was believed that if a new convert was forced to make a quick public profession, it would prevent him from backsliding away from that profession since everyone in the meeting now knew about it. Thus peer-pressure was used to keep a new convert in line spiritually rather than depending upon the inward work of the Spirit in that person's heart.

This practice should also be considered a psychological aid to evangelism.

6. Protracted Meetings Designed to Wear A Congregation Down

These types of protracted meetings are now called evangelistic meetings or campaigns that might run for weeks. Their use was no doubt influenced by the Kentucky camp meetings of the early years of the Second Awakening. Finney said they were as old as the Bible. He claimed the Jewish festivals were nothing else but protracted meetings- their manner was different, but their design was the same. All denominations where religion prospered held them.[144] But he did admit that protracted meetings were not necessary for a revival.[145]

These meetings were designed to "wear a congregation down" in the hopes that it would result in a large number of conversions and revival. The evangelist would keep hammering at the congregation day after day with highly emotional preaching until he got the results he was after. It would never be admitted that perhaps the Lord had no intention of giving a revival to that area despite the best efforts of the evangelist. Yet in revivalism, the evangelist is under pressure

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[142] Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, pages 109,112.

[143] Ibid., page 117

[144] Finney, *Revival Lectures*, page 297.

[145] Ibid., page 302.

(sometimes very intense pressure, especially from other preachers) to produce results, so he would stay in the area until something did happen. If no revival resulted, the people were usually blamed. Some secret sin must have held the revival back. Yet a simple study of church history would have revealed that God sends revival in an unpredictable and sovereign manner and man's programs could not alter that fact.

7. Services Held At "Unseasonable Hours"

These were held to keep a congregation off balance. One problem that churches have is falling into ruts and getting into settled routines. The same old services with the same old songs and the same old preacher and the same old forms was seen as the problem. People can get lulled into a rut by a constant conformity of routine. Finney saw one way to get people out of ruts was to schedule meetings at abnormal times- weekdays, daytime services, morning services.

8. The Inquiry Room

This was a room that was set aside to give personal instruction and counseling to those who came forward during the invitation. It would be here, away from the hustle and bustle of the meeting, that the sinner would be directed to Jesus. The personal worker would do everything he could to help that person to Jesus.

There is certainly no sin in personal work, but the abuses of this practice are evident. High-pressure techniques to wring a profession out of the sinner were employed with regularity. Again, the pressure for conversions on the part of the preacher and personal worker were intense.

The question arises "How did the sinner get to Christ? Was it by means of inward conviction and drawing of the Holy Spirit or through a highly trained personal worker who knew which buttons to push to get a profession?" The inquiry room was looked upon with suspicion because it was believed that it employed Arminian methods by calling attention to human action rather than the divine. Men were then claiming to be saved because they went forward in the invitation and made some sort of profession in the inquiry room. These fears were summed up by Charles Spurgeon:

> "Go home alone trusting in Jesus. 'I should like to go to the enquiry-room.' I dare say you would, but we are not willing to pander to popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms, men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry-rooms turn out well."[146]

The Controversy With Nettleton

There could not be two strong yet opposing revival philosophies coexisting without an eventual confrontation. By the middle of the 1820s, there were two such competing theologies, embodied by Nettleton (the older, traditional view) and Finney (the new and more radical position).

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[146] Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, page 102.

Nettleton was the Old Evangelical, relying on evangelical Calvinism and Jonathan Edwards. Nettleton pointed to the theology of the Puritans and Edwards as well as the evangelism of Whitefield as the proper mode for any revival and soulwinning. Nettleton rejected the use of any man-made measures to try to help the Holy Spirit along in His work of revival and conversion. He also insisted that the Holy Spirit was the primary agent in conversion rather than the mere will of man "deciding" for God on its own. This clearly reflected the mainline orthodoxy up to about 1825.

Everything Nettleton held Finney rejected. Finney was a new man in a new age and the teachings and traditions of the First Awakening were no longer valid. This was a new age and the old methods simply would not work any longer. Finney had discovered and developed a better way. He had discovered the psychology of revivals and the proper means for promoting them. The Church could not simply stay back and wait for God to finally get around to sending much-needed revival. The need for evangelism was too great, as so many souls were dying and falling into hell. If God tarried, the Church must take these matters into their own hands. There was no revival because the Church did not understand the science of revivals. Properly instructed, the Church might be able to usher in the Millennium. Thus, a sanctified pragmatism was enjoined to use any and all means to bring men to quick conversions. Finney reduced revivals to nothing more than a formula to be followed that, if done correctly, would produce revivals every time.

The two philosophies came to a head in 1826 when Nettleton decided that Finney had gone too far in his excesses and New Measures and he requested a meeting with Finney to discuss it. Finney was preaching in Troy, New York while Nettleton was holding a meeting across the river in Albany in November 1826.[147] The meeting was set. Nettleton had called Finney's New Measures "exceedingly calamitous to the cause of revivals". Yet many ministers supported Finney.

Finney denied Nettleton ever tried to dissuade him from his new measures or to change his views. He also said Nettleton had no complaint with his doctrines, but with his new measures. Nettleton kept Finney "at arm's length" and was uneasy with him, not wanting to be seen in public with him. "At no time did Mr. Nettleton try to correct my views in relation to revivals."[148] Other sources, including Nettleton's own writings give a different picture. If Nettleton had no quarrel with Finney, then why this meeting? And why was Nettleton so uneasy concerning Finney? It seems Finney was misrepresenting Nettleton's concerns and try to spin the meeting to look like Nettleton either approved of his New Measures, or that Nettleton did not object to them. There was indeed a confrontation between the two men that was not resolved, despite Finney's claim to the contrary.

Finney responded to Nettleton's concerns about his measures by refusing to surrender them. Finney denounced Nettleton and like-minded men as "worldly" and with a heart as cold as an impenitent sinner. This became the favorite tactic of Finney and his followers by calling anyone who opposed them suffered from a "cold heart."[149] Finney charged Nettleton with opposing the revival, which was a lie since Nettleton was

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[147] Hardman saw a conspiracy by Nettleton in trying to see Finney, by "doing a little preaching in Albany" in trying to disguise the true reason why Nettleton was in the area on page 110 of his biography on Finney.

[148] Finney, Autobiography, page 203.

deeply involved in the revival before Finney ever began preaching. Nettleton opposed not the revivals but Finney's new methods and theology. Finney finished by accusing Nettleton of being in error and being misled.[150] Finney simply refused to entertain the notion that the great results he had seen under his ministry could have contained any error. How could such a great work of God be in error? And since God was using him in such a great way in seeing so many souls being converted, how could he be wrong?[151]

Nettleton and his supporters never questioned that Finney had seen revival.[152] They maintained the revivals would have been of a higher quality with Finney's new measures.[153]

Suggestions were voiced in 1826 and even to today that the true reason why Nettleton was so upset with Finney was not really due to the New Measures but rather to jealousy. Some writers, like Keith Hardman in his book *Charles Grandison Finney* on page 124, promote this view. This is drawn on letters of the time which accused Nettleton on "not being the man he once was", "having lost his mind" and "having his character sink."[154] Finney no doubt pushed this reasoning to deflect criticism of his doctrine and practice. Yet Nettleton's biographers, Iain Murray, Bennet Tyler and Andrew Bonar reject this explanation. They emphasized Nettleton's jealousy for the Old Orthodoxy as his motivation for opposing Finney, not jealousy regarding Finney's apparent success. Such a charge is inconsistent with Nettleton's testimony and personality. In his letters, Nettleton always refers to Finney as "Brother Finney" and says "I believe him to be a good man and wishing to do good."[155] Would that Finney had that much grace regarding his opponents.

The Controversy Ended?

The year 1827 was a year of great controversy between the two camps. But by 1828, the furor calmed down to almost nothing. Within a year, Nettleton's position was almost universally abandoned, and Finney's was almost universally accepted. The main reason may have been the defection of Lyman Beecher from Nettleton's position.

Lyman Beecher pastored in Boston during the controversy years and was an early supporter of Nettleton. Beecher joined with Nettleton in voicing his concern and

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[149] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 231. This was a favorite charge Finney would often make against his opponents. Finney's opponents simply weren't spiritual enough, else they would support him.

[150] Finney, *Autobiography*, page 211.

[151] Finney should have asked himself that same question, but in reverse. It cannot be denied by any honest historian that Nettleton saw great results in the earlier years of the Awakening by using the "old methods". How could the "old methods" be wrong if God used them in such a great way? But it seemed that Finney was not about to acknowledge that the evangelical Calvinism that he despised could be instrumental in bring about a revival. If Finney acknowledged that, then his position that it was his New Measures that had sparked the revival would be seriously undermined.

[152] Nettleton was indeed a very gracious man to acknowledge that. I cannot find any such acknowledgement by Finney that Nettleton had also seen revival. It may be in his writings, but I have not seen it.

[153] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 243.

[154] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 238.

[155] Ibid., page 239. Such men of Finney's temperament simply cannot handle any criticism or opposition, no matter how well intention. Today, if such men are on Twitter/X, they block those who dare ask them questions or who Scripturally evaluate their methods or philosophies. This shows a very spiritually immature mindset.

opposition to the New Measures of Finney. Beecher had warned Finney that if he should come to Boston to try and preach his New Measures, he would fight him every inch of the way. But 1827 brought about the change in Beecher. The die was cast at a meeting of the New London presbytery in 1827 where Nettleton and Beecher stood against Finney, but Finney got most of the support. It may have been this meeting which convinced Beecher that the old philosophy could not prevail. Finney had simply become too powerful, and he had too much support. No doubt he still believed Nettleton was right but realized that he was fighting a losing battle. Beecher realized Finney would win the controversy and jumped to the winning side. In May 1828, Beecher traveled to Philadelphia where Finney was preaching and signed a "treaty of mutual silence." The signatories agreed "to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations and conduct designed and calculated to keep those subjects before the public mind" and "to induce our friends on either side to do the same."[156]

Nettleton was in Virginia when he heard of Beecher's agreement to silence. Nettleton had lost a valuable companion and supporter. Afterwards, Beecher even attacked his old friend, accusing him of wanting to continue the controversy as long as possible. From 1828 to his death, Nettleton fought his battle nearly alone. His desire for a revival of evangelical Calvinism and Edwardian evangelism was drowned out by the clamor of Finneyism. Nettleton had lost the day.

The real outcome of the New Lebanon Conference is that Finney emerged as the heir of the revivalism supposedly promoted by Edwards and Dwight, which of course, he was not. That honor belonged to Nettleton, but politicking and parliamentary procedure allowed that mantle to fall on Finney. Thus, history had been successfully re-written to favor the victor.

Finney's Revivalist Philosophy Analyzed

Finney insisted that without new measures, it was impossible that the church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to the subject of religion.[157] Finney believed people wouldn't pay any attention to the Word without the excitement of the New Measures.[158] What? How then did Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, McCheyne and others who enjoyed revival ever see it since they never employed any new measures? Finney was all for using every carnal weapon he could find, just as any businessman or politician would. All of this came straight from the Second-Generation Methodists who had been using it for 25 years. Many of the Eastern preachers feared that Finney's methods and followers could spark a new round of fanaticism similar to Davenport's of the First Awakening. While no one as radical as Davenport arose during the Second Awakening, there were excesses and errors all the same.

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[156] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 237.

[157] Dod, page 117.

[158] Ibid, page 119.

Finney's Psychology

Finney revealed much of his philosophy in his *Revival Lectures.* In this book, we read that Finney made free and frequent use of psychology in promoting revivals.[159] Finney taught that sinners were not converted by direct contact of the Holy Ghost, but by truth employed as a means.[160] There were then particular and appointed means to be used in converting sinners.

Finney's Pragmatism

The *Revival Lectures* also document Finney's devotion to pragmatism in revival. Finney wrote that the success of any measure designed to promote a revival of religion demonstrates its wisdom. When the blessing evidently follows the introduction of the measure itself, the proof is unanswerable that the measure is wise. It is profane to say that such a measure will do more harm than good.

Finney says nothing about measuring the revival measure against Scripture. Whether it is right or Biblical is totally irrelevant to Finney- does it work?[161]

What Was a Revival?

Finney believed when hundreds were converted it must mean a revival.[162] Finney thus confuses evangelism with revival. It is not important how the Spirit of God is moving in the hearts of Christians, but rather how sinners are being affected defines a revival. Under Finney, revival becomes nothing more than a tool for evangelization of the lost. Revival is not applied to the ones needing it most, Christians. What if there was an increased devotion to prayer, Bible study, church attendance, tithing and witnessing among Christians? Would that qualify as a revival? Not unless a large number of sinners was converted as a result. Finney then takes revival away from saints by concentrating only on sinners. But saints need revival too! The men of the First Awakening and of the early years of the Second also looked for evidences of revival among their own congregations. That sinners were being converted as well was a bonus and a further evidence of a divine visitation.

Iain Murray wrote the following observation between the Puritans and Finney on defining a revival:

> "In the vocabulary of the Puritan school, revivals were extraordinary manifestations of the power of God, and, by definition, not produced by human labor. But under C. G. Finney and later Moody, so many 'results' attended

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[159] Finney, *Revival Lectures,* page 36.

[160] Ibid., page 50.

[161] This is a major problem today, especially in youth ministries and bus routes, where all manner of carnality is tolerated as long as "conversions" result. "Any thing for a soul" justifies any carnality and worldly methods. And no one has any right to question such methods.

[162] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 247. This attitude fails to distinguish between a revival and an evangelistic crusade. You will have souls saved with revival but you can see souls saved with revival. Isaiah 9:3a, **Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.**

campaigns that these also came to be spoken of as 'revivals'. Indeed, Finney deliberately treated evangelistic endeavor and revivals as synonymous, and encouraged the philosophy of 'the more effort the more revival".[163]

This attitude would be consistent with the revivalist idea that church services should be designed for evangelism. Every part of the service should be geared for evangelism, from every song to the message to the execution of the invitation. There is no concern for worship or for feeding the saints. All is done for the sinner. This gross error has led to hyper-evangelism which results in anemic saints. We will examine this further in the next chapter, but we make these observations to show that Finney is responsible for this situation.

Is Revival a Miracle of God?

To Finney, revival, as individual conversions, were to be promoted by a right use of means rather than by the power of the Holy Spirit. Before Finney, revivals were seen as miracles, an interposition of Divine power. This changed with Finney. Now revival was simply the result of human agency and of a predetermined set of rules that were to be followed.[164]

A revival is not a miracle to Finney. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means. This was the direct opposite of the First Awakening view and is extremely damaging to a proper understanding of revival.

Traditionalists maintained that the measure of the revival blessing was in the hands of God. Revivals came unpredictably, spontaneously, sovereignty. This is what Finney opposed. He said that if there was no revival, the Christians were at fault because they did not want one bad enough to work for it and to fulfill the conditions for it. It was a matter of pure cause and effect. Finney went further- the reason why the Millennium had not yet come was that the church had been slack in its work! It could come within three years if only the Church would get busy and do her duty.[165]

Finney saw revival as nothing more than the reclamation of backsliders and evangelism. There is nothing in his writings about an increase in personal holiness or a greater love for Christ. Revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God.[166] There is nothing supernatural or spiritual about revival. God is thus removed as the source and cause of revival, only to be replaced with man-centered Pelagian evangelism and ecclesiastical programs and methods. The rejection of the miraculous nature of revivals and the divine role in giving them led to the belief that revivals could be "willed" into existence. If a revival was wanted badly enough and the people were willing to "meet" God's "requirements" for a revival, then a revival could be created. A lack of revival was the result of a lack of will and desire for one. Should a revival be desired, the machinery would go into gear and it would be created through sheer willpower and method.

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[163] Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, page 220.
[164] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 247.
[165] Ibid., page 248. This is post-millennialism,
[166] Finney, *Revival Lectures*, page 7.

Why Are Revivals of So Short Duration?

Finney asked the question as to why revivals were of so short duration.[167] Finney said because the churches did not understand the science of revivals.[168] Pastors did not know how to promote them or maintain them[169] so they lost the blessing through their incompetence. God was thus limited in His power to bless in revival and in the salvation of souls through the ignorance and/or the incompetence of pastors who did not follow Finney's teaching or methods.

What Is More Important: Revival or Doctrine?

Finney believed that when Christians were revived, they would not involve themselves in controversy. In other words, Christians would be more interested in the revival than in doctrinal purity.[170] Here is a mark of New Evangelicalism which Finney pioneered- the neglect of doctrine for the sake of producing a desired result. Finney would be only too glad to discard any and all doctrine (especially the more controversial ones) in order to promote revival and soulwinning.

Finney and the First Awakening

Finney claimed his teaching was of the tradition of Jonathan Edwards and Edward Griffin but later he was forced to retract it when challenged.[171] Finney, in order to deflect criticism, tried to claim Edwards was a user of "new measures" in his day by calling attention to the Communion Controversy and baptizing children of unsaved parents. But this controversy occurred after the revival, and it had nothing to do with promoting a revival. What did the Halfway Covenant and the Lord's Table have to do with revival and soteriology?

Finney- the First Cause of Revivals?

It must be admitted that Finney was not the humblest of men. In his *Memoirs*, Finney totally ignored the revivals of 1797-1824 but asserted that the new era of revivals began with his ministry, in 1825. Finney claimed that "of the last ten years (referring to the period starting in 1825)...there has been such remarkable revivals through the length and breadth of the land.[172] Why didn't he instead say "of the last thirty years" which would have been more accurate? Finney totally ignored the revivals under Dwight, Nettleton, Payson, Griffin and others dating up to 1825. The reason is

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[167] This is a valid question. Most revivals tend to be short-lived. But Finney has the wrong answer.

[168] Murray, Revival and Revivalism, page 249.

[169] But Finney and his followers would have taught that the evangelist did understand how to nurture a revival! There is an idea here that the evangelist is superior to the pastor in the "science" of revivals. This is the same attitude reflected by John R. Rice in his book The Evangelist, where he elevated the office and work of the evangelist of that of the pastor, or any other office in the body of Christ.

[170] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 272.

[171] Ibid., page 290.

[172] Basil Miller, *Charles Finney: On Fire For Souls*. Pasadena CA: World- Wide Mission, 1977, page 68.

obvious- they saw revival without Finney's methods and without preaching Finney's theology. They were Calvinistic, a theological system Finney despised. They would have been (or were) totally opposed to Finney's practices and Pelagianism. There was no way Finney could compare his ministry to theirs or claim to be preaching the same gospel as them, so he simply divorced himself from these men and declared a new era to have begun with him. Nor could he acknowledge their success without undermining his claim that these revivals were the fruit of his methods and his methods alone. Even worse, he totally ignored these men and attempted to rewrite the history of the Second Great Awakening.

What Caused Revivals to Wane?

Finney attributed the waning of revivals to the opposition to them that grieved the Holy Spirit.[173] Christians were also to be blamed if the revival waned. Revivals will cease when the Church gets exhausted by labor, as if it was the Church that started the revival or maintains it! If the Church could somehow maintain her level of intensity, there would be no reason for revivals to cease. Again, God does not figure into it at all. Revival is seen purely as the work of man. God doesn't send it and thus is not responsible for maintaining or promoting it. That burden falls upon the church, especially the preacher.

Finney's Manners and Personality

Finney's manners and method of treating his critics was an integral part of his New Methods and revival philosophy. He was bold, ardent and denunciatory in his manner. He rebuked with harshness and great severity.[174] He frequently denounced his brethren as "cold, dead and enemies of revivals.[175] Men who opposed or questioned his methods were accused of suffering from a "cold heart." This spirit of denunciation grew out of the Western Revivals where it was widely practiced.

Finney also practiced intimidating ministers to force them to agree with him by "crushing" or "breaking them down". This involved getting a few individuals in a church to join him and then condemn all those who do not support him as enemies to revival. Rather than bear this kind of reproach, many men knuckled under and followed Finney. Men were afraid to correct Finney lest they be denounced as enemies of revival. They saw the errors but were forced to justify them by saying that some good was coming out of them.

Finney was just as rough on his congregations. His language was harsh and vitriolic. He made free use of words like "hell" and "devil." He blasted and withered his hearers, castigating them beyond measure. Finney's preaching was unbalanced in that he dwelt long on the judgment of God and the condemnation of sin while passing over the preaching of the love of God. Dwight Moody suffered from a similar mentality early in his ministry until confronted with it by Henry Moorhouse in 1868.[176]

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[173] Tyler and Bonar, page 340.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Hardman, page 100.

[176] Ibid., page 109.

Finney had no such guide or check, nor would he have listened had one existed. Consider an example of Finney's personal work with a certain lady under conviction:

> "It was charged that Finney and Nathaniel Beman called at the home of a Mrs. Mosier, and immediately Finney began to browbeat her mercilessly, asking 'Do you love God?' The lady responded, 'I think I do.' Then Finney shook his fist in her face, saying 'You lie!...You ought to go to hell, and you must repent.' The lady responded that she could not repent. Finney, irate, said that she could be converted immediately, and when the lady still insisted that she could not, he declared 'You ought to be damned".[177]

Finney claimed the motivation for much of the criticism against him (and there was plenty of it) was simple jealousy over his success. Those who have been making the ado about new measures have not been successful in promoting revivals. This was certainly untrue. Nettleton, the most visible of Finney's critics, saw as much if not more revival as Finney.

The established practice of the day thus became one of intimidation. Either agree with Finney's methods or be denounced! If a preacher appears zealous, pretends uncommon holiness and succeeds in producing a considerable number of apparent conversions, no one must say a word to guard people against the influence of his errors, however gross and dangerous they may be; no one may oppose any of his measures or even withhold his cooperation on pain of being counted an enemy of revivals and hindering the work of God. This was the state of affairs during the First Awakening regarding the critics of James Davenport but they could just as well apply to Finney.

Finney had no respect for education, wisdom or experience if it opposed him or his system.[178] Established churches, schools or ministers were distained by Finney since he charged them with ineptness in failing to promote revival as well as he.[179]

Finney has a great distrust of theologians who were not "on the front lines." "It is as dangerous and ridiculous for our theological professors, who are withdrawn from the field of conflict, to be allowed to dictate, in regard to the measures and movements of the Church, as it would be for a general to sit in his bed chamber and attempt to order battle."[180] The raw, untrained and zealous evangelist was then to be preferred over the orthodox, seasoned theologian. Yet he later took the presidency of Oberlin College in Ohio and became a theology professor! Later in his life, Finney took to writing books on systematic theology. Did this scholarship in any way diminish his usefulness as an evangelist? As what so often happens, Finney ended up taking a ministry that he had denounced in his younger day.

Finney appealed to his success as a mark of divine approval. "I used to say to ministers, whenever they contended with me...Show me the fruits of your ministry."[181]

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[177] Dod, page 148

[178] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 281.

[179] Ibid., pages 214-215.

[180] Ibid., page 284 and Finney, *Autobiography*, page 83.

[181] This is exactly where John R. Rice developed his attitude as he dealt with his critics. When challenged on a point of doctrine or practice, Rice would also maintain he was right since he had "won more souls" than his critic has.

Thus the man who won the most souls and who had the most success was always right and lesser men were not to oppose or question them.

Finney's followers were no better. They proceeded to split churches where the pastors did not support Finney. Old School pastors were run out of their pulpits as "anti-Revival" men. Many men were attacked by Finneyites for not producing the desired revivals in following Finney's methods. The ultimatum would then be handed down- submit to the New Measures or resign and stop hindering souls. Men were now judged by whether or not they had been able to produce a revival. If a pastor could not produce a revival, he was to be quickly dispatched. Pastors and evangelists now needed periodic revivals to prove to the "brethren" they were spiritual or that God's blessing was upon them. To get the required revival, these preachers would be forced to resort to Finney's methods to produce the required results rather than waiting on the Holy Spirit to give a revival.

Regarding Finney's lack of humility, Albert Dod wrote the following:

> "Through all his writings there is found an ill-concealed claim to be considered as one called and anointed of God to do a great and singular work. There is scarcely a recognition of any fellow-laborers in the same field with him. One might suppose indeed, that he considered himself the residuary legatee of all the prophetic and apostolic authority that has ever been in the world, so arrogantly does he assume all knowledge to himself, so loftly does he arraign and rebuke all other ministers of the gospel...the whole world is wrong and he proposes to set them right. Ministers and professors or religion have hitherto been ignorant what truths should be taught to promote revivals of religion and he offers to impart to them infallible information."[182]

Finney's Fruits

Any system must be judged by its fruits. It cannot be doubted that Finney saw revival and that there were a great many professions under his ministry. But what of them? Very many of his reputed converts endured only for a time.[183] The number of true professions were relatively few in ratio to the overall number of professors.[184]

Finney's system produced very weak converts. They did not repent because they saw themselves sinners or saw the depravity of their own hearts or saw their judgment but because they had "voted" to make Jesus the Supreme Ruler of the universe and because they wanted to be Christians. These "converts" had no

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[182] I have lost the reference.

[183] Tyler and Bonar, page 340.

[184] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 289. This has been a constant source of criticism in evaluating the ministry and claims of hyper-evangelical men like Jack Hyles, who pastured First Baptist Church in Hammond, Indiana. Hyles would claim thousands of baptisms per year by his church. After 40 years of ministry and such results, one would wonder that the entire population of northwestern Indiana and the Chicagoland area had not been baptized by Hyles' church. His church membership, though large, did not reflect these numbers. If he was baptizing 10,000 people a year, one would have expected his church membership to grow accordingly. But the growth in his church membership was always only a fraction of his reported number of baptisms. This brought up the obvious question, "Where were all of his converts?"

understanding of sin, depravity, righteousness or judgment. This was the fruit of Finney's evangelism- get saved not because you are a sinner who has offended a holy God and because you are depraved but get saved by voting to be on God's side.[185]

The result of this was a self-sufficient religion- "I am a Christian because I voted to be so and exercised my own volition." These converts were totally ignorant of any doctrine and Finney would have it so. It was more important for them to be in the church than to understand anything about the whys or wherefores of how they were saved or even what it meant.

Finney's system then packed the churches with a multitude of supposed converts. There were thousands of professions but few true conversions. Most of the professors soon fell away.

On several occasions, Nettleton entered an area soon after a Finneyite protracted meeting. He said many of the subjects of that revival are all unconverted by the time of his arrival. Some declared that they were never under conviction of sin nor did they know anything about regeneration. Many testified that the doctrines they heard were false based on their own experience.

Finney's methods did not seem to be very successful in his own family, which included 6 children. Thirty-two years into his marriage, when all the children were grown, Finney confessed while lecturing on the home at Oberlin College that he was not sure if any of his children were saved.[186]

Finney asserted that if preachers adopted his methods, there would be continuous revival. Yet after 1831, the revival was waning and no amount of Finneyism could revive it. By 1835, the Second Great Awakening was over, despite all of Finney's methods. There was to be no continual revival, despite Finney's claims.

Finney's Legacy and Influence

By 1875, Finney was being given nearly all the credit for starting the Second Awakening. He was the plain cause of the revival and he had converted souls. By 1900, the impression was nearly universal that Finney had introduced revivals into 19th century America and that he was more useful than anything else and that there was little evangelistic effort before him. This belief continues even to today. This is seen by the large numbers of biographies of Finney and the re- printings of his works. In contrast, Finney's opponent, Asahel Nettleton, is all but unknown to the Christian public.

[185] Dod, pages 130-131.

[186] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 289.

Chapter 8: The Ministry of Charles Finney II: Finney's Theology

In the last chapter we examined Finney's ministry and revival philosophy. Now we want to examine the resulting doctrines which he promoted. A man's practice cannot be divorced from his theology. To understand why Finney rejected what he called "the traditions of the elders" and everything they stood for, a proper understanding must be had of his doctrines, especially his soteriology.

The New Haven Theology

Finney's rejection of even the moderate evangelical Calvinism of his day was influenced by Nathaniel William Taylor, the pastor of the First Church in New Haven, Connecticut. Taylor was a student of Timothy Dwight and may have gotten the seeds of his moderate Calvinism from Dwight. Dwight sought to modify the soteriology of his famous grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, to make it easier for sinners to be saved. Edwards' Calvinism was seen by many in the early 19th century as being a bit too harsh and there were attempts to grant the sinner more personal ability to come to Christ on his own. This was an attempt to place more responsibility on the sinner in his salvation. Dwight cannot be considered the father of the moderate Calvinism of the New Haven Theology for he still held to most of what his grandfather taught. It was Taylor who took the desire to soften the 18th century Calvinism and developed it into a new theological system.

Taylor was convinced that in the interests of revival and evangelism, the emphasis needed to be shifted from the sinner's dependence on God to the accountability of sinners. It was agreed by Lyman Beecher and Asahel Nettleton that the New England preachers tended to overemphasize the sovereignty of God in conversion to the exclusion of free will[187] Evangelical Calvinists (not the hyper-Calvinists) sought to balance out these two elements in salvation: the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. The hyper-Calvinist never made the distinction. They overemphasized the sovereignty of God in salvation. It seems Finney was either unwilling or unable to make this distinction between the two brands of Calvinism. He lumped all brands of Calvinism, including the evangelical kind, in with the “hypers”.[188]

Taylor was willing to sacrifice the established dogmas of conversion for the sake of evangelism. The old Calvinism (including the moderate Calvinism of Edwards and Whitefield) was hindering revival and evangelism and had to be radically amended. This was the beginning of what became known as the New Haven Theology. It was to this line of thinking Finney was converted to. New Haven and New Measures went hand in hand. The doctrine required a corresponding method to bring

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[187] Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, page 317.

[188] We ought to define hyper-Calvinism here. Iain Murray gives a good distinction between evangelical Calvinism and hyper-Calvinism: "Hyper-Calvinism was a form of rationalism which deduced from the sovereignty of God 'that all men were not under obligation to repent of their sins and believe the gospel'. In upholding one truth it denied another. Instead of teaching man's duty, its tendency was to encourage a form of passivity under the impression that this was more honoring to God. No Calvinistic confession had ever upheld that error." It should also be noted that I am not a Calvinist, I do not identify with the movement and I am no fan of John Calvin, so I do not make this evaluation as a supporter of Calvinism.

the sinner to the right exercise of his will. Taylor provided the theology, Finney the method.

The New Haven Theology was an answer to and an attack upon the stronger Calvinism that emphasized divine sovereignty, total human depravity and inability. Reprobation also figured into this salvation scheme. Taylor and the New Haven system softened the doctrine of human depravity and divine sovereignty in salvation, making salvation more dependent upon the proper exercise of the will of man. The development of the New Haven was a response against this old- line Calvinism. But what specifically brought it about? It was the emergence of a militant Unitarianism which attacked all orthodoxy, including Calvinism. The more moderate group of Calvinists (typified by Taylor) seemed to be shamed away from the Edwards/Whitefield brand of Calvinism by Unitarian attacks and modified Calvinistic doctrines to make it more appealing to these apostates. It became more "fashionable" to hold to a weak form of Calvinism than to the old school Calvinism of Edwards. Even the moderate Calvinism was suspect since too much still depended upon God in salvation.

Finney adopted the New Haven Theology because it, opposed mainline Calvinism. Finney saw Calvinistic doctrines (of any degree) as an impediment to revival and evangelism. The Calvinists were insisting that regeneration lay primarily in the hands of God and Finney claimed this cut the heart out of evangelistic preaching. Finney however completely ignored that the men who were heavily involved in the First and Second Awakening were largely evangelical Calvinists: Whitefield, Edwards, Payson, Nettleton, Griffin, and Dwight. Theirs was not a hyper, five-point brand of Calvinism but the more balanced, evangelical type. This form of Calvinism dominated New England and represented the "old school" which Finney waged war against. The day of the evangelical Calvinist was over and should be given a proper burial. Finney was all too happy to supply the shovel.

Finney's law training also influenced his rejection of Calvinism for the New Haven Theology. In law, a man is not considered to be guilty of a crime until he commits the crime. He may be a potential murderer but is not considered a murderer until he murders. Finney carried this over into theology. A man is not a sinner until he sins. Man is not to be thought of as a sinner by nature. He thought it unfair to assess blame to mankind for Adam's sin. Man should not be punished for something that was not his fault. This led to a rejection of the depravity of man and a serious neglect of the doctrine of the indwelling sin nature in man. This helped Finney adopt sinless perfection teachings later in his ministry.

The orthodox men of the Second Awakening opposed the New Haven Theology. Edward Griffin was fully of the opinion that it was at variance with the teachings of the divines of the Old School, namely Jonathan Edwards.[189]

Griffin wrote to Taylor in 1832 and pointed out his problems with the New Haven Theology:

1. That the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration results solely from the voluntary perverseness of the sinner's heart.

[189] William Sprague, *The Life and Sermons of Edward Griffin*. Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth, 1839, 1987, volume 1, page 173.

2. That regeneration is produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit operating on the mind through truth and in perfect consistency with the nature of moral action and laws of moral agency. On these, two questions arise. (1) What is meant by "through truth?" (2) What is the limitation or explanation by the words "and in perfect consistency with the nature of moral action and the laws of moral agency?"

3. That as a moral agent the sinner is qualified so to use the truth presented to his mind as to become holy at once. Did this mean that as a rational being the sinner has a natural ability and so is reasonably bound to be holy at once.[190] Taylor's reply to Griffin could be summed up in one sentence, which was also the foundation of the New Haven Theology and the theology of Finney: there was no need for a constitutional change in man in order for him to be made morally perfect.[191] In the New Haven Theology, moral perfection is seen as the equivalent of the new birth and no change in man's nature was required to bring it about except an exercise of man's will. As we will see, morality and the moral law played a very large part in Finney's thinking.

Finney's Pelagianism

Here is the sore point in Finney's doctrine that no one wants to talk about! I have found only a few articles questioning or examining Finney's soteriology. The reason is obvious. Since Finney is the "hero" of modern revivalism, no negative articles can be tolerated regarding his doctrines. If Finney was a Pelagian then he can in no way be used as an acceptable model in either doctrine or practice.

The fact that Finney rejected evangelical Calvinism so strongly ought to immediately set up the red flag in our minds. Now I do not identify with a Calvinistic theological system personally, but I recognize that there is some truth in Calvinism. However, much of this truth is simply out of balance in a Calvinistic system. Biblicists (non-Calvinists) would readily agree with the sovereignty of God in salvation and revival, the depravity of man, the indwelling sin nature in man and the need for a change of nature in salvation. All this Finney rejected. Finney believed such doctrines put too many constraints on evangelism and revival. Fewer people would be saved under such a system. A softer, friendlier soteriological system must be erected to get more conversions. Yet Finney ignored the fact that God sent powerful revivals under just such a system in years past.

The charge of Pelagianism against Finney is an old one, going back to the late 1820s. After the Troy, New York conference with Nettleton in 1827, the charges flew. A deputation of "Old School" ministers led by Lyman Beecher sat in on the Troy meetings of Finney to observe the New Measures in action firsthand. They came away shocked. The main point of contention was that the New Measures sought to produce conversions through the arm of flesh. The power God was nowhere to be seen nor did it seem to be required. By 1835, Finney was being widely denounced as a Pelagian.

Pelagianism was developed in the early years of the 5th century by a British monk Pelagius, a Christian moralist who lived in Rome. Distressed by the moral laxity of Christians of his day, he urged them to live moral lives and to reform themselves.

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[190] Ibid., 1:174-175.

[191] Ibid, volume 1, page 178.

Pelagius taught that men could reform themselves and live free from sin if only they wanted to. Human nature is sufficient as created by God to bring about the desired moral changes. The will is always free to choose good or evil without divine aid. The inherited Adamic sin nature is denied. Adam's fall and sin had no influence upon mankind. Adam's sin affected only himself. Pelagius also denied the need of internal grace to keep God's commands. Human nature was created good and was endowed by its Creator with power to live a morally upright life if a man desired to. "By his free will man is emancipated from God." This statement by the Pelagian Julian is the key to Pelagianism, which is nothing more than a rationalized moralism.[192] It put a very strong stress on morality.

Does this definition not fit Finney? A sinner may be saved if he desires, and that desire is the only requirement for conversion. There is no need for divine conviction. Finney strongly believed that individuals possessed the power within themselves to make the choice for Christ and for holy living. The issue comes down to "Do you want to be saved or not? If so, just 'decide for God'!" Here is where the term "Make your decision for Christ" comes from. Salvation is not a "decision", it is a new birth, where the Holy Spirit brings the repentant sinner to repentance and gives him a new divine nature. Human responsibility is a factor of course, but the Holy Spirit must be considered. Revivalism downplays the work of the Spirit, dumping all the responsibility on man, who may be saved if only he will.

Salvation then is a mere decision, a proper use of the will. Finney will continue to talk as though he believed in the divine work in salvation, but he cannot honestly believe it. Remember, we already noted that Finney rejected any element of the supernatural in revival. Revival was nothing more than the right use of appointed means. Is not the new birth seen in the same light? If salvation is simply the making of a "right choice" for God, is it supernatural? If it is all of man, where does God fit in? If it is of man then it cannot be a work of God, cannot be supernatural, cannot be a miracle. Finney then robs the new birth of its miraculous nature as he does with revival.

Emphasis on morality is also a dead giveaway for Pelagianism. Morality is a manmade substitute for holiness. God is holy while man is moral. Holiness is a state of being while morality stems from a moral code of do's and don'ts. Man can be moral without God. Some sinners are more moral than Christians. Many sinners do not lie, cheat or steal. This makes them moral but not holy.

Morality or Holiness? In his theological writings, Finney is obsessed with the Moral Law of God. He dwells much on "Moral Law" and "Moral Obligation". He spends much time and paper discussing our moral obligations toward God and how God operates according to a moral law. There is much emphasis on morality but not as much corresponding discussion of holiness. Finney neglected the holiness of God and the obligations of Christians to live holy lives in favor of morality. Again, it is not hard to understand why. Finney's gospel is man-centered and dependent upon human ability. Morality is man-generated goodness. Anyone can be moral if he sets his mind to it. Sinners can be moral. All a man must do is quite drinking, swearing and beating his wife and he may be considered as moral.

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[192] David Broughton Knox, "Pelagianism", *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, pages 399-400.

Holiness is quite something else. Holiness is divine while morality is human. Man can be moral (to some degree) without God, but he cannot be holy. Holiness, both positional and practical, is divine in origin. Man can do nothing to attain it. He cannot decide for holiness as he could for holiness. This explains Finney's fixation on morality. To the Pelagian Finney, who centers on human ability in salvation and sanctification, morality is the substitute for holiness. To be moral is to be holy. Absolute morality is the goal in complete sanctification of Finney's Perfectionism.

The evangelical Calvinists that Finney dismissed dwelt much on the holiness of God. Some of the holiest men (humanly speaking) have been Calvinists: Edward Payson, Robert Murray McCheyne, Samuel Rutherford, John Newton, Edward Griffin, etc. These men emphasized the absolute constitutional depravity of man and his inability to save himself. This forced them to depend more on God for salvation and sanctification. If they were going to be saved, it would have to be God who would do it. Ditto for sanctification. Emphasizing the depravity of man seems to have the reciprocal effect of magnifying the holiness (not the morality) of God. Now reverse it. Magnify the ability of man in salvation and sanctification and you end up with a corresponding decline in the holiness of God. Pelagians are not known for their personal holiness. When it is emphasized, that holiness emphasis tends to be more legalistic. What is the Pelagian Finney known for today? What is his legacy? Is he remembered as a prayer warrior? No. Is he remembered as a holy man, like the "Seraphic Payson?" Is Finney universally admired like Robert Murray McCheyne for his holiness of life? The answer to these questions is “no”. Finney's legacy is his version of “soulwinning” and “revival”, not holiness! Finney did not dwell on divine holiness but on human morality. Being moral is not great accomplishment for the Christian but it was the best Finney could do under his theological system.

This helps to explain the poor quality of Finney's converts. They got plenty of morality but not much holiness, which would accompany a true divine. regeneration. True Biblical salvation emphasizes the work in the Spirit in the heart of the believer, empowering him to live right and to bring forth spiritual fruit. Since Finney forsook the divinity of the new birth and since the Holy Spirit was not at the center of his soteriology, all Finney could offer his converts was "Strive for moral perfection!" That takes no grace. One can be moral and still be wicked. As long as one was "moral" and outwardly righteous, these converts were satisfied with their spiritual condition. After all, they did what Finney told them to do. Sanctification is morality. Be moral and you must be saved. Be even more moral and you can attain entire sanctification. "Make yourself a new heart" and all will be will. We rather preach "let Christ make you a new heart." This is the crux of the difference. Who saves- you or Christ? Who sanctifies- you or Christ? Do you want to be moral or holy?

Later Doctrinal Problems: Sinless Perfection

Finney's Pelagianism led him to greater errors later in life. After he took the position of professor at Oberlin College, he fell into the pit of total sanctification. It is easy to understand how he could adopt this doctrine. Remember, Finney rejected the teaching of the indwelling sin nature of man as being too "Calvinistic". The root of the sin problem in man lay in his will and not in his nature. All a sinner needed to do for

salvation was to "choose" to forsake sin and stop sinning. He would "choose" against the world and "make a decision for Christ".

If salvation was to be understood as nothing greater than deciding to turn on a light, then why would it be so hard for Christians to attain total sanctification? Finney recognized that Christians were still sinning after conversion. Why would this be so? Could not a Christian make a simple exercise of his will and stop sinning as a Christian? He did so at his conversion, why not so again for his sanctification? Could he come into total obedience to the moral law of God? Thus, Finney began teaching that a Christian could grow in grace to the point where he completely fulfilled the moral law of God. This is called Oberlin Theology, after the school in Ohio where Finney served as a professor and later president.

Oberlin Theology is an attempt to force a marriage between "liberal" or "New School" Calvinism (the New Haven Theology) with Methodist perfectionism. To Finney, God was benevolent, and man was capable of growing toward perfection, although not absolutely.

A. A. Hodge, in his *Outlines of Theology*, defines Finney's teaching of perfection, taken from Finney's own writings in *The Oberlin Evangelist*:

> "It is a full and perfect discharge of our entire duty, of all existing obligations to God, and all other beings. It is perfect obedience to the moral law. A Christian may attain a state of "perfect and disinterested benevolence," may be "according to his knowledge, as upright as God is," and be "perfectly conformed to the will of God."[193]

Hodge would continue with the question "State the points of agreement and disagreement between these several theories, Pelagian, Romish, Arminian and Oberlin (Finney)?"

1st. They all agree in maintaining that it is possible for men in this life to attain a state in which they may habitually and perfectly fulfill all their obligations, i.e., to be and do perfectly all that God requires them to be or do at present.

2d. The Pelagian theory differs from all the rest, in denying the deterioration of our natural and moral powers, and consequently, identifying the necessity of the intervention of supernatural grace to the end of making men perfect.

3d. The Pelagian and Oberlin theories agree in making the original moral law of God the standard of perfection.[194]

This is the cornerstone of Finney's perfection, his fixation on the moral law of God. His *Systematic Theology* is obsessed with the supposed necessity of keeping the moral law of God to attain perfection.

Finney put too much faith in the ability of man to reform himself without divine aid. Finney's evangelism did not require the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to bring the sinner to salvation. All that was required was for the sinner to desire to be saved and to make the right use of his will to be "converted".

Perfection or Finney's concept of Christian maturity also excluded the need for divine aid. A Christian could fulfill the moral law of God in his own power, will and

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[193] A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1878, page 534.
[194] Ibid.

desire. No divine quickening was required. Again, the issue with man, either sinner or saint, is not nature but ability. The sinner has the ability to be saved within himself and the saint has the same inner ability to fulfill the moral law of God.

Origins of the Oberlin Theology: Birthed in Failure

What moved Finney in the direction of perfectionism in the first place? It grew from his successes in the revivals of the late 1820s and 1830s. Many were saved in areas where religion was very low. Since the churches were in a very low state (according to Finney), the level of spirituality in the areas visited by revival would continue to be lower than desirable. Religion was neglected before the revivals and there was no strong moral foundation by which to build up the new converts.

Finney despaired over the relatively low percentage of true converts out of the great multitudes who made professions in his revivals. Why were so few truly saved? Finney believed it was because he had brought the professors only into a traditional Christianity but not into perfectionism.[195] Finney got a profession out of them but did not disciple them and follow up on them. Finney said “I was often instrumental in bringing Christians under great conviction and into a state of temporary repentance and faith."[196] So up to 1836, Finney admits that the great number of his converts merely were responding to their "great conviction" but were not necessarily getting saved. Finney admitted that his revivalist techniques were unable to produce permanent results.

Something along the lines of discipleship was still missing in the lives of the "converts". Finney came to believe that if he had only preached his doctrine of perfectionism earlier in his ministry, he would have seen greater numbers of permanent converts.

The low level of the revivalist converts was of great concern to Finney and his followers. There were so many professions yet so little true fruit. The "converts" must be brought into a more positive relationship with God. If the Holy Spirit could not (or would not) bring them into a true Christian life, then the "converts" must do the work themselves. This idea is not so extreme if we remember that these people were largely responsible for their own "salvation." Man saves himself under a Pelagian gospel by the proper use of his will to reform. Salvation in Pelagianism is nothing more than a moral reformation, not a true spiritual regeneration. This moral reformation must extend past the initial conversion to the entire life. The way to a good Christian life and testimony was to determine to obey the moral law of God to its fullest extent. This is the aim of Oberlin Perfectionism. Save yourself and them pull yourself up by your own bootstraps and live right. No inward help from the Holy Spirit is required, although it would obviously be a nice thing to have. We have already seen that salvation to Finney was really no miracle at all. It was simply the making of a moral choice. With such a low, naturalistic concept of salvation, is it any surprise that the spiritual quality of its adherents would be so low? A low view of salvation produces a low level of spirituality.

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[195] Warfield 2:23.

[196] Ibid, 2:24.

Methodist Influence in Oberlin Perfectionism

As the Methodists had heavily influenced Finney's soteriology, they also influenced his sanctification. Finney took the frontier Methodists as his model in revivalist techniques. When it came time to organize entire sanctification, Finney turned again to the Methodists. Finney testifies to being influenced by John Wesley's book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley's idea of perfection (which was the idea of a "perfect love" toward God, not "entire sanctification") and Finney's moral perfection do not agree. Wesley cannot be blamed for Oberlinism or Finneyism. The later Wesleyan concept of perfection is what appealed to Finney, if not the actual nuts and bolts of its teaching.

Finney's Systematic Theology

Finney's theology has been neatly systematized in a systematic theology he published. A study of it will reveal Finney's Pelagianism in overemphasizing the moral law of God. To Finney, man's responsibility toward God was mainly moral. He devoted 219 pages out of 540 pages (40%) in the 1994 reprint of the work discussing various aspects of the moral law of God. This paper is not designed to be a full examination of Finney's theology, but we will outline some of his major points regarding to the central doctrine of revivalism and evangelism, which is soteriology. We will reproduce quotes from his *Systematic Theology* in outlining these points.

1. Atonement

"The providence of God in this world is manifestly disciplinary and designed to reform mankind."[197]

"I must show that the atonement was not a commercial transaction. Some have regarded the atonement simply in the light of the payment of a debt; and have represented Christ as purchasing the elect of the Father and paying down the same amount of suffering in His own person that justice would have exacted of them. To this I answer: It is naturally impossible, as it would require that satisfaction should be made to retributive justice. Strictly speaking, retributive justice can never be satisfied...To suppose, therefore, that Christ suffered in amount, all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that He suffered in amount, all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that He suffered an eternal punishment multiplied by the whole number of the elect."[198]

Again, Finney is fixated on the morality of God and of the atonement.

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[197] Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1994, page 211

[198] Ibid., page 219.

2. Moral Depravity

"Depravity does not imply original mal-conformation, but lapsed, fallen, departed from right or straight. It always implies deterioration or fall from a former state of moral or physical perfection. Depravity always implies a departure from a state of original integrity, or from conformity to the laws of the being who is the subject of depravity."[199]

"Moral depravity is the depravity of free will, not the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Moral depravity is depravity of choice."[200]

"Sin is a violation of moral law. We have seen that sin must consist in choice, in the choice of self-indulgence or self-gratification as an end."[201] This leads to the denial of the sin nature, saying that sin lies in the choice, or will, of the sinner, not in his fallen nature.

"Moral depravity cannot consist in anything that is an original and essential part of mind, or of body; nor in any involuntary action or state of either mind or body."[202]

"Sin does not, and cannot consist in malevolence, properly speaking, or in the choice of sin or misery as an end, or for its own sake. All sin consists, and must consist in selfishness, or in the choice of self-gratification as a final end. Moral depravity then, strictly speaking, can only be predicted of selfish ultimate intention."[203]

"Moral depravity, as I use the term, does not consist in, nor imply a sinful nature, in the sense that the substance of the human soul is sinful in itself. It is not a constitutional sinfulness. It is not an involuntary sinfulness. Moral depravity, as I use the term, consists in selfishness; in a state of voluntary committal of the will to self-gratification. It is a spirit of self-seeking, a voluntary and entire consecration to the gratification of self. It is the choice of the wrong end of life.[204] This may be the most important statement of Finney. He defines moral depravity not as a constitutional sinfulness but "the choice of the wrong end of life." Thus, man is a sinner by choice, not by nature. This is gross heresy and is a foundational doctrine of revivalism. This makes Finney a heretic of the first order.

"Moral depravity cannot consist in a sinful constitution. Moral depravity is sin in itself and not the cause of sin. It cannot be an attribute of human nature. This would be physical, not moral depravity. Moral depravity is not then to be accounted for by ascribing it to a nature or constitution sinful in itself."[205]

"To talk of a sinful nature, or sinful constitution, in the sense of physical sinfulness, is to ascribe sinfulness to the Creator, who is the author of nature."[206]

"The defenders of the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, or moral depravity, urge as an additional argument: that sin is a universal effect of a human nature, and therefore human nature must be itself sinful. This is a non sequitur."[207]

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[199] Ibid., page 243.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., page 245.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, page 250.
[207] Ibid., page 257.

"I object to the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness."[208]

Finney goes on to explain why. If man is a sinner by nature then he cannot help but sin. So then how can that man be punished for his sins if he is condemned by nature to sin? Finney then heaps an anathema on this doctrine: "This doctrine is a stumbling-block both to the church and the world, infinitely dishonorable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect and should be banished from every pulpit...It is a relic of heathen philosophy."[209] Finney blames Augustine for hatching the doctrine and Universalism for promoting it.

3. Regeneration

"Regeneration is represented in the Bible as constituting a radical change of character. Regeneration is a radical change of the ultimate intention, and, of course, of the end or object of life."[210]

"Regeneration implies an entire present change of moral character, that is, a change from entire sinfulness to entire holiness. It consists in a change from selfishness to benevolence. It implies an entire change of moral character (not nature!)."[211]

Finney thus defines regeneration as affecting the moral character of man, not his nature.

4. Natural Ability

"The human will is free, therefore men have power or ability to do all their duty. The moral government of God everywhere assumes and implies the liberty of the human will, and the natural ability of men to obey God."[212] To deny that a man is able to do as well as he can."[213]

Lecture 27 in Finney's *Systematic Theology* is entitled "Sanctification, Paul Entirely Sanctified." Thus, he denies that Paul is speaking of his own present state and experience in Romans 7, despite the use of the personal pronoun "I" by Paul.[214]

From his own pen, we have seen that the vaunted Finney, the darling of the revivalist, was a heretic and a Pelagian. Based on these quotes, we wonder why revivalists have ignored and chosen not to deal with these issues.

Chapter 9: The Fruits of Finneyism: Revivalism and the New Evangelicalism

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[208] Ibid., page 262.
[209] Ibid., page 263.
[210] Ibid., page 273.
[211] Ibid., page 277.
[212] Ibid., page 307.
[213] Ibid., page 382.
[214] There is disagreement on Romans 7 by the commentators. I believe Paul is peaking about his current state at the time of his writing. Refer to my notes in *The Pilgrim Way Commentary on Romans,* available at www.pilgrimway,org for a fuller treatment.

A man's doctrine will certainly affect his practice and so it was with Charles Finney. The theological system of doctrine and practice he developed, called revivalism, flowed directly from his understanding of the nature of man.

Defining Revivalism

What is revivalism? The word itself only goes back to the Second Awakening, especially with the Kentucky Revival and Finney. The Old School Calvinists never used the word and should not have the term applied to their ministries. We can define revivalism as the use and promotion of certain programs and procedures that will, as it is believed, result in revival. Revivalism contains no real element of mystery, unlike revival. Revival appears suddenly and sovereignty, stays a while and then is withdrawn without apparent rhyme or reason.

Revivalism uses psychology, peer pressure, bold predictions of expected results, personality (of the evangelist) and emotionalism. Theology is discarded if it should interfere with the salvation of sinners. Revival is a mystery; revivalism is a method.

The foundation for revivalism is bound up in an improper understanding of the doctrine of sin, as promoted by Finney. We have already seen that Finney had an incorrect understanding of sin as it applies to man. Finney rejected the Old Evangelical orthodoxy regarding the depravity of man. It was understood that the sin problem was bound up in the fallen nature of man. Because of Adam's fall, man is born with a sin nature. Man sins because it is his nature to sin. He must sin for he cannot help it. He was born a sinner and is in possession of a fallen sin nature that cannot be repressed or reformed by natural, human means.

Finney rejected this negative view of man in his rejection of the accepted old orthodoxy. One of the first things Finney did at the start of his ministry was to reject nearly every "old" doctrine he encountered. He held the old doctrines in contempt, including the depravity of man. He took the more optimistic position that the problem with man lie in his will and not in his nature. Man sinned not because he was a sinner by nature but because he improperly exercised his will. Fallen man simply made bad choices and decisions. The doctrine of the depravity of man was discarded as too old fashioned and a hindrance to evangelism and revivals.

The implications on evangelism from such a doctrine are evident. Salvation now becomes nothing more than the sinner making a choice or a decision to be saved. His will is redirected toward God. He decides to stop sinning and live for God. The problem is that his nature has not been changed. The sinner has made a resolution for God without a necessary corresponding change in nature.

Preaching then shifted from presenting the "sinfulness of sin" (to quote the Puritan understanding) and the wickedness of the heart of man to exhorting the sinner to turn to God and “make a decision” for Christ.

The issue then became "What is salvation? Is it a change of will or a change of nature?" Nettleton and the Old Evangelicals believed that salvation must involve a change of nature. A new divine nature must be imparted unto the sinner and that is the work of God. Man cannot change his nature. He cannot make himself a new heart.

Mere outward reformation is a good thing, but it cannot change the nature.[215] The sinner is helpless to affect this change on his own. Thus, salvation becomes largely the work of God, indeed it must be. Man cannot save himself for he cannot either change his old sinful nature nor create a new divine one. Both works must be done by God.

Such negative preaching may be too hard for some sinners. Sinners often don't like to be told they are sinners. They also don't like to be told that they cannot save themselves. It either binds the sinner in despair or wounds their pride. Numbers of converts would then decrease. Such was Finney's thinking.

Yet he totally ignored that thousands were saved through such preaching during the First Awakening and in the early years of the Second. The Old Evangelical evangelism had resulted in thousands of strong and sure conversions. Finney thought he could do better with a softer form of the gospel. If that stern and negative gospel preached by the fathers accomplished so much, how much more could be done under an easier gospel, one that was not as negative? For his desire of greater numbers of converts, Finney shifted the traditional presentation of the gospel with its emphasis on the sinful nature of man and the work of God in conversion to the more "positive" presentation that man could deliver his own soul through a right use of his will.

Finney's theological problems have not been sufficiently discussed by his biographers or his modern-day promoters. They often look at his results without examining how he obtained them. It is as if it would be sacrilege against the memory of the great evangelist to analyze exactly what form of gospel he was presenting to his hearers. Yes, he got a multitude of professions, but how? What sort of gospel did the people respond to? What was the fruit of such a presentation? It was a “gospel” that presented the following plan of salvation: stop your rebellion, make yourself a new heart and make your decision for Christ. Thus, salvation went from repentance and conversion to decision-making on the part of the sinner.

Elements of Revivalism

Revivalism then is a system that seeks to bring the sinner not to repentance but to the point where he will make the right and proper exercise of his will toward God. The evangelist is trying to get the sinner to change his mind (in this context, not to be confused with repentance[216]) about his sin. If he would simply resolve to stop sinning, then he would be saved. To this end, many methods were used, and the results of those methods is what we want to now examine. So, we ask the question "What are the marks of revivalism?"

1. Pragmatism

[215] My former pastor, Allen Dickerson, who pastored Maranatha Baptist Church in Elkton, Maryland, used to say “If you have a bad well of water, it does no good to paint the pump”.

[216] Most revivalists, in that day and in ours, reject the need for repentance in salvation, incorrectly labeling it as a part of what they misunderstand to be “Lordship Salvation” or adding of works to grace. Their motivations are clear- to insist on a change of heart and a resulting change of life in a new convert would severely reduce the number of professions.

Revivalism is the friend of pragmatism. It uses whatever method works in getting men to "make decisions for Christ" or getting them to "weep and wail before God." Since salvation is seen as the work of man rather than the work of God, it is the joint responsibility of both preacher and sinner to save themselves. The evangelist will use any methods to get the sinner to make that right use of his will toward God. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is not considered important in such matters.

Such pragmatism is seen in the "revival meeting" for example. Evangelistic meetings are often referred to as “revival meetings”, as if revivals can be scheduled by the calendar. While I was pastoring in Mebane, North Carolina in 1993-1994, I noticed the local Pilgrim Holiness church had a banner draped over their building whenever they had special meetings which proclaimed, "Revival in Progress!" The banner would remain up for a week, then be taken down. I guess the revival was over. A few months later, the same banner would go up with a new series of meetings- "Revival in Progress!" A few days later, the banner would come down again. One would be left with the impression that God was visiting that church with revival a few times a year for exactly one week at a time.

A modern "revival meeting" is when a pastor brings in an evangelist or a special speaker in the hopes that the preacher will revive the congregation and that large number of sinners will be converted. The revival meeting in this context becomes a man-centered effort for revival that can be brought about with proper organization and advertising. It is full of gimmicks and tricks to get people to attend meetings, like "pack a pew day", representing absentees as black sheep, using thermometers to gage attendance. Practices used in modern “bus evangelism” are even worse and are more carnal.[217] Yet would they not be justified in revivalism? Since conversion is the work of man, then every effort must be made to get the sinner to change his mind and any such work would be justified if it resulted in conversions. The sinner must be convinced of the rightness of the gospel and be brought to a point where he is willing to make a positive “decision” for Christ. Any means or technique which accomplishes this must be considered good or God-honored as it helped bring the sinner to salvation. Never mind if it was Biblical, it worked! Hence, Bozo the Clown, bus routes that cover three time zones and "hit-the-pastor-in-the-face-with-a-cream-pie" day are judged as good and honored by God if they are tools that result in conversions.

Methodology and not the Holy Spirit is the rule of the day.

2. Arminianism and Pelagianism

Second, revivalism is based on an Arminian (or what is popularly known as Arminianism) view of salvation in discounting or minimizing the work of God in bringing the sinner to conversion. This theological system has a very optimistic view of fallen man as we have already discussed. This wrong view of the doctrines of sin and of man lead to incorrect methods of evangelizing the sinner.

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[217] As I write this in March of 2025, an Independent, “Fundamental” Baptist church in Nebraska was advertising a pagan easter egg hunts and the Easter Bunny for their upcoming Easter/Resurrection Sunday services. But this would be justified if such carnal antics brought in a large number of unsaved people to the church on that day, and if any of them got “saved”.

Remember, Finney believed man was a sinner by choice but not by nature. Man's problem was not a sin nature but that he made a wrong use of the will.

Pelagianism also enters in. Arminianism downplays the role of God in salvation while Pelagianism overemphasizes the ability of man to save himself. The foundation for this view is that the sin problem in man lies in the will and not in the nature. Preaching and methods are directed toward the will in order to make the sinner change his mind about God and "decide for God." Wrong views of hamartiology and soteriology must necessarily result in wrong methods to try to get sinners saved. There will be a vast difference between a Biblicist or even a moderate Calvinist in his evangelism as compared to a revivalist Arminian or Pelagian. The Biblicist/moderate Calvinist will rely on doctrinal preaching, much prayer and the inward work of the Spirit for conversions. The Arminian/Pelagian will rely on highly emotional preaching and every trick in the book to get professions.

3. Excess Emotionalism

Revivalism is responsible for bad emotionalism and false experiences. It encourages emotional outbursts as a sign of salvation. The greater the outward manifestation and sign, the deeper the work of repentance, or so it is thought. The preacher wants to see some results from his preaching. Since the revivalist evangelist believes that it is he and his preaching that is largely responsible for conversions, he needs this "instant gratification" that his message was a success. Many such preachers are judged by their results. A good evangelist will have many conversions and the best way to know whether sinners were converted is to have them "walk the aisle" and make a public profession or to make a grand emotional display (preferably at the altar). The more outward results he can report and the more emotionalism he can generate, the greater esteem he is held in by other revivalist preachers.

Charles Spurgeon had some strong words for the cry for emotional services in his day:

> "It is a fact that thousands of persons live close to our notable sanctuaries and never dream of entering them. Even curiosity seems dulled. Why is this? Whence this distaste for the ordinary services of the sanctuary? I believe that the answer in some measure, lies in a direction little suspected. There has been a growing pandering to sensationalism; and, as this wretched appetite increases in fury the more it is gratified, it is at last found to be impossible to meet its demands. Those who have introduced all sorts of attraction into their services have themselves to blame if people forsake their more sober teachings, and demand more and more of the noisy and the singular. Like dram-drinking, the thirst for excitement grows. At first, the fiery spirit may be watered down; but the next draught of it must be stronger, and soon it is required to be overproof. The customary gin-drinker wants something stronger than the pure spirit, deadly though that draught may be. One said, as she tossed off her glass, 'Do you call that gin? Why, I know a place where, for threepence, I can get a drink that will burn your very soul out!' Yes, gin leads on to vitrol; and the sensational leads to the outrageous, if not to the

blasphemous...I feel deeply grieved at some of the inventions of modern missions work."[218]

Thus, did the revivalists set the stage for the modern-day Charismatics who placed the emphasis on subjective Christianity.[219]

4. Lay Ministry and Little, If Any, Theological Preparation and Training

Revivalism encourages an uneducated lay ministry. We have already talked about the increase of uneducated young men (exhorters) who possessed a heated zeal to preach and to get in on the excitement of the revival. This was the plague of the Western Revival, that so many of these uneducated men rose to positions of prominence. With this rose unchecked fanaticism and gross doctrinal and practical errors. Educated ministers were looked down upon as being the guardians of the despised "old order", too taken with stodgy old theology to be concerned with souls. It was these educated ministers who were thought to be responsible for withholding the glorious "new truths" and manifestations brought about by the uneducated lay preachers, namely the emotional manifestations of the revival. The theologians couched the truths of God in theological language and were too busy fooling around with Greek and Hebrew to preach to the people in the manner they needed to be preached to. But the lay preachers spoke their language, came down to their level and met their spiritual needs.

An uneducated ministry can be very dangerous because such preachers know little doctrine and thus have little or no doctrinal discernment. How can one know the truth unless he is also able to recognize the error? Such ministers are in danger of being swept away with any and every wind of doctrine. If it sounds good and if it works, they will use it. They do not have the theological training to be able to analyze such doctrines and movements by the Bible. They cannot take the time for "book larnin'" for they are too busy saving souls. And why do they need all that education? They see more conversions without their education than the "regular clergy" does with theirs.

It was the Western Revivals that brought about the lay ministry and as a result, the errors abounded. Any Tom, Dick or Harry now took it upon himself to preach, whether he was called or not. The desire to preach and the ability to scream like a banshee and to work a crowd into a lather were considered to be the most important prerequisites. The apostolic warning about laying hold on no man suddenly was ignored. These preachers were not tried and tested in a Bible College and seminary atmosphere where they could mature, learn their lessons, work under experienced ministers and grow.

The precedent of an uneducated ministry now became the standard. The so-called Third Great Awakening, starting in 1857, was largely the work of laymen. The ministry of D. L. Moody was based on such thinking. Moody had absolutely no formal theological education as he began his ministry. He later realized his need and

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[218] Charles Spurgeon, *An All Around Ministry*. Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1960, pages 296-297.

[219] We had a lady who attended our church for a while and then stopped since our services were not emotional enough for her. She liked to wave her handkerchief during the service, a practice I did not encourage.

defects in this area and considered entering into a program of formal theological study but was discouraged from doing so. He was told that it was his ignorance that made him so popular with the crowds. If he earned a degree, it would destroy his rapport with the people.

This attitude then led to a rejection of ministerial training and a general decline in the preparation and education of the pastor and other Christian workers.

Classical ministerial education died, killed by revivalism. The demand for such preachers dwindled to nothing.

Now we realize that not all ministers can attend Bible College through no fault of their own. My former pastor, Allen Dickerson, who pastored Maranatha Baptist Church in Elkton, Maryland for 55 years, had no formal education beyond the 8th grade. He dropped out of school to exercise race horses. Then he was drafted into the Navy in 1944. After the war, he married, had a son and was working full time at General Motors. He had no time for Bible College. His theological education consisted of a Scofield Reference Bible and a set of Matthew Henry's *Commentaries*. He studied privately and trained himself. While a formal education is desirable, it is not for everyone and it will not protect one from apostasy or other theological errors. With the general decline in the quality and spirituality of most Bible Colleges today, we would wonder just how desirable it would be to attend many of them.

5. Decline in Theology and Doctrine

There was also a separation of theology from evangelism. Emotional preaching was seen as being more effective than doctrinal preaching. More conversions were to be had in preaching at the heart rather than at the head. Theology only tended to confuse the sinner. He had to be warned of hellfire, not be lectured on hamartiology.

It must be remembered that the majority of revivalist preachers have either no theological training or a very superficial one. In the mid-1800s, theological training fell into disrepute as something being totally unnecessary. Theology also suffered. The foundation of preaching shifted from theological to emotional for two reasons: it was received better by the crowds and the preachers could preach in no other manner.

6. Worship Services Replaced By Evangelistic Services

Church services were now geared primarily for evangelism rather than for the saints- preaching mainly to sinners rather than saints. In the "old days" of the First Awakening (and before), church services were designed to meet the need of the saints. This is not to say that evangelization of the lost was neglected for it certainly was not. The services were marked by a worshipful spirit, reverence, dignity and strong doctrinal preaching.

All this changed under the heavy hand of revivalism. Emotion displaced theology from her throne. The sinner became more important than the saint. Services were geared to seeing as many sinners saved while the saint sat in church and was spiritually starved. All he heard were messages centered on salvation themes. Yet the saint was already saved. He needed to "go unto perfection" and leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to the strong meat of the Word (Hebrews 5:15-6:2).

The shift from saint in sinner also hurt the services themselves. Worship became a thing of the past. Preaching was deemed more important than worship. Later, singing became even more important than the preaching. No longer were church services marked by that reverence and dignity of the past. Now, the congregation was expected to shout, run the aisles and act in a more undignified manner.

Such attitudes were encouraged from the pulpit. If no such outbursts took place, the service (or preacher) was considered to be a failure. This attitude hurt the dignity of worship and the church has yet to recover today.

A good example of this situation is given by George Marsden, commenting on the typical evangelical church service in the 1950s:

> "Many of the...churches...were basically centers for missions and evangelism. Morning worship was not primarily for building up the saints; rather it was for evangelizing the unconverted. In such churches no public service without the invitation to accept Jesus into one's heart would be a proper service. Worship itself was secondary and subordinate to evangelism, so that catchy hymns and choruses or thrilling xylophone recitals to warm up the audience transformed or entirely crowded out the traditional American Protestant liturgy. Liturgy was, in fact, an alien word in many such churches."[220]

Such a mentality of "low-church services" is a direct result of Finney's revivalism.

7. Weaker Professions

Converts under revivalist preaching tended to be weaker with a larger percentage of empty and temporary professions. Compare emotional preaching with worshipful doctrinal preaching and you will find that the stronger doctrinal preaching produces stronger converts. They may be numerically fewer than those produced under the revivalist preaching, but they will be stronger and more durable. The Finney half of the Second Awakening produced large numbers of professors, but it was later revealed that the majority of these converts were emotional ones- they made a "decision for Christ" but there had been no change of heart or nature. They lasted for a season but soon fell away.

8. A Spirit of Denunciation

A spirit of denunciation was born toward those who did not fully support. revivalists and revivalist methods. They were and still are today condemned as "enemies of revival" and "men with no passion for souls" if they question the rightness of revivalist preaching and methods. Peer pressure among ministers became very strong under revivalism. They would either conform to the spirit of the age within the churches

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[220] George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, page 85. We are also starting to see more "celebration services" instead of worship services, even in professing Fundamentalist churches.

or be condemned as a sort of cold-hearted liberal. If they would not conform, then they were warned to keep quiet and not to expose or condemn the revivalists. After all, God was greatly using then to win souls and they were winning more souls than was the critical preacher.

This spirit of denunciation tends to be the strongest from the weakest of preachers. In a letter from Nettleton written to a Mr. Aiken after his second meeting with Finney, dated January 13, 1827, he notes the inexperience, ignorance and imprudence of the young evangelists who followed Finney. Nettleton also noticed they tended to slander pastors who opposed them.[221] Pastors would invite these younger Finneyite evangelists into their churches, only to be turned out because of doctrinal and practical errors made by them in their inexperience and zeal. This led the younger men to develop bad feelings toward these churches and pastors who would not support them.

9. Evangelists Opposing Pastors

Revivalist evangelists tended to set themselves up over the pastors. Nettleton went out of his way not to set himself up against the local pastor. He considered the settled minister as having more authority than the itinerant evangelist within the area of that church. Yet Finney and those after him tended to look down on pastors as they had a tendency to oppose or question the new breed of evangelists. The pastors were quite conservative in their theology and style and they feared the results from letting the young evangelists into their pulpits. In his letter to Aiken, Nettleton complained that "The young itinerants, in their zeal to extend the work, began to denounce all those settled ministers who would not go all lengths with them."[222] These young evangelists would run roughshod over the pastors, totally ignoring them and undermining their influence in their towns. The evangelists were a law unto themselves, under no one's authority.

This was a trait of the ministry of John R. Rice, who was an ardent promoter of Finney in the 20th century. One of the most damaging books Rice ever wrote was entitled *The Evangelist* in which he exalted the office of evangelist at the expense of every other office. As Finney before him, Rice had little use for "ministers", especially if they did not agree with him, his doctrine or his methods. Rice only exalted certain types of evangelists- his type and those in his camp. He had little use for pastors, missionaries or Bible teachers. Although Charles Spurgeon was a pastor and never worked as a vocational evangelist, Rice maintains he really wasn't a pastor but an evangelist. Rice tried to convert Jonathan Edwards from a pastor to an evangelist simply because he had "500 saved from one sermon" but it is obvious that Edwards was a pastor and Bible teacher and would not have put his approval on Rice or his methodology. Rice, in the spirit of Finney, said evangelists were more important than pastors or teachers.[223] Pastors and teachers are lesser in the value of their gifts and their place in the work of Christ than the evangelist. Why? Because the evangelist wins

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[221] Tyler and Bonar, page 347.

[222] Ibid.

[223] John R Rice, *The Evangelist.* Murfreesboro TN: Sword of the Lord, page 14.

more souls.[224] As a result, the gifts of the evangelist are of more importance than the gifts of pastoral duty and teaching.[225]

Rice also credited the evangelist with being primarily responsible for setting up Bible institutes to train soulwinners than any other group of men.[226] The result of all this was the evangelist being set against the pastor, teacher or missionary. Finney and his followers managed to separate very friends and co-workers by exalting one over the other for no other reason that the evangelist won more souls than any other type of ministry.

The "al", the "ist" and the "ism" of Revival

Revivalism has developed into a full-fledged theological system, and this has contributed to its problems. There is certainly nothing wrong with revival since it comes from God and is often a great spiritual boon to the church. But once man begins to dabble in the work of God and administrate it in his own wisdom, corruption must eventually set in. This is demonstrated in comparing the terms "revival", "revivalist" and "revivalism."

O. Talmadge Spence, the founder and first president of Foundations Bible College and Theological Seminary in Dunn, North Carolina[227] wrote an interesting booklet entitled *The Fabric of the Fundamental* in which he discussed the importance of the "al", "ist" and "ism" of any movement. We quote from his book:

> "Being fallen and human, it is natural for man to proceed towards an unbalanced position in all things. The first step (in Fundamentalism) is to overemphasize the "al" of the Fundamental Word of God...This paves the way for the second step as man lengthens the extremity and becomes an "ist" as a Fundamentalist. Finally, man is overwhelmed into the bondage of the power of an overemphasis as in the cognate of FundamentalISM. It is the "ism" that finally destroys the Fundamental."[228]

Now replace "revival" for "fundamental" as well as "revivalism" for "Fundamentalism" and the problem becomes apparent. The doctrine is mutated into a system! The fundamentals of the Word of God become warped into a manmade theological system called Fundamentalism. The truth of revival also suffers as it becomes "revivalism." Man takes a good then from God and lowers it into a system he can understand and control. Finney did this with revival. He took a truth and built a manmade theological structure for it to dwell in. No such system was erected in the First Awakening or in the early years of the Second and thus revival managed to stay pure.

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[224] Ibid., pages 14-15.
[225] Ibid., page 16.
[226] Ibid., pages 38-39.
[227] He died in 2000. He was one of the best men I ever knew and was a godly divine, a rarity in the 20th century and in Fundamentalism.
[228] O. Talmadge Spence, *The Fabric of the Fundamental*. Dunn, NC: Anvil Press, 1990, page 20

Spence continues:

> "Man is prone to take the most blessed thing in his life to an extreme; man takes his God-given "als" of the Fundamental and becomes self-centered as an "ist" and finally places all his faith in an "ism".[229]

Again, substitute "revival" for "fundamental."
But what is the difference between the "ist" and the "ism"?

> "We notice in a study of these cognates their respective peculiarities. The "ist" is 'one that performs a specified action; one that makes or produces; one that specializes in a specified art or science or skill; one that adheres to or advocates a specified doctrine or system or code of behavior." "Ism" is no less frail: 'A distinctive doctrine, cause or theory; an act, practice, process; manner of action or behavior characteristic of a specified person or thing; abnormal state or condition resulting from an excess of a specified thing or marked by resemblance to such a person or thing; adherence to a system or a class of principles; characteristic or peculiar feature or trait.' (Webster)."[230]

Revival, revivalist, revivalism- the downward slide![231] Now the doctrine and practice of revival is held hostage to the theological system of revivalism which is promoted by its prophets, the revivalists. So imprisoned, the pure doctrine and practice or revival may never be able to emerge. Indeed, revivalist thinking is so ingrained into the church (and especially in Fundamentalism) that to depart from it invites one to charges of heresy. Who says we must give an invitation after every service? Which verse says so? Why do we need to have a Sunday School? Could we afford to give up some of our evangelistic practices (visitation, evangelistic or revival services, invitations, singing gospel songs...) and still be burdened for revival and souls? It is very difficult to do so today. No longer can we preach and minister like an Edwards or Payson for that is simply no longer acceptable in a church that has been exposed to Finneyite revivalism for nearly 200 years. A man who would seek to release the true doctrines and practices of revival from the theological system of revivalism would be a pioneer although he would be doing nothing new. He would be savagely criticized for his return to revival principles without revivalism. It is time to drop the "ism" and for the "ist" to rethink his position on the original "al". Revivalism must be abandoned, and the revivalist must center his efforts not on revivalism as a system but on revival as a doctrine.

Revivalism and New Evangelicalism

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[229] Ibid., page 21.
[230] Ibid., pages 21-22
[231] I interpret the Bible dispensationally and I have to beware of reducing it to a mere human system; dispensations > dispensational > dispensationalist > dispensationalism, where it is reduced to a human theological system. The same is true for any theological system.

The ultimate result of Finney's ministry was the official development of what would be known as revivalism. Finney cannot be credited with originating the tenets of this methodology for he merely borrowed them from the Methodists of the Kentucky camp meetings and refined them. Yet his stress on methodology in evangelism will be his legacy.

It is for this reason why it can be rightly said that Charles Finney was the true father of New Evangelicalism in practice, not in doctrine. Modern New Evangelicalism as a movement goes back to 1948 with the ministries of Harold Ockenga and Billy Graham but philosophically, it must go back to the late 1820s and the ministry of Finney.

The methodology of New Evangelicalism is something that has been all but ignored by modern writers. Much of the concentration on this movement deals with its willingness to compromise with liberalism and to seek a middle ground with enemies of evangelicalism. All this is accurate and ought to be stressed. But is this all there is to New Evangelicalism? By its very name, New Evangelicalism, we can see that the movement preaches a change in evangelism, with the stress on the "new." A new evangelicalism and evangelism for a new age!

This evangelistic element of New Evangelism has been overlooked. In June of 1992, I sat in the office of Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, President of Foundations Bible College in Dunn, North Carolina. In discussing my plans for writing the thesis for my Master of Theology degree entitled *A History of Separation in Twentieth Century American Fundamentalism*,[232] I brought up my belief in Finney as the true father of New Evangelicalism. I mentioned that Finney emphasized the method in evangelism over the work of the Spirit and that this was the same emphasis in the beginning years of the New Evangelical movement. Dr. Spence fully agreed with my assessment, saying he had been harboring similar views of Finney for some time. I am sure other Fundamentalists who have studied Finney and his emphasis on method have come to similar conclusions but to my knowledge, no one has yet to write of it or to fully analyze it. I shall attempt to do so in an introductory fashion as I deal with revivalism.

New Evangelicalism can be defined best by the man who first coined the term, Dr. Harold John Ockenga:

> "While reaffirming the theological view of Fundamentalism, (New Evangelicalism) repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. (New Evangelicalism sets forth a ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and...summons to social involvement...It differs from Fundamentalism in its repudiation of separation and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day."[233]

Ockenga furthered this first definition with a second:

> "Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the

[232] Available at https://www.pilgrimway.org/writings-and-commentaries/.

[233] John E. Ashbrook, "Thirty Years of New Evangelicalism", The Ohio Bible Fellowship Visitor, December 1976, pages 1,2).

> theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many evangelicals...It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political and economic areas of life."[234]

New Evangelicalism is literally a new way to evangelize. The old methods of preaching and personal witnessing were considered obsolete for the "modern" age. Since man had progresses to a certain social and scientific level, evangelism must adapt. Old methods that once worked were thought to be unable to meet the demands of the current age. A new method was needed to evangelize the modern sinner. New Evangelism then degenerated into depending too much on its "new method" rather than upon the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners.

Did this thinking first originate in the 1940s and 1950s under John Harold Ockenga and Billy Graham?[235] No. The premise of New Evangelism with its stress on the "method" in evangelism goes all the way back to the 1820s and the end of the Second Great Awakening. Its founder then cannot be Ockenga (he simply tagged it) but rather Charles Grandison Finney. And if Finney can be said to be the founder of the "method-evangelism" of New Evangelism then the forerunners of the movement which matured in the mid-twentieth century would include not only Billy Graham and Carl Henry, but Dwight Moody and R. A. Torrey.

Such assertions are bound to raise eyebrows. How did Finney, Moody, Torrey and others like them help contribute to the modern redefinition of separation? By their emphasis on method and result in evangelism over the power of the Holy Spirit. This is seen in the practice of Finney in the waning years of the Second Great Awakening in the United States. His practices and philosophies laid the foundation that would encourage three generations to redefine separation for the sake of church growth and super-evangelism.

The birth of practical (not the doctrinal) aspect of New Evangelicalism starts with Finney in the mid-1820s. Before this time, the major preachers of the First Awakening, including Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley and Samuel Davies (to name but a few), stressed that conversion was the work of God and not man. These men preached to the sinner but relied on the Holy Spirit to bring about the work of conversion. No method was used to bring about conversions. The old ways worked well because they were scriptural. There was no need for anything new. Invitations and personal work as we know it today were unknown. This practice of evangelism obviously worked as multitudes were swept into the kingdom without benefit of busses, Sunday School, altar calls or organized visitation nights.

The Second Great Awakening which started 40 years later followed much of the same ideas of pastoral theology and homiletics as the First Great Awakening.

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[234] David Cloud, *The Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*. Oak Harbor WA: Way of Life, 1992, page 158.

[235] I have no documentation to prove this, but I believe Graham would have spoken highly of Finney and his methods. Graham criticized very few people.

There were more departures, especially in the frontier of Kentucky. The camp meetings which sprang from the revival in this area became more dependent upon emotionalism while the eastern areas which were affected by the revival continued to rely on doctrinal preaching, prayer and divine power for conviction. People got saved in the West with its "hollering", rejection of scholarship and institutions and emotion. People also were saved in the East where the preaching was more dignified and doctrinal.

Finney was the preeminent evangelist who worked during the waning years of the Second Awakening. He saw much in the way of results and was deeply involved in the revival. He became convinced that revivals could be sparked and sustained if a certain set of Biblical requirements were met. Finney sought to help God in the starting and maintenance of revivals. He came to reject the belief fostered by the First Awakening that revivals were the work of God, sent by Him at certain times for definite reasons. Finney came to believe and promote man's work in revival and evangelism over the work of the Holy Spirit. Again, this was because of his faulty understanding of the nature of the sin problem in man.

Finney believed the sin problem resided in the will of man rather than in his nature. Salvation then should be aimed at the will of the sinner rather than stressing the need for a divine change of nature. This theology and its resulting methodology resulted in Finney taking a stand against nearly every theological position taken by the major figures of the First Awakening, especially concerning salvation, evangelism and revival. The direction of evangelism then shifted from the sin nature of man to his will.

Finney gave birth to an orthopraxy which put evangelism and results ahead of the work of the Holy Spirit. This was picked up by later evangelists like Dwight Moody and R. A. Torrey, who became known for their union campaigns and strong emphasis on soulwinning and evangelistic preaching. The next generation to embrace the practical aspects of "Finneyism" included Billy Sunday, J. Frank Norris, John R. Rice and Jack Hyles.

Examining the ministries of these men should tell us how separation suffered under the "new methods" of Finney which would be reborn as New Evangelicalism and the "new methods" of Ockenga. Both men sought to change the current mood of evangelicalism. Finney saw the church in the death-grip of what he wrongly considered to be a form of hyper-Calvinism. Ockenga saw the church in the iron fist of an intolerant separatist Fundamentalism that spent too much condemning sin and preaching the new birth.

The parallel between Finney's philosophy and Ockenga's are interesting. Both sought to reform the mainline movements of their day; Finney went after Calvinism and Ockenga took aim at Fundamentalism. Both contended that these movements did serve a historical purpose but that their day was over, and they needed to be replaced. Both were dissatisfied with evangelical Calvinism and mainline Fundamentalism respectively. Finney stressed a change in doctrine with a resulting change in orthopraxy. Ockenga worked this in reverse. He changed the practice and that resulted in changes in doctrine later. Theology was secondary to the method and movement of both men. Finney saw theology as an impediment to conversion while Ockenga saw the doctrine of separation as holding back evangelicalism. Both were willing to

compromise and discard these doctrines (Finney by repudiating them, Ockenga by dialoging with them).

The key word here is "new"- something new to replace something old. Both old-line evangelical Calvinism and Fundamentalism worked in their days. Yet it was the fear that the old ways would not work in the new age that drove both men to abandon the old paths and seek for the new thing.

No one would assert that Ockenga had the same type of doctrinal problems as Finney. We are sure Ockenga would have rejected the rampant and unchecked emotionalism which characterized the Finney revivals. Ockenga was more doctrinally orthodox than Finney. We are stressing that both men were dissatisfied with the prevailing religious climates of their day and sough not a reform but a dramatic change. Both men would rely on the method of their new movements to bring about the change. If their methods were adopted, then all would be well. If the new methods of Finney would be adopted, it was promised that the millennium may come to America within three years. If the methods of new-evangelicalism were adopted (namely repudiation of separation, greater social involvement and a willingness to dialogue the truth with modernists and liberals) then evangelicalism and Fundamentalism would be revitalized into a force that could change society (and supposedly see many more conversions).

We emphasize the common denominator between Finney and the New Evangelical is the method rather than the Spirit. Neither revivalism nor New Evangelicalism are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for their successes. Both are pragmatic movements. "Do this in this way and we guarantee success!" is the promise of both movements. It seems to be working, at least outwardly. Both revivalist and New Evangelical churches are large and seem to be growing at rapid rates. But both spiritual superstructures are built upon the weak foundation of human method. Both must eventually collapse and when they do, great will be the fall!

It is interesting to see how Fundamentalists and other orthodox preachers embraced Finney whole-heartedly while they condemned Ockenga. This inconsistency cannot be explained except either due to 1) ignorance about Finney or 2) pragmatism, that Finney's new methods worked better than Ockega's New Evangelism when it came to producing "revival". As we have seen, it is inconsistent to accept Finney's methods while rejecting Ockenga's methods.

Ignorance of Finney is one reason why so many otherwise orthodox men support him. They see Finney lionized in the writings of men like John R. Rice and such praise becomes almost a standard of faith. To disagree with it is to condemn oneself as an "opponent of soulwinning" or as a "New Evangelical" and as a compromiser. So instead of reading Finney and drawing their own conclusions, these men simply fell into lockstep with the "party line". This is an example of a self-inflicted ignorance caused by theological peer-pressure to conform to a created doctrinal narrative and few preachers had the courage to buck that narrative.

Pragmatism would be the other reason why Finney was embraced but Ockega was spurned. Finney claimed to see a lot of revival, something even Asahel Nettleton admitted. I don't read where Ockenga and his supporters saw much revival. Many of them were not revivalists. Their ministries were calmer, quieter and more focused on pastoral teaching than in evangelism. Thus, Finney and his followers got more

“results” than did Ockenga and his followers. More results mean more attention and more notoriety. Since many preachers are “results-driven”, they would have embraced Finney’s methods as being able to produce more “action” and “results”. Ockenga’s version of these new evangelistic methods were based on a quieter, more scholarly approach to evangelism. Fundamentalists in the latter half of the twentieth century and the new-fundamentalists and pseudo-fundamentalists of the early twenty-first century were not and are not known for their scholarship.

The practice of Finney's New Evangelicalism can be seen at the New Lebanon Conference we discussed in chapter 7. In May 1828, Lyman Beecher, one-time opponent of Finney and supporter of Nettleton, jumped sides and supported Finney when he realized that Finney would eventually emerge the victor in his controversy with Nettleton. Beecher traveled to Philadelphia where Finney was preaching and signed a "treaty of mutual silence." The signatories agreed "to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations and conduct designed and calculated to keep those subjects before the public mind" and "to induce our friends on either side to do the same." This was New Evangelicalism- remain silent on the doctrinal controversy for the cause of the greatest good and for the sake of unity. Shut up and just win souls! But was not the controversy still burning? Nothing was really resolved at New Lebanon or in Philadelphia.

Nettleton never stopped his criticism because he knew the stakes were too high. Doctrine, revival and the truth of God were all under assault by Finney and his followers and he was unwilling to be silenced to win souls or to promote revival. Finney happily signed the document, showing his willingness to compromise on doctrine as would any New Evangelical. Nettleton played the lonely Fundamentalist as he refused to be silenced. He stood for the right even when all the world was standing against him. This compromise agreement would be the prototype for all such future compromises.

Chapter 10: Classical Christianity

Far be it from me to constantly criticize and find fault yet never offer any solution or remedy. While I have been hard on Finney and his system, it is not due to any animosity toward him personally but rather his theological system and its effects. I am bothered by two things: that Finney's memory is so revered and that his methods are so universally accepted. Finney should be considered a heretic today for his Pelagianism and teachings of sinless perfection.

The theological system and practice of Revivalism (which is closely associated with the teachings and practices of Finney) has greatly damaged the church and her evangelism. Its Pelagianism, populism and rejection of traditional orthodoxy and orthopraxy has taken something very special from the church, namely its worship and scholarship. Both have suffered since the days of Finney and it should be a top priority of the modern church to reclaim these gems.

The Death of Classical Christianity

The most significant damage that Finneyism and revivalism have done regards how it has damaged what can be called Classical Christianity. If we were to compare American religious life at the dawn of the 21st century to the early 19th century, we cannot help but notice the great change. How inferior is church life and practice today as compared with 200 years ago! What a weaker brand of Christian we have today than they had two centuries ago! We go so far as to say that Charles Finney helped to kill this concept called Classical Christianity that the earlier revival men (Edwards, Whitefield, Nettleton, Wesley) sought to promote.

We must mark this shift from Classical Christianity of the 18th and 19th century to what we have today (which may be called "Popular Christianity"). We have already marked how the revivalist movements of the Kentucky Methodists and later adopted by Finney sought to discard any and all "old means and methods" and replace them with new ones. New methods for a new age were called for. What had worked in years prior was rejected as too old-fashioned. Since a great new era of revival had come on America, new philosophies and practices were required to accommodate it. America was changing and the church and her methods had to change as well.

Revivalism advocated religious populism. Religion must appeal to the masses and gospel truth must be brought down to their level. Instead of trying to raise people up to the level of Scripture, the Bible instead suffers being lowered to where the people are. This is not to suggest any form of spiritual aloofness but is rather to emphasize that the Gospel is designed to improve and better those who receive it. Once a man is saved, everything about him should improve, from his dress, appearance, job performance, the books he reads, the people he associates with and music to which he listens. There ought to be a marked difference in culture (which is nothing more than the development of the total man) of a saint and a sinner. He becomes a new and a better creature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Not so with Finney and the Revivalists. The crowd must be accommodated. Whatever appealed to the broadest range of people was adopted and promoted. The

majority of the church goers on the frontier had little formal education and culture, and they led rough and difficult lives. The refinements of Classical Christianity did not appeal to them. Thus, Christianity had to be reinvented to be appealing to these frontiersmen. They demanded a less formal brand of Christianity that did not make the same educational, intellectual or theological demands on them that their brethren in the East enjoyed. The revivalist preachers were only too happy to oblige since it freed them from the heavy ministerial obligations and qualifications of Eastern preachers. They denounced an educated ministry, classical studies, Biblical languages and training for ministers. It was believed that all a man had to do was "open his mouth" and God would “fill it” with the Gospel.[236] An organized ministry and an orderly Christianity were discarded for a brand of Christianity that depended upon the immediate impressions of the Holy Spirit.

Defining Classical Christianity

What was abandoned during the early years of the 19th century? Classical Christianity was replaced with Populist Christianity. Classical Christianity depended upon Scripture and time-honored philosophies of education and ministry while Populist Christianity instead relied upon public opinion and outward signs of success.

Classical Christianity embodies those attitudes and practices that are founded upon similar ideas dating from the Reformation up until about 1830.[237] Classical Christianity certainly continued past 1830 but it was at about that time that the challenge from Populist Christianity emerged. In a few short years, Classical Christianity had been dethroned but it still continued in remnant form. This classical philosophy became a definite minority in American Christianity.

Classical Christianity is bound up in the word "culture." We would go as far as to attach the word "Biblical" to it and arrive at "Biblical culture." This can be defined as "the development of the person, intellectually, aesthetically and socially, to the full use of his powers, in compatibility with the recognized natural and biblical standards of excellence for the society given by God for the human race "[238] Notice, excellence! Excellence in every compartment of man's life. Biblical Culture and Classical Christianity demand only the best in all areas of life, from music to philosophy of education to preaching to literature to social interaction. It demands a holy life, discipleship, consecration and a quest for Christian purity. Is it any wonder then that this brand of Christianity is so unpopular? It dares to make severe demands upon those who would embrace it. It is pure discipleship.

Character, maturity and personal holiness come only through much personal tribulation and effort. It insists upon a change of mind and attitude. It sets high standards in all areas of life and accepts nothing that is second-best. It demands an adherence to a Biblical law, order and design in every compartment of life and rejects

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[236] This is a misapplication of Psalm 81:10. This error is used as a proof text that the preacher need not study for a message but that the Lord will give him “on the spot” inspiration when the time comes.

[237] And probably before. We wonder about the philosophies of the pre-Reformation groups such as the Waldensians. What we know of them shows they also had high standards of ministry and for their ministers. I have Waldensian ancestors on my father’s side of the family.

[238] Joye Spence, "Artistry in Voice" in Straightway, December 1987, page 2.

lawlessness and liberalism. Classical Christianity teaches the beauty, restraint and wisdom of modern apparel in accordance with elegance, manners with grace, speech with clarity, countenance with joy. With all this, Christ must be at the center.

This attitude can be traced all the way back to ancient Greece. During the "Golden Age" of Greece (500-100 B.C.) man recognized the treasury of classical instruction. He began to exemplify real devotion to the principles of truth, beauty and intellect. Greek education made one aware of culture as an essential part of living and not something that was to be extraneously sought after. Art was calm and ordered, with clarity of line and restraint in movement. Even music was subject to mathematics and avoided the appeal to emotion. Combined with Hebrew revelation, this became the most powerful intellectual and social force in human history, laying the foundation for Western civilization. Classical Christianity and Biblical Culture are at the very heart of Western civilization![239]

Remove them and the Western world teeters and eventually collapses. As Christians of this generation, we must cultivate classical learning for the world sees Christianity as being frivolous, flamboyant, artificial and lawless.

Yet it was all this that the revivalists, exhorters and Finney sought to destroy as "too high" and "too old-fashioned" and "too Calvinistic."[240]

Classical Christianity can best be defined by examining its parts and then comparing and contrasting them to revivalism and Populist Christianity. What exactly has been changed and challenged by the more modern form of Christianity that was ushered in during the 1820s by Charles Finney and his mentors, the Kentucky Revivalists?

A Change in Worship

We have already noticed the shift in church services as once being referred to as "worship services" only to be transformed to "evangelistic services."[241] The Sunday service was originally seen as time or worship and instruction in righteousness for Christians. Everything in the services was geared for the needy saint who needed an exhortation or rebuke from the Scripture. Since the church was comprised of Christians, the church service was geared toward them.

After the Western Revival, this emphasis began to change. The revival had produced many professions in a short period of time and it whetted the appetite of ministers who desired to see even more men saved. Such a hope is certainly honorable, but the means employed to bring it about were questionable at best.

The frontier mentality was not conducive to an attitude of worship. The men and women the western United States (as it was known then) had a hard life. They were far from civilization and lived in nearly constant fear from Indian attack. They had a hard lot. When they went to church, they wanted an escape from the hardships of their life. Eastern-style intellectualism and classical preaching did not appeal to them

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[239] We would really go back further for beginnings of this, all the way to Solomon, who had all this figured out centuries before the Greeks did.

[240] I am not a Calvinist, but I have never had any problem wanting to identify with a Classical mentality.

[241] Revivalists hate the term "worship service", wrongly equating it with formality. They prefer "preaching services".

because it was seen as too dull (or not entertaining enough) and too stodgy (since few of them had much education). They may have been intimidated by such a presentation of Christianity.

What worked in the East simply would not work in the West. The hard-living frontiersman demanded a form of escapism and entertainment. Revival excess in emotionalism fit the bill. Young, impulsive and uneducated men filled the pulpits and supplied the type of evangelism which appealed to the crowds. Religion became a form of entertainment in an area where there was little to do in one's spare time.

Church services in this atmosphere would reflect this mentality. A "worship service" was deemed too formal, too stodgy and too old-fashioned. An orderly time of worship would do little to stir the emotions as would an "old-fashioned hell-fire, barn-storming, shingle-pulling, leather-lunged preaching" would. A worship service might feed the soul and draw the Christian closer to God, yet an emotional-type of preaching service would do more to satisfy the emotion. Yet to assume that a worship service had to be as emotionally stirring as a bowl of cold oatmeal on a January morning is an error that many still embrace today.

Modern church services then have shifted their emphasis from one of feeding the needy saint to trying to get sinners who may be in attendance in the service saved. While sinners must be saved, we wonder if a church service is the best place to do evangelism. Certainly, we should witness to any sinner who may show up in the Sunday services, but it must be remembered that church services must be geared to those saints who make up the church. They must be taught the Scripture and must hear preaching on living the Christian life. They must be able to engage in worship both in song and in attendance during church services.

Christians must also have the opportunity to fellowship one with another. The only place this can be done is in the regularly scheduled church services. But if the entire service is to be geared to evangelism, then where will the saint get his needed spiritual ministrations? The sinner can be won anywhere at any time in any situation. The saint can only receive the spiritual opportunities he needs and is entitled to during church services.

A Change in Evangelism

It was believed that evangelism would flourish better under emotional preaching services than under traditional and more restrained worship services. If emotion replaced doctrine, it was believed that more sinners would respond to the gospel. It is true that there have been a vast number of professions under revivalist systems, yet the flaw becomes evident- there has been no corresponding revival to match this evangelism. Since the days of Finney, there have been no revivals that were anywhere near as powerful as either Awakening. Both First and Second Awakening leaders were ignorant of revivalist doctrines, yet strong, powerful and lingering revivals resulted. After Finney, there were awakenings under Moody and Sunday but there were of an inferior quality compared to the Whitefield/Edwards and Nettleton revivals. Modern revivalist evangelistic ministries, such as those exemplified by the likes of Billy Graham, John R. Rice and Jack Hyles have not been honored with such divine visitations. There have been a multitude of professions but no corresponding revival. They have certainly

multiplied the nation but have not increased the joy (Isaiah 9:3). We have great numbers of professions and baptisms but with no corresponding revival.

The problem with revivalist evangelism is that is basically Pelagian even if the evangelist is not. Like it or not, a moderate, evangelical Calvinistic system makes for a stronger evangelism. I am not a Calvinist,[242] but I realize that the Calvinistic philosophy and mentality (not necessarily the doctrine) is a better field to grow true revival. Modern revivalism, with its obsession for large number of converts has been more than willing to rewrite the rules of evangelism. No longer is the Holy Spirit given the central role in the salvation of the sinner. Now the personality and preaching skill of the evangelist is regarded as more important in evangelism than is the inner convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Man, and not God is the determining factor in evangelism.

A Change in the Christian Life

Revivalism changed the entire reason why Christians were saved. No longer was Romans 8:29 used to give the motivation and goal for our salvation, namely to be conformed to the image of Christ. Now it was taught that Christians were to be nothing more than soulwinners and recruiters for Christ, and that local churches were to be nothing more than "soul-saving stations." In years past, it was believed that a holy life and personal piety were most important. Christians were to be following hard after holiness and developing their personal relationships to God. Private devotions and family worship were strongly stressed. Theological education was centered around "divinity studies" when young preachers learned both their doctrines and their devotions. The revivalists changed this philosophy to the only reason God saves men is so they can be soulwinners.[243]

Preaching now centered on service rather than on relationship.[244] What are you doing for Christ rather than what you are for Christ. Work and activity were seen as the primary Christian virtues. Service is a major part of the Christian life but again, the revivalist tilted the balance away from personal holiness and how to live as a Christian. Practical messages replaced doctrinal messages and Christians were not being taught how to live or how to live close to God. Is it any wonder then that each succeeding generation of Christianity became weaker in its morals and in its spirituality?[245] The saints of the Awakening years of 1730-1830 were strong

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[242] I cannot accept certain Calvinist teachings such as their understanding of "total depravity" or "limited atonement" but I can accept their evangelistic philosophy and their love for Biblical culture and Biblical scholarship.

[243] Most revivalist Bible colleges are very heavy on "Church Education" which is nothing more than practical theology. Such courses stress how to baptize converts, how to set up visitation programs, how to run a bus ministry, etc. In some schools, 60 hours of a 128-hour undergraduate degree program involve such courses. To them, it is more important to know how to set up a Sunday School than to learn how to properly exegete a text of Scripture.

[244] There is practically no preaching on the Song of Solomon by these men!

[245] There is a high level of immorality, sexual abuse and adultery in such churches, because the pastors are too busy trying to increase attendance rather than on preaching on the Christian life, heart purity and developing a walk with God.

spiritually because their ministers preached doctrine. Once they lived right and once they were right with God, service would naturally flow from that.

Revivalism reversed the order. Now service was seen as the cause for holy living rather than vice versa. The busy man, the soulwinner, the nationally-known evangelist was elevated as the man God was the most pleased with because he was so busy. So many souls were being won under his ministry that it seemed blasphemous to question his relationship with God or if his life was clean. Pragmatism over purity! The prayer warrior, the scholar, the contemplative saint were all now all relegated to a second-class Christianity.

A Change in Education

Since revivalism got its start on the Kentucky frontier, it should be no surprise that scholarship and education would not be a major element. There was little if any educational opportunities or institutions in the West and even fewer of the settlers had any education to speak of. Since they were surviving just fine without education, they saw little need for the New England-style of scholarly Christianity. Revivalism was built on emotion, activity and results, not on scholarship.

As revivalism moved east, it brought its anti-intellectualism with it. Soulwinning was viewed as a mere exercise of the will on the part of the sinner that could be brought about by good preaching and heart-rendering appeals or by scaring the sinner into salvation by much emotional preaching on hellfire. Thus, emotional preachers were more in demand than the scholarly ones. Preachers were demanded to be able to stir the heart rather than to be able to present the truths of the gospel in a clear and logical manner. It does require much in the way of education or ministerial training to be able to holler, yell and entertain congregations. Ministerial training then suffered as requirements for pastors and evangelists were "dumbed down."

This new breed of minister did not have the need for classical education that was required of the preachers of previous generations. No longer was the Yale-educated Edwards-type preacher in demand. No longer were the Oxford-educated Wesley or Whitefield needed. The Puritan-type minister with their deep scholarship in classical literature, Biblical languages and theology need not apply. Men entered the ministry with no education or training and openly boasted of their ignorance and lack of education. They had no "book larnin'". They felt this would protect them from the evils which befell an educated ministry, such as suffering from a "cold heart"[246] or formalism. This is seen even today with the stale jibe at seminaries by calling them "cemeteries", as in "I didn't go to the cemetery, I mean, the seminary." And people always smiled as if a seminary education was the root of all evil. Ignorance was seen as the best preventative for coldness or apostasy. This led to a lack of demand for ministerial training and education in general suffered.

The thrust of ministerial education now changed from theological to practical. No longer were the classical fields as theology, languages, homiletics or hermeneutics emphasized. Now it was "how-to" courses- how to preach, how to baptize, how to plant a church, how to conduct an evangelistic campaign. This resulted in many preachers who knew how to do things but did not know their theology and who were unable to

[246] This was a favorite Finney cliché which he frequently directed toward his opponents.

teach their congregations. But that was not seen as a handicap since teaching ministries were not in widespread demand in revivalist circles.

The greatest preachers in church history took the opposite view of ministerial education and preparation. For example, Jonathan Edwards and the average minister of his day believed the training of the intellect to be of paramount importance.

In the beginning of our nation's history, our spiritual forefathers understood the necessity of education and saw a sound mind as a character quality required by God. The Puritans placed great value on education and were typically the leading educators. As Richard Hofstadter notes,

> "Among the first generation of American Puritans, men of learning were both numerous and honored. There were about one university-trained scholars, usually from Cambridge or Oxford, to every forty of fifty families. Puritans expected their clergy to be distinguished for scholarship, and during the entire colonial period all but five percent of the clergymen of New England Congregational churches had college degrees. These Puritan emigrants, with their reliance upon the Book and their wealth of scholarly leadership, founded that intellectual and scholarly tradition which for three centuries enabled New England to lead the country in educational and scholarly achievements."[247]

With Finney and the decline of the Second Great Awakening, this testimony to academic and intellectual excellence waned. Because so many of the pastors of "dead" churches (i.e., those who did not attain the desired evangelistic results) were not "converted," (i.e., they disagreed with Finney and men like him), a polarization took place between men of the "Spirit" and men of "intelligence." A distinction was created where none existed before. It increasingly became a badge of honor to be ignorant! To be educated could well be grounds enough to call into question one's conversion--or at least his sanctification. What the modern minister needed was not so much an education in biblical languages, orthodoxy, history and the like but an understanding of human psychology and the techniques of moving the sinner's will to choose God. It seems that what God needed was not ministers but salesmen. As Iain Murray writes of this time,

> "(I)n the new age of democracy, now dawning, traditional positions and offices stood for far less, and half-educated, fast-talking speakers, claiming to preach the simple Bible, and attacking the Christian ministry, were more likely then ever to find a hearing...Finney frequently criticized ministers of the gospel: His lectures were full of examples of revivals which had been killed by the inept practices of ministers unskilled in the science of revivalism.'"[248]

From the Puritan ideal of the minister as an intellectual leader, the church, under men like Finney, began to think of the ideal minister as a crusading exhorter who never

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[247] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1979, page 60. There was a time with the local pastor was expected to be the most educated man in town. Now, he has been reduced to a church administrator and a "soulwinner".

[248] Murray, page 282.

moved away from the most simplistic explanations of the faith for fear of "quenching the Spirit" and resisting revival. Thus, being a "simple preacher" who only preached "simple sermons" was the ideal. The fear was that someone in the congregation may have to think during a sermon and that would drive them away from the gospel.

Personally, I have had men tell me this same thing. While one man was criticizing me for being "too intellectual", he stated "I have a church full of people who don't have the same education as you have, so I have to keep my preaching nice and simple for them." Yet this really should be interpreted as an insult and a condemnation. He insulted his congregation as being too stupid to understand the deep truths of the gospel. He also condemned himself because he had pastored that church for quite a number of years and according to his own admission, the congregation couldn't understand the strong meat of the word.[249]

What, then, had he been preaching for all those years? Interestingly, in my twenty-six years as pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Smyrna, Delaware, I have had only one person criticize my preaching for being "too intellectual" and she was a backslidden "church hopper". While pastoring in Mebane, North Carolina from 1993 to 1994, I only had one person complain that my preaching was "too deep" and she was an 85-year old lady who grew up on a tobacco farm. I think she was just looking for an excuse to criticize me because of my stand against tobacco, which she still chewed. Finney opposed the formal study of divinity. Quoting Nathan O. Hatch, David Wells notes that "(T)heir sermons were colloquial, employing daring pulpit storytelling, no-holds-barred appeals, overt humor, strident attacks, graphic application, and intimate personal experience. Charles Finney despised sermons that were formally delivered on the grounds that they put content ahead of communication...".[250]

The church as a place of doctrine and center for holy living was replaced with the church as a revival center. What was all-important to the leaders of the Second Great Awakening was one's "personal salvation." Every other concern (e.g., social, intellectual, political) was secondary, if of any importance at all. only those denominations "which exploited innovative revival techniques to carry the gospel to the people, flourished".[251]

Early Ministerial Training

Most of the schools in early American history were Classical Christian schools. The instructors were usually ministers whose training was a combination of classical languages and literature and Protestant theology. They studied the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek, and they read Homer's *Iliad* in Greek, Tacitus' histories in Latin, as well as studying John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. For example, Moses Waddell, a Southern Presbyterian preacher and teacher (1770-1840), began studying Latin at age eight, and after six years of school, he had finished courses in

[249] This sounds very much like a Jack Hyles' sermon- long on humor and personal illustrations (where he was the hero), short on doctrine.

[250] David Wells, God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams, Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1994, page 62.

[251] Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, page 62.

Greek, Latin, and mathematics. After his conversion and entrance into the ministry, Waddell established, in a log building, a school with an enrollment of as many as 180 students a year. In his book *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, Henry Alexander White made these comments about Waddell's school:

> "The food furnished to the students in Waddell's log college was plain, for it was usually nothing more than cornbread and bacon. A blast from a ram's horn called them all together from morning and evening prayers. When the weather was mild the students sat or lay beneath the trees to prepare their lessons. The sound of the horn told the class in Homer when to assemble, and all of the members rushed at once to the recitation hall in the main building. Then the horn called up, in regular order, the Cicero, the Horace, and the Virgil classes, as well as those engaged in the study of mathematics and English."[252]

Waddell's students mastered the classical curriculum at an exacting pace, interspersing long study periods with recitations. Many of Waddell's students achieved prominence in academic and civil affairs.

The type of student Classical Christian education produced is astounding to modern Christians weaned on revivalist theology. The difficulty and rigor of education made it a prized commodity. The compulsory and egalitarian education system of today has debased the value of the commodity. Education in the past was equated with book knowledge, and that knowledge was acquired only by hard work. Moses Hodge was noted for fastening a book to his plow as he worked the fields. He would plow a furrow, stop and read a page, and then ponder the contents as he plowed the next furrow. David Caldwell, as a student, would sit near an open window and study into the late hours of the night. Then he would fold his arms on the table, lay his head down, and sleep until morning.

James Henley Thornwell, who was given to studying fourteen hours a day, commented on his own need to improve his speaking and writing skills:

> "Language was my great difficulty in early life. I had no natural command of words. I undertook to remedy the defect by committing to memory large portions of the New Testament, the Psalms, and much of the Prophets, also whole dramas of Shakespeare, and a great part of Milton's *Paradise Lost*; so that you might start me at any line in any drama or book, and I would go through to the end."[253]

As a young teacher, Thornwell continued his study habits:

> "I have commenced regularly with Xenophon's works, and intend to read them carefully. I shall then take up Thucydides, Herodotus, and Demosthenes. After

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[252] Henry Alexander White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1911, pages 59-60.

[253] Jack P. Maddex, Jr., "Waddell, Moses," *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, edited by Samuel S. Hill. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984 pages 309-310.

> mastering these I shall pass on to the philosophers and poets. In Latin I am going regularly through Cicero's writings. I read them by double translations; that is, I first translate them into English and then retranslate them into Latin. In German I am perusing Goethe's works. My life, you can plainly see, is not a life of idleness."[254]

After Thornwell was saved, he entered the ministry and became one of the greatest Presbyterian ministers and theologians ever produced in America. Clyde Wilson described the curriculum and its purposes in the University of North Carolina in the middle of the 1800s. He said:

> "The college curriculum consisted chiefly of Latin, Greek, and pure mathematics, with smaller amounts of modern languages, chemistry, geology, physics, botany, zoology, metaphysics, logic, rhetoric, political economy, and constitutional and international law. More than half of a student's time in four years was spent in languages ancient and modern three-fifths in the languages and pure mathematics together. The intent of these studies was to develop the powers of reason, analysis, and perspective, and by familiarity with the classical republics to inspire an understanding and love of American institutions. The curriculum also reflected a highly verbal and personalized society in which fixed status and institutional rigidity had not robbed words of their power to persuade and move."[255]

To conclude this section, instead of "boasting" (not the best word but it will work in this context) of their education, training or libraries, pastors today boast on lesser things. One anti-intellectual, Finneyite Baptist pastor made a series of posts on Twitter/X glorying in a new bus his church obtained and spent six posts tracing the application of a new paint job this bus was receiving. One man, more enlightened to the signs of the times, observed that there was a time when pastors had a "study". Today, they have an "office", reflecting the shift in the modern pastoral attitudes.

Reclaiming Classical Christianity

What is the Christian ideal for the ministry, worship services and personal life? Every man will have his own idea of course and we will respect each man's conviction as long as it is Biblical. But here I personally offer my alternative to revivalism by calling for a return to a more classical form of Christianity. It is my conviction that this is the brand (practically speaking) that the Puritans, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Davies, Witherspoon, Nettleton, Payson, Griffith, McCheyne and men of the same mold would endorse. It would also be the type of Christianity that the revivalists and Finney would reject. What would such a brand of Christianity look like?

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[254] Ibid.

[255] Clyde N. Wilson, *Carolina Cavalier: The Life and Times of James Johnson Pettigrew*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), page 15. Few modern Bible colleges or Christian universities can match this type of curriculum or have any desire to.

I am the first to admit that I may never see my own personal ideals of Christianity realized. Some of my ideas may not work and my congregation may reject others. When I was pastoring in North Carolina during 1993 and 1994, I took it as a laboratory experiment in Classical Christianity. I tried to enact a few ideas and to stress a definite theme in my preaching. Some ideas worked and some needed work. The same situation exists in my current pastorate in Smyrna, Delaware.[256] But I believe the philosophies are sound, even if enacting them in a practical manner is more difficult.

1. A Revival of Biblical Preaching

Preaching is the all-important duty of the preacher and the local church. The pastoral office is one that is geared to the saints. The way saints are built up and equipped is through preaching. This is also the method of transmitting the teachings of the Bible. The pastor and evangelist must put all of his resources into expository preaching that moves through the Bible in a systematic method, teaching the truths of Scripture and then making practical and personal applications that relate to his congregation and to the generation in which they live. Other activities must come second after preaching, teaching and shepherding. That includes evangelism.

The quality of preaching has suffered revivalism. This is ironic since revivalism puts much emphasis on evangelistic preaching. But it is that emphasis on the emotional-style of evangelistic preaching that has caused expository preaching to suffer. Evangelistic preaching under a revivalist system usually requires a very charismatic preacher who can holler, spit, slobber and entertain. That was the demand on the Kentucky frontier. The quiet, scholarly and dignified preacher is believed to be unable to preach as to convert souls. Here is a fatal flaw that is renewed in revivalism; that conversions depend solely upon the quality of the preacher rather than on the Holy Spirit's use of that preacher. Is it the man or the message? As men began to be judged not according to their spirituality or scholarship but rather according to their evangelistic results, the preaching had to accommodate the new mood. Teaching and expository preaching was neglected for evangelistic, revival-type preaching, which often did not require as much study. All that was generally needed was a three-point alliterated outline and a loud voice. It never occurred to the revivalists that men like the Puritans or Jonathan Edwards, who would certainly never qualify as "revival- style preachers" saw multitudes of conversions. It was their godliness rather than their homiletics that brought about conversions.

What sort of preaching is then required? Expository preaching is certainly the superior method of preaching. Expository preaching is the verse-by-verse, even word-for-word preaching, teaching and application of the Scripture. The preacher confines himself to the Bible and preaches what it says. There is a heavy teaching element to expository preaching since the preacher realizes that the most important element of the pastoral office is the teaching ministry. The preacher will work his way through the Bible in a systematic way, teaching and preaching the entire Bible over the course of his pastorate, being careful to make such preaching as practical and applicable as

[256] My results are less-than satisfactory and did not meet my expectations from both pastorates but the problem probably lies with me more than this ministerial philosophy. The modern congretation is also probably not prepared to receive these doctrines and practices.

possible. Naturally, not every situation will lend itself to expository preaching. Street preaching and jail ministries demand different styles of presenting the truth of God. But we center our remarks to local church services, since that is where the majority of preaching is done and heard.[257]

We realize that a return to a more classical form of preaching would bring the preacher into much criticism. He will be criticized as a "teaching pastor" with "no burden for souls" or for revival. But if a pastor is not a "teaching pastor" then he is not faithful to his ministerial charge (1 Timothy 3:2)! A man is not qualified to pastor unless he can teach. And a man cannot teach unless he is also a student. A shift in the emphasis in preaching is stirred by a shift in pastoral attentions. The pastor is to be the shepherd of the sheep of his congregation, not of the unsaved goats of his town. His first responsibility is to the souls God has given him to watch over. He concentrates his efforts and preaching to them. In the process, he witnesses to every sinner he can and continues to stress the need for evangelization. But he will not continually harangue his congregation with evangelistic messages when the large majority of them are already saved.[258] He will serve them the spiritual meat of the Word that they so desperately need to live the Christian life the Lord desires. Leave off evangelistic preaching for evangelistic situations. Since the majority of attendees to services on Sunday morning are already saved, the preaching must be geared toward them. If you do it correctly, any unsaved person in attendance can still receive an evangelistic witness by the end of the service.

Regular church services would not qualify as an "evangelistic service." The regular services of a local church are to serve the saints, not the goats.

2. A Revival of Worship

Secondly, church services must be worship services, geared toward meeting the spiritual needs of the saints. Church is for them. Sunday is the special day for the saint and it ought to be. Everything in the church service must be centered on the saint, from the preaching to the order of the service to the music. Sinners are not shut out of these services of course, but the saint must not be neglected. He needs church and wants it too. He wants to hear the Bible and hear those divine truths he needs to live as he ought for God. If he doesn't get them on Sunday in church, then where will he obtain it? If church services are designed strictly for evangelization of non-members and sinners, the saint will starve. Christians need more than hearing "Ye must be born again" weekly to grow since they are already born again! They need to go unto perfection (Hebrews 6:1) with appropriate teaching and preaching.

Revivalism rears its head again. Who needs "worship" when one is trying to win souls? They wrongly equated "worship services" with formalism. Revivalists hate

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[257] Mainline evangelicals in John MacArthur's orbit place a lot of emphasis on "expository preaching" but their compromise with Finney and rejection of classical Christianity disqualifies them from a serious hearing. Your expository preaching will accomplish nothing if it is accompanied by contemporary Christian music and weak Biblical standards. If your "expository preaching" isn't making you into a stronger Christian, then it has failed. Most revivalist preachers reject expository sermons for topical sermons.

[258] This usually involves shaming the congregation into spending six hours on Saturday doing bus visitation or into doing more door-to-door visitation.

anything they believe even reeks of formalism. Any service that has any semblance of reverence, form or structure would "stifle the Holy Spirit" and prevent conversions. Sinners are not attracted to worship services. Sinners are more likely to be drawn to entertainment-type services with lively gospel songs and emotional preaching. Finney certainly saw this to be true. An atmosphere must be created to make sure the sinner wants to come to church and be saved. Every element of the church service would then go to creating an evangelistic atmosphere. Church services were reduced from worship and teaching services to evangelization attempts. But again, Finney missed the point. What attracted the lost to church in days past? It was the reputation of the preacher for his holiness and godliness and the inward working of the Holy Spirit in bringing that sinner to conviction. Finney saw the responsibility lying with the church to get sinners under the sound of the Gospel, so the church must sell itself like a grocer selling corn flakes. Package your product to make it appealing to the sinner.[259] [260]

This attitude completely misses the purpose behind church services. We again insist that church services must center on worship of God and the teaching and preaching of the Scripture for the benefit of Christians. Make strong Christians is the burden of the pastor. Get Christians firmly grounded and rooted in Scripture and they would go out into the community and win people on their own. Strong services and a strong pulpit ministry will produce strong Christians who will then produce the strong evangelistic atmosphere that the revivalists attempt to create on the arm of flesh.

3. A Revival of Classical Hymnology

Thirdly, church music must be classical in style, based on Biblical law, order and design. The hymn should be placed in the forefront of worship, the weaker gospel song placed in a secondary role. Southern Gospel and Christian Contemporary Music and other forms of modern "Christian" music ought to be rejected. Music is for worship, not evangelism or entertainment. The traditional hymn is best suited for building saints.

Music was appropriated by the revivalists for promoting revival and evangelism just as church and worship had been. Music had been designed for worship and for teaching doctrine (hence the strong doctrinal content of the hymn). To expand on this would require another book.[261]

Now it was used as simply another evangelistic tool. The classic hymn was declared to be too stodgy, too old-fashioned or too doctrinal to be of much use in evangelism. You couldn't tap your toe to it. It was then replaced with the weaker and more experiential gospel song which was based on personal experience rather than doctrine. With the conquest of music, the revivalist take-over of the church was now complete. Everything in the church was now geared to produce revival, from the atmosphere and style of the service to the preaching to the music.

We state emphatically that music was never designed for evangelism (or even for entertainment for that matter). Music was designed by God for worship and praise.

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[259] This is the burden of the modern “seeker-sensitive” movement in contemporary churches.

[260] Of course, we reject contemporary worship, with its “worship leaders” and contemporary music. That is not worship at all.

[261] A good starting place would be *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music* by H. T. Spence, which can be purchased at https://www.foundations.edu/bookstore/item_details.php?Section=Books&ItemNum=28

Anything that takes music off that lofty perch is wrong. Music was never designed to be light entertainment or for evangelization.

We live in a very bad day when it comes to church music and it is getting worse. The battle over music has been lost in the Fundamentalist churches. Contemporary Christian Music and Southern Gospel Music (and other forms of worldly music) have captured the majority of the churches. If any man dare plead for the old, Biblical forms of church music (the English hymn and the better gospel songs), he will be attacked on a number of fronts. We have men defending the use of rap music, hip-hop, R&B music, jazz, country and outright rock music in the worship of the church. This attitude clearly identifies the desperate need for the remnant of God's churches to reject contemporary philosophies of church music and to return to classical and more Biblical forms of worship and church music.

4. A Revival of Education and Scholarship

Fourthly, there must be a revival of ministerial education and training. Ministers ought to be the best educated and best trained men in town. We demand lawyers, doctors, engineers and the like to be highly trained, certified and literate before we would trust them. You would even expect this from your local plumber and auto mechanic. But why are we so tolerant of ignorant and ill-equipped preachers? The responsibilities of the preachers are infinitely more important than any other vocation since the eternal destiny of immortal souls are at stake. No one would trust their heart bypass surgery to an incompetent bumbler who uses a rusty saw rather than a scalpel. A man convicted of a crime and facing a long stretch of jail time wants the best lawyer money can buy. A family looking to invest their hard-earned money for future retirement of college for their children wants a financial planner who knows his trade. So why would anyone be expected to trust their souls to a man who deliberately shuns ministerial education and training? Is such a man competent to be trusted with the oversight of redeemed souls? Any man put in the ministry by God should immediately realize his shortcomings. He is not qualified for such a task! No man is! He feels as if the Spirit of God has bidden him to "arise, thresh the mountains and make them chaff." For the sake of the people who will sit under his ministry and who will look to him for moral and spiritual leadership, the preacher ought to secure all the education as he possibly can, both secular and sacred.

A revival in ministerial education hopefully would result in a similar revival in Christian education. A return to the older and tested philosophies of the early1800s America for the education of Christian youth would be desirable. We should seek to go back to the philosophy embodied by the *McGuffey Readers*, *Ray Arithmetics* and *Harvey's Grammars*, with concentrations on the Bible as the foundation of education. The knowledge of God should be goal of all education, especially in the lower grades where character and personality are shaped. This would also result in more homeschooling, even by those parents who send their children to a Christian school.

Revivalism was incubated in an attitude of ignorance. Finney had little formal theological training (although he had legal training) and at first disdained it until he was offered the presidency of Oberlin College. The Western Revivalists viewed with suspicion any man who had any education. Revivalists understood that the more

education a minister possessed, the more likely he was to reject the revivalist model. Send a man to seminary and he'll be ruined! He'll read books! He may start thinking! He'll study pagan philosophy and liberal theology! He'll lose his zeal for souls! He'll stop slobbering and yelling when he preaches! He'll turn into a "minister" instead of a "preacher". Education, any education, was seen as the "kiss of death" for any young man called into the ministry. "Bless God boy, just find yourself an old stump and get at it!" was the usual advice and this was blessed by most revivalist congregations. To the revivalist, the prime qualification for the preacher was volume and zeal.

Piety, love of God and scholarship did not figure much into their equation.

5. A Revival of Biblical Evangelism

Fifthly, evangelism and missions should never be neglected. The burden would be to make sure that all evangelism is done Biblically. We need none of the hyper-evangelism of modern Neo-Fundamentalism, nor should we tolerate it. No tricks or gimmicks to get people saved. No cutting corners in presenting the gospel, such as neglecting repentance or judgment or holiness. No numbers racket or judging men and ministries by raw numbers of conversions. No sacrificing doctrine or purity for the goal of seeing people saved. Pragmatism must be discarded. We do not "win the lost at any cost" for Christ never commanded such. If we must sin or compromise truth to see souls saved, we must ask if we really understand evangelism.

Classical Christianity has a strong evangelistic thrust, but it is careful not to make the tail wag the dog. The most important ministry of the Christian and his church is faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2) not evangelism. Biblical evangelism will only flow from obedience to the Scripture and to faithfulness to the same. Once the foundation is laid, then all Christian ministries, including evangelism, may be built with confidence. The flaw with Finneyite revivalism is that it has no such foundation. Everything is built on revival and soulwinning rather than faithfulness and obedience. When a ministry rather than a way of life is predominant, then problems will follow. That evangelism will have no constraining factor to it since it is seen as all-important. To win souls and to promote revival is the most important ministry for a Christian so all other things, including purity of life and orthodoxy are shunted to a secondary position. This is why the morals and doctrines of a revivalist must never be called into question or examined. He is winning souls, that makes him alright. God is pleased with a man as long as he is a soulwinner. What about his doctrine? What about his family? This is why revivalists ignore Finney's heresies, such as his Pelagianism or his teachings of sinless perfection. Doctrine is unimportant as it relates to revival. A man's personal life or purity is also unimportant as long as he gets results. Could this be why the immoralities and heresies of a man like Jack Hyles are ignored by his supporters? They say "Look at all the souls he has won! Look at how God is using him!" But we would respond "Is he right?" Any similar questions regarding Finney or Torrey or Moody evokes similar responses from revivalists: "How dare you attack such a godly soulwinner!"

Revivalism has hurt all of this. It has hurt our worship, our scholarship, our piety, our music. Finney declared war on all of these and was determined to force all these compartments of the Christian life to conform to his philosophy of evangelism and

revival. The damage done by one man, Charles Finney and his followers has been enormous. It has contributed to the decline in the Church since the emphasis on scholarship; discipleship and piety have been removed in favor of creating revivals. A good desire has been warped into a plague and this blessing has become a curse.

A Postscript- Finneyism in the Modern Independent Baptist Movement

I identify as an Independent Baptist, although I left the Fundamentalist movement in the 1990s due to compromise and a "softening up" of their previous stands and their rejection of spiritual militancy.[262] There is a segment of the Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB) Movement that is dominated by the Sword of the Lord newspaper that continues to promote the errors of Charles Finney. This is unusual as most in the IFB Movement are very strong Baptists (even bordering on the "Baptist Bride" heresy[263]). Since Finney was not a Baptist, we wonder why the IFB "leadership" promotes him so heavily.[264] This Baptist promotion of Finney is not limited to the Independent Fundamental Baptist ("IFB")/Sword of the Lord wing of the Baptists. Non-IFB preachers have also promoted Finney, such as Peter Ruckman.[265]

Why this promotion of Finney? We would offer several reasons:

1. Ignorance of his teachings. How many Baptists have read Finney's *Revival Lectures* or *Systematic Theology*? The laud it and promote it but never read it.[266]

2. Ignorance of the history of the Second Great Awakening. There is much misinformation regarding the state of the American churches in the early 19th century. Men like Nettleton, Payson, Dwight and Griffin have been forgotten, ignored or overlooked. There is also ignorance of Finney's early ministry, as he did not start preaching until the mid-1820s, when the Second Great Awakening was starting to wind down.

3. They just don't care. They know about Finney's problems but still have decided to cast in their spiritual lot with him because he was a "great soulwinner" who "saw multitudes saved" and was "so greatly used in the Second Great Awakening". This is the "never criticize a soulwinner" mentality.

4. Peer pressure. Finneyism brought about the pressure on pastors and evangelists to "produce results", mainly in church attendance and numbers of conversions. A successful pastor will have a church where the attendance is growing and a successful evangelist will be able to report large numbers of conversions in his meetings. This is how a successful ministry can be identified. It is the easiest way to

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[262] I was a member of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship but when they removed "militancy" from their literatire, I knew they had compromised so I left.

[263] This teaching is that the Body of Christ is Baptist, that John the Baptist was a Baptist, that his baptism was a New Testament Baptism and that you need to belong to the "right kind" of Baptist church to be part of the "Bride". Protestant churches are seen as "daughters of the whore of Rome". They oppose the Body of Christ concept, claiming that local Baptist churches are the "Body" of Christ. This evolved from the "Landmarker" teachings of J. R. Graves. Various forms of these teachings are popular within the IFB Movement.

[264] They also strongly promote other non-Baptists, like Dwight Moody, R. A. Torrey and Billy Sunday. Many in the IFB Movement are strongly opposed to Calvinism but they also strongly promote Charles Spurgeon and other Calvinist writers if it suits them to do so. The Sword of the Lord often edited Spurgeon's sermons that they publish to weed out his Calvinism.

[265] Peter Ruckman, *History of the New Testament Church*, volume 2, chapter 5, "The Storm Troopers From Philadelphia". Ruckman repeats much of the "party line" regarding Finney and the misrepresentations of the Second Great Awakening and the state of the American churches in the 1810s and 1820s. Ruckman refused to be identified with any wing of the Fundamentalist movement.

[266] Some books are universally accepted but are almost never read by the men who promote them. On a more personal level, this book started life as a doctoral thesis and was accepted. I learned about a year later that it was not read by the men who accepted it.

do this, humanly-speaking. A pastor of a small church (with little or no growth) or an evangelist who only reports a handful of conversions can be easily singled out as a man who has rejected the so-called "old paths" and the philosophy of hyper-evangelism. This can be avoided while other preachers will know which "successful" ministries they should promote and gravitate toward.

5. Rejection of Calvinism. Nettleton and the "Old Guard" who followed the philosophy of Jonathan Edwards were Calvinists to varying degrees. Finney started his ministry in a Presbyterian church but later rejected Calvinism. With Finney's attacks on Calvinism, the misunderstanding developed that Calvinists did not care about evangelism and the only way you could be a true "soulwinner" and "revivalist" was to reject Calvinism. This explains the ignorance of and the attacks on Calvinism by the modern IFB movement. Yet many IFB preachers will attack Calvinism on one hand and will then favorably quote Calvinists like Spurgeon.[267]

An example of this problem regarding recognizing Finney and his influence for what they were is attached. This advertisement ran in various IFB publications as well as on the internet promoting a "Conference on Revival" to be held in the "famed" Charles G. Finney Auditorium in Oberlin, Ohio. The featured speakers, all self-styled "experts" on Finney-type revival methodology and philosophy are prominent in the IFB Movement.[268]

These men have been dealt with by other Independent Baptist by letter and social media, regarding the problems associated with Charles Finney. They have been shown the historical and theological evidence regarding his errors, including his Pelagianism. They have been shown the historical evidence regarding Finney's role in the Second Great Awakening. They have been shown that other, and better, men could be promoted for revival than Finney. The response of these men has been to reject such brotherly admonitions as well as outright hostility. Pastor Jeff Fugate and Evangelist John Hamblin blocked other preachers from following them on Twitter who challenged them on their promotion of this meeting and of Finney.[269] Their attitude reflects the idea that anyone who would oppose the philosophies or practices of Charles Finney has "no evangelistic spirit", "is a backslider", and/or "is not a true Fundamentalist who cares about revival" who haven't accomplished anything in their ministries. They are just jealous of these "great ministries" that these "great men" have built. These are the same charges that were leveled at the opponents of Finney during the latter years of the Second Great Awakening and we see history repeating itself.

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[267] The Sword of the Lord has published many articles and sermons critical of Calvinism, yet they sell Calvinistic literature in their bookstore, such as works by Charles Spurgeon. IFB preachers think very highly of Spurgeon while attempting to ignore his Calvinism. John R. Rice and Curtis Hutson were well known for editing Spurgeon's sermons and removing anything positive he said regarding his Calvinism. IFB evangelist John Hamblin is famous for this on X/Twitter, as he also favorably quotes Spurgeon and other Calvinists while condemning Calvinism. If you point this fact out to him, you will be immediately blocked.

[268] My primary issue with these speakers is who appointed them to be spokesmen for any sort of revival? What makes them experts on revival? As with other contemporary preachers, none of these men have experienced any sort of revival that even comes close to what was seen during the Second Great Awakening. Yet they anoint themselves to be experts on revival.

[269] They are not the only ones. IFB preachers on social media are quick to block anyone who offers even the slightest challenge to them on social media.

Meetings like this reflect the current misunderstandings of true revival as the men who promote these ideas have chosen to either ignore the history of the Second Great Awakening (and other similar revivals) or to re-write the history. As we have noted, the controversy between Asahel Nettleton and Charles Finney was won by Finney, and the victors in any conflict usually write the history. To them, history began around 1950 or so with the establishment of the modern Independent Baptist movement.

When good and godly brethren try to engage the modern IFB preacher to express his concerns, he is blocked on social media and ignored. They will not be corrected. They will accept no rebuke. They ignore all evidence put before them. They are right because they get results, pastor large churches, "stand on the shoulders of giants", are seeking out the "old paths" and have gotten themselves to the "great men" (Jeremiah 5:5[270]). They are simply too busy to stop and study or to engage with the brethren who have studied these issues and who seek to sharpen the iron of these preachers by counsel.

If you examine the flyer below, you'll notice another inconsistency with the revivalist movement. We have documented its aversion to scholarship, yet look at how many of these preachers and "Dr." before their name. Yet these "doctorates" are fake as they are honorary. They were not earned by hours of hard study and writing. They were awarded by friends of theirs. And when a man like this receives an honorary degree, it immediately goes to his head. The ink isn't even dried on the certificate before this newly minted "doctor" has all his personal stationary updated. If it they disdain scholarship so much, why do they lust after doctorates as much as they do? It is as if you are a nobody in the movement unless you can sport a "Dr." before your name. Yet the awarding of these "synthetic sheepskins" does not make them better men or preachers. It is a matter of pride, nothing else as they glory in these titles (Matthew 23:8, **But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren**.).[271] [272]

[270] This is one of the most abused and mis-applied verses in Scripture. Those who promote this verse as a defense of what they style as "old paths" have never studied the verse. They simply yanked the first part of the verse out of its context and ignored the second part of the verse.

[271] The world has more sense. Singer Dolly Parton was awarded an "honorary doctorate" once for her humanitarian work, but when is the last time you heard anyone refer to her (or hear her refer to herself) as "Dr. Dolly Parton"?

[272] I have an earned doctorate but I rarely use it. It comes in handy if I am dealing with a secular situation and I need to "throw a little weight around", but I rarely use it in a religious context. Simply because I have a doctorate does not make me a better preacher or a better man. All it means is that I completed a system of study, paid the tuition and wrote a dissertation. It is a secular title, not a spiritual one. Some of the worst reprobates you'd ever want to meet have doctorates.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW...
November 14–16, 2016
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Dr. John N. Hamblin


Dr. Jeff Fugate


Dr. Lonnie Moore


Dr. Jeffrey Smale
Host Pastor
Victory Baptist Temple
Elyria, Ohio


Charles G. Finney Auditorium

Recommended Reading List

The books listed below will give a good presentation of the Second Great Awakening, the primary men involved and evaluations of both the Old and New Evangelicalism. This list is not exhaustive and there are some good books I probably have overlooked. This list will be continually updated and expanded as new resources are discovered.

Alexander, Archibald., *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College*

Asquith, John, *Who Moved The Goal Posts? A Critique of Soul Winning in the 21st Century*. Lansing, Michigan; Calvary Publishing, 2018.

Bradley, Joseph, *Accounts of Religious Revivals in Many Parts of the United States from 1815 to 1818.*

Cummings, Asa, *Memoir, Select Thoughts and Sermons of the Late Rev. Edward Payson, D.D.*

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Edwards, Jonathan, *The Religious Affections*

Hatch, Nathan O, *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven; Yale University Press, 1989.

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Sprague, William, *The Life and Sermons of Edward D. Griffin*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania; Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, originally printed in 1839.

Tracy, Joseph, *The Great Awakening*

Tyler, Bennett and Andrew Bonar*, The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton*

Recommended Preachers to Read After and to Study From This Period

Asahel Nettleton
Edward Griffin
Edward Payson
Gardiner Spring
George Whitefield
John Wesley
Samuel Davies
Timothy Dwight

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Hardman, Keith J, *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformers*
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Murray, Iain, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*
Murray, Iain, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*
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Noll, Mark, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*
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Tyler, Bennett and Andrew Bonar*, The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton*
Wallace, Adam, *The Parson of the Islands: The Life and Times of the Rev. Joshua Thomas.*
Wells, David, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*
White, Henry Alexander*, Southern Presbyterian Leaders*
Wilson, Clyde, N.*, Carolina Cavalier: The Life and Times of James Johnson Pettigrew*[273]

[273] I believe Pettigrew made a brief appearance in the 1993 movie “Gettysburg” where he tried to give a book to General Longstreet.

About the Author

Dr. John Cereghin was saved on February 9, 1978 at the age of 13 after being raised in the Roman Catholic church. He was saved after listening to a program on missionary shortwave radio station HCJB from Quito, Ecuador. He left the Catholic church in 1983 and joined Maranatha Baptist Church in Elkton, Maryland in 1985. In 1986, she transferred from the University of Maryland to Maryland Baptist Bible College, earning the first doctor's degree awarded by the school in 1995. Dr. Cereghin also earned his Master of Theology degree from Foundations Theological Seminary in 1994.

Dr. Cereghin's ministry background includes working at Radio Station WOEL in Elkton, Maryland (1986-1998), teaching in various capacities at Maryland Baptist Bible College in Elkton, Maryland from 1988-1998, also serving as Dean of Men, Registrar and Academic Dean, and pastoring Queen Anne's Baptist Church, Centreville, Maryland (1989-1990), Charity Baptist Church, Mebane, North Carolina (1994-1995) and Grace Baptist Church in Smyrna, Delaware (1998-present). He and his wife Teresa have four children and four grandchildren.