

Ministers of "the second great awakening"



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Lee Boone Ms. Lorraine Orenchuk Graduation Project 30 May 2013 Ministers of " The Second Great Awakening" There was a time in history when the community would come together for an outdoor awakening, sending the message of the need to get back in church. In the 1700s to the 1800s, the setting was purely outside. It was known for the people attending to set up camp and correlate a gathering called " campmeeting. " As time and technology progressed, canopy tents covered the area where the people were assembled and it was common to find sawdust and pews set up under the tent.

The main purpose for a revival is to hold an event that is centered on reflection and rededication to the Christian faith. These meetings come in many forms and through many denominations. They have been identified with many different names over the centuries. Throughout this essay they will be referred to as " revivals. " A revival is a specific time of increased spiritual interest or renewal in the life of a congregation of many churches. The root of these gatherings begins at the heart of the Christian faith, The Holy Bible.

Nehemiah wrote in the Old Testament, " And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law" (English Standard Version, Neh. 8. 3). The Water Gate is located in Jerusalem beside of the street and outside of the temple. Revival was needed because of the turmoil from intermarriage and immorality and the need for returning to their faith in the one true God. Ezra had authorization from the Persian

government to reestablish proper modes of YHWH worship and adherence to the Torah of Moses" (Bandstra 466). The government saw enough benefit to allow this revival to happen. In the New Testament of The Bible, the first gathering took place after Jesus ascended to Heaven. " When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2. 1). This awakening was among the Jews. Luke, the author of the book of Acts, wrote, " Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2. 5). The significance of this was its outdoor location rather than inside the temple. The Pharisees and Sadducees would have never allowed this event to happen in the temple because it was in worship of a man that they had crucified. The Jews were promised first to be able to experience " The Spirit" after Jesus left earth from His physical body. " For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (New International Version, Romans 1. 16). The outcome of the revival and receiving of the Spirit was " the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (King James Version, Acts 2. 7). There was a lasting impact that reached out to all who heard about what was happening and it only grew. Over the next 1600 years, there was not a lot of activity outside the four walls of a church aside from exploring the world and bringing the church with them. In the late 1700s a message was displayed that " individuals must readmit God and Christ into their daily lives, must embrace a fervent, active piety, and must reject the skeptical rationalism that threatened traditional beliefs (Brinkley 190). This message carried through the Second Great Awakening. The awakening began around 1790 and peaked by the 1840s. The effect of awakening differed in the North and South. " Highly

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emotional camp meetings, organized usually by Methodists or Baptists but sometimes by Presbyterians, became a regular feature of religious life in the South and the lower Midwest" (Divine 282). In the North, " evangelists formed societies devoted to the redemption of the human race in general and American society in particular" (Divine 282).

There were many evangelists and ministers the left a notable impact on this time period, but this will focus on three: Methodist circuit rider, Peter Cartwright, the Congregationalist president of Yale, Timothy Dwight IV, and extremist Presbyterian Charles G. Finely. Less than 30 years after Daniel Boone paved the way through the Cumberland Gap, " Somewhere between 1800 and 1801, in the upper part of Kentucky, at a memorable place called " Cane Ridge," there was appointed a sacramental meeting by some of the Presbyterian ministers" (Cartwright 30).

This was Peter Cartwright's first encounter with any type of revival after boarding school. " It was supposed that there were in attendance at times during the meeting from twelve to twenty-five thousand people" (Cartwright 30). Cartwright's parents pioneered to Kentucky when he was at a young age and settled in Logan County. His mother was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A traveling Methodist preacher, Jacob Lurton, visited the family after they settled in Logan County. Lurton preached to the family right from his cabin. I was then in my ninth year, and was sent out to invite the neighbors to come and hear preaching. Accordingly they crowded out, and filled the cabin to overflowing" (Cartwright 24). As Cartwright grew older he rebelled and began dancing and gambling for a short period of time but later repented and answered to his calling to preach. " I then rose, gave them for

a text Isaiah xxvi, 4: " Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. " The Lord gave light, liberty, and power; the congregation was melted into tears" (Cartwright 63).

Cartwright became a Methodist circuit rider that " won national fame as he traveled from region to region exhorting his listeners to embrace the church" (Brinkley 190). As he traveled, there were many incidents that happened. " Even Cartwright, however, was often unprepared for the results of his efforts - a religious frenzy that at times produced convulsions, fits, rolling in the dirt, and twitching ' holy jerks'" (Brinkley 190). Timothy Dwight IV's mother, Mary Edwards (1734-1807), was the third daughter of theologian Jonathan Edwards from the " First Great Awakening. Dwight was born into a wealthy family and was raised in Norwich, Connecticut. He became president of Yale in 1795. " Beginning among Presbyterians in several eastern colleges (most notably at Yale, under the leadership of President Timothy Dwight), the new awakening soon spread rapidly throughout the country, reaching its greatest heights in the western regions" (Brinkley 190). " Dwight was particularly disturbed by those religious liberals whose rationalism reached the point of denying the doctrine of the Trinity and who proclaimed themselves to be ' Unitarians'" (Divine 282).

Dwight's message to the students at Yale is that they were " dead in their sins" and this led to a series of campus revivals. Charles Finney had a " new and more radical form of revivalism" (Divine 283). " Finney's " life began in 1792 in the town of Warren, Connecticut" (Charles Grandison Finney). At two, his parents moved to Oneida County in western New York. It's unsure if Finney attended schooling because of the families low income and work on

the farm. Later, " he studied independently while living in Warren, Connecticut, preparing to enter Yale College" (RG 2/2 - Charles).

He studied there, then went to achieve a degree in law. " On October 10, 1821 in Adams, Finney underwent a dramatic religious conversion, which altered the course of his life. " After his conversion, he began preaching the Christian gospel. Finney's sermons were drastically different from the conventional Calvinistic doctrine that was common in western New York. " His appeal was to emotion rather than to doctrine or reason" (Divine 283). This thought was more practical in the sense that " It is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense.

It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means -- as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means" (What a Revival of Religion). Finney wanted those who attended the meetings to be able to " feel the power of Christ" (Divine 283). Finney began conducting a series of revivals throughout western New York in 1823. He was " ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1824" (Charles Grandison Finney). " He left the Presbytery in 1836 and from then on identified himself as a Congregationalist" (RG 2/2 - Charles).

Finney style differed because he would hold " meetings that lasted all night or even several days in a row, placing an ' anxious bench' in front of the congregation where those in the process of repentance could receive special attention, and encourage women to pray publically for the souls of male relatives" (Divine 283). Lyman Beecher challenged Finney's radical practices through an evangelical summit meeting held at New Lebanon, New York in

1827. Neither side reached an agreement, but Finney's ministry continued in spite of the threats.

There was more than a temporary peak of emotion left behind by Finney; there were strong and active churches following his departure. " Finney eventually founded a tabernacle in New York City that became a rallying point for evangelical efforts to reach the urban masses" (Divine 284). The message that carried among Peter Cartwright, Timothy Dwight IV, Charles Finney, and many others through the " Second Great Awakening" was that individuals should include Christ in their daily lives once again, show kindness, and reject the skeptical rationalism that threatened traditional beliefs.

This awakening only covers a short period of 2000 years of Christianity. The revivals themselves mainly focus on a specific time of increased spiritual interest or renewal in the life of a congregation of many churches. Following the second, there was a " Third Great Awakening" from the late 1850s to the early 1900s. It affected religious Protestant denominations and had a strong element of social activism. This was followed by what some consider the " Fourth Great Awakening" of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This leads us up to today where technological advances and the new emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus have pushed away from this outdoor style revival to an indoor, mega church style worship. Revivals have not fully dwindled away, but could soon be a thing of the past. Works Cited
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