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**An Analysis and Theological Evaluation of Revival
and Revivalism in America from 1730-1860**

Revd. David Prothero M.A

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Promoter GST: Prof Stephen W Need
Co-Promoter P.U. vir C.H.E: Prof. J.M.Vorster

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ABSTRACT

Key Words: Analysis, Theological, Historical, Evaluation, Revival, Revivalism, America 1730-1860

From the seventeenth century, North America has experienced a succession of powerful and nationally significant 'revivals.' Such 'movements of the Spirit' emanated from the seed of a reformed tradition that was maintained by the Pilgrim Fathers, Scots and Irish Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed and German Lutherans. For example, this heritage was foundational to the *First Great Awakening*, which produced a remarkable turn in favour of the Christian faith among the colonies during 1730-1750. Furthermore, following the American War of Independence this reformed heritage became the ground for promoting the *Second Great Awakening*, another movement of the Spirit that continued for a period of over twenty years.

However in the 1820-30's, this heritage was seriously confronted by a different form of revivalism. During this decade, new theological/philosophical thinking, together with an updated method of evangelism, began to upset an accepted and traditional understanding of revival and revivalism. Existing friendships or loyalties between pro-revivalists were tried and tested and their eventual division over the issues meant that two alternative or separate views of revivals became common. The traditionalists tended to emphasize the sovereignty of God in revival, whilst the innovators appealed more to the use of human means in promoting 'outpourings of the Spirit.'

This thesis will attempt to answer a central question: Can the church promote a revival? Is revival only, or always, directly attributable to God's sovereignty? Does God operate *outside* the employment of human agency in revival? If not, then at what level, to what degree, or by what means, does or can the church actively participate in the process of revivals? These questions will be considered from an overview of American revivalism during 1730-1860. This thesis will aim to present a case, based on biblical exegesis and historical illustration.

PREFACE

In presenting this thesis, there are several people or agencies that have combined to aid my enthusiasm for revivals. Firstly, I am indebted to a number of reformed evangelicals (authors and preachers) who have combined to simulate my interest in, and appreciation of, historic 'outpourings of the Spirit.'

Chief among these would be the contributions made by the writings of Bishop J C Ryle, Dr D M Lloyd-Jones and by the preaching of the Rev. W Vernon Higham; formerly the pastor of Heath Evangelical Church, Cardiff. My initiation into 'spiritual history' led to an interest in historic American revivals, which was stirred when I covered 'Finneyism' for a project at Bible College in the summer of 1981. Since then, I have continued to be interested in the evolution of evangelicalism within the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century.

I am indebted to the Greenwich School of Theology, and the University, for supporting the examination of my historical subject and I have found it to be a cathartic experience to express my thinking in this thesis. It goes without saying that I have been grateful for the assistance and encouragements of my promoters. In particular, Dr Stephen Need has been helpful in providing me with some pointers to enhance the presentational form and literary style of my thesis. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the part played by my wife and family as I have laboured with my subject. I must confess that at times this has been one of patience and understanding and, at other times, it has been one of a merciless chagrin. However, like the Apostle Paul, I have learned to be content in all things and I am grateful that my family has thus tended to keep me from becoming too despondent or too engrossed in this work. Finally, I would present my praise to the Lord for the wonderful privilege of being able to consider his works of salvation in the unfolding of his mighty, sovereign, redemptive purpose. It is my sincere hope, and prayer, that one day I will see the power of *his outstretched arm* in life as well as in books.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1. PROPOSED TITLE

An Analysis and Theological Evaluation of Revival and Revivalism in America from 1730-1860

(Key words: Analysis, Theological, Evaluation, Revival, Revivalism, America 1730-1860)

2. FORMULATING THE PROBLEM

2.1 Background

From 1730-1860, North America witnessed a number of special, surprising and unusual outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Christian leaders referred to the unusual phenomenon as '*awakenings*' or, '*revivals*.' Many of these leaders later documented the effects of these revivals and some of them attempted to provide a theological framework for revival and to assess the psychological impact of such outpourings upon the churches. Notably, this engaged the brilliant, analytical thinking of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) who felt the impact of such awakenings at Northampton, Massachusetts. Within his own time and in successive generations Edwards' arguments in favour of revivals have been well known and critically acclaimed. For example, Dr. D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1987: 368) was certainly impressed with the view of revival that was supported by the eighteenth century writers and by Edwards in particular:

“Read Edwards on revival. The term he used always is ‘an outpouring of the Spirit’ Revival is an out-pouring of the Spirit. It is something that comes upon us, that happens to us. We are not the agents, we are just aware that something has happened. So Edwards reminds us again of what revival really is.”

However, during the 1820's, American evangelicalism began to respond to the rise and development of alternative thinking and practice that effectively opposed the previously held views of revival. Under new teaching, *revivals* could be produced in the church by an appropriation of the right means and such blessing was largely contingent on human action. Charles G Finney (1792-1875) was mainly responsible for the shift in the move away from this more reformed view that had been maintained throughout the eighteenth century. In his *Lectures on Revival*, Finney argued *a priori* that the promise of revival blessing was conditional on the obedience of the church (2 Chronicles 7:14, Hosea 10:12). This view led to an emergence and acceptance of a new pragmatism among the churches that then resulted in a tradition of *revivalism*. Thornbury (1977: 162) states that:

“By the end of 1826, Finneys’s star was rising fast. From the very start of his evangelistic career he was instrumental in promoting powerful religious revivals, beginning at Antwerp, a small village in northern New York ... During this time his ability to dominate the minds of those who listened to him continually increased.”

This thesis, therefore, will attempt to provide an overview and a critical analysis of the opposing trends of theological thinking and evangelistic practice that emerged between revivalists during 1730-1860. Moreover, it will aim to contend more favourably for the reformed understanding of ‘revival’ that predated the growth of western revivalism and the absorption of Finney’s ‘new measures.’

2.2 Problem Statement

Throughout the twentieth century evangelistic activity both in Britain and the USA has relied on use of revivalistic ‘*methods*’ that first appeared in America during the 1820’s. Thus, from D.L. Moody to Dr. Billy Graham, the *method* was carried forward through organized, promotional evangelism where stirring music and passionate preaching was followed by an altar call. The reliance on human organization and insistence on human

activity in connection with evangelism and church growth thus became an integral part of an evangelical revivalist tradition. However, this principle is problematic because it has had the tendency to *overstate* the place of human action and the part that it plays in securing the gracious blessing of God.

Prior to the 1820's, American preachers and theologians had consistently held the view that special awakenings or outpourings were ordained by the free and sovereign agency of God. This position dominated the thinking and the practice of their churches through this period of unparalleled spiritual blessing in the towns of New England. However, it could be argued that their view of revival as a free and sovereign work of divine power resulted in a tendency to *understate* the place of human agency. In contrast, the diverse strands of western revivalism that emerged between 1820-1860 placed greater emphasis upon human ability to the detriment of the sovereign agency of God. These two strands of revivalism both appealed to scripture as a justification for their thinking and practice but differed in their answer to an essential and problematic question. Is revival the free and sovereign act of God or is it conditional upon human action and obedience? Hence the questions that arise from this problem are:

- Did the reformed view of revival, which was advocated by American preachers and thinkers during the eighteenth century understate human agency or overstate the place of God's sovereignty?
- Were the 'new measures,' adopted by nineteenth century American revivalists based upon a more enlightened understanding of revival or on a more pragmatic approach to evangelism?
- Do covenant promises such as those found in 2 Chronicles 7:14 endorse, justify or support the view that the activity and obedience of the church is a necessary precondition for revival?

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study, will attempt to argue that in contrast with the revivalistic innovations of the nineteenth century, the eighteenth century view of 'revival' offered a more satisfactory perspective. Conclusions will be reached through historical and theological assessment of divergent views and alternative practices that appeared in North America during the years between 1730-1860.

- To study and evaluate the theological thinking on 'revivals' that emerged from America in the eighteenth century.
- To examine the origin of revivalism and the development of 'new measures' in America during the nineteenth century.
- To study and evaluate the appeal to scripture that was made by those who held these divergent views of revival.

4. CENTRAL THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is, that the thinking and practices of those North American revivalists who ministered within the colonies from the mid-eighteenth century were both theologically and practically sounder than those that came into vogue during the 1820's.

5. METHODS TO BE USED

This theological study is done from within the reformed tradition. This will be a literary comparative study and to address the various research questions the following methods are used.

- To study and evaluate the historical events and theological trends that forged the common view of 'revivals' in eighteenth century America. This will be done by presenting an overview of the accounts of revival and by offering an assessment

of the varied ministries and published works of those preachers and writers who lived during this period.

- To study and evaluate the historical events and theological trends that served to challenge the eighteenth century views of revival and replace it with a different rationale and methodology. This will be done by charting the rise of alternative thinking and practices in America that came into mainstream evangelical use in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- To study and evaluate the eighteenth and nineteenth century views of 'revivals' and their relationship to scripture. This will be done through a consideration of the interpretation of '*covenant promises*' (2 Chronicles 7: 14, Hosea 10:12) and their impact on best thinking and practice.

6. CHAPTER DIVISIONS

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1 Proposed Title

2. Formulating the Problem

2.1 Background

2.2 Problem statement

3. Aims and Objectives

Central Theoretical Argument

Method of Research.

Chapter Divisions

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10.4 A concluding statement

10.4.1 The continued impact of new school revivalism

10.4.2 The continued impact of old school revivalism

formalists. In connection with the increased membership of the colonial churches Sweet (1965: 31) has made the following observation:

“The number added to the churches has been estimated at from thirty to forty thousand. Between 1740 and 1760, one hundred and fifty new Congregational churches in New England were formed besides the creation of numerous Baptist and Separatist congregations.”

The Great Awakening, therefore, became a pivotal event in the colonial period of North America. The study of its origins and the effects that it produced is essential because this ‘outpouring of the Spirit’ became a benchmark by which other ‘awakenings’ would be later assessed, evaluated and interpreted. In addition it can be claimed that this specific period produced the high-water mark of Calvinistic revivalism. The great preachers and writers of this period were generally committed to the reformed position and thus their thinking and practice was largely determined by a theological construct that predated modern revivalism.

2.2 A survey of the social and religious background in the Colonies at the time of the first Great Awakening

From 1620 to 1730 all the North American colonists were confined to a relatively small territory. By the mid eighteenth century English, Scots, Dutch, German and Irish immigrants had settled at a number of points covering a thin tract of land that bordered with French Canada in the north and Spanish Florida to the south. By 1730 North America had become separated into thirteen colonies that covered this territory. In total, the population (Dallimore, 1970: 431) was estimated to be just fewer than one million persons. Indians and African slaves constituted a small part of the colonial population but the northern, middle and southern colonies were generally made-up of settlers who shared a common religious tradition. This tradition was based upon an acceptance of the reformed faith and only differed according to defined geographical limits at certain points of ecclesiastical preference and political or social structure.

- **In the north, the New England colonies comprised Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Connecticut and Newport, Rhode Island.** The centre of these colonies was Boston, Massachusetts. Following the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers this area became the focus of radical church polity. However, following experimentation, it settled to support the principle of Congregationalism.
- **The middle colonies comprised Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.** New York City and Philadelphia were the major centres within these colonies. Immigrants from Holland, Scotland and Ireland largely settled in this area and it became a stronghold of Presbyterianism. In addition, German immigrants gradually occupied the middle colonies in greater numbers and thus established their own protestant tradition on American soil.
- **The southern colonies included North and South Carolina and Georgia.** The centres of these colonies were Charleston and Savannah. British loyalists who adopted their own form of Anglicanism settled within these areas. However, by 1730 Anglican churches in the south were without a Bishop or a recognized clergy and their leadership fell largely into the hands of lay vestries

However, whilst reformed thinking and various forms of ecclesiastical practice were successfully transported to the colonies, the historical data confirms that that the moral and spiritual conditions that prevailed before the *Great Awakening* in 1740 were a cause of concern to both church leaders and civil administrators. In New England the problems seem to have emanated from the tendency to move away from that principle of church membership that was accepted and legitimized within the thinking of the founding fathers.

The pioneering colonists who first arrived in these parts were opposed to a formal membership of the church. In contrast, they maintained that such membership was to be sought as a result of the exercise of saving faith that 'voluntarily' operated in obedience to the commandments of Christ and his apostles. McLoughlin (1978: 37) has thus summarized the theological ideal that was upheld by the early colonists:

“Embedded also in the Puritan movement were the ideals of a congregational church polity, a voluntary church membership, a justification for the priesthood of all believers (the right of the laity to prophesy), and an evangelistic concept of soul-winning.”

From around 1660, however, another standard began to displace the principle of voluntary church membership. Conversion, as defined in the reformed confessions, gradually ceased to be accepted as the grounds of church membership. People were received into membership without the need to profess saving faith and the ordinances of Christ were generally administered through clergymen without adequate direction or qualification. This gradual formalization or routinization of church order therefore militated against 'voluntarism' and altered the primitive and established pattern of New England Congregationalism. Similar trends also impacted on the general outlook and modus operandi of other established denominational bodies within this particular period in the history of colonial America (McLoughlin, 1978: 50-52).

Then, within the late 1720's, the colonists witnessed the birth and rise of a new group of preachers who re-asserted the personal nature of saving faith and upheld the 'voluntary principle' of church membership. These preachers were fundamentally opposed to the view that the salvation of Christ was credited to mankind the basis of personal respectability or by a formal or nominal adherence to the ordinances of the church. In contrast, they taught that saving faith was a gift of God's grace, freely bestowed (Ephesians, 2: 1-10) without meritorious pre-conditions and as the direct result of the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. They held that faith was a personal and cognitive response to the presentation of 'revealed truth' (Romans, 10: 8-15) and that evangelism was a primary part of the function and ministry of the church. Thus,

they confronted the pattern of eighteenth century colonial religious life with a decided and renewed emphasis on that form of teaching and practice that belonged to the founding fathers. Thus, in the mid-eighteenth century the colonists were once again faced with a number of ordained ministers and itinerant evangelists who presented the need for and the necessity of a conversion experience.

2.3 A survey of the preachers that were effectively used to bring about change within the Colonies during the Great Awakening

The Great Awakening produced a great change throughout the length and breadth of the colonies. Towns in the north, middle and south all experienced the impact of a renewed interest in religion through a pro-revival movement. This movement was advanced and sustained in direct proportion to the endeavours of 'new style' preachers. These 'new style' preachers differed from one another in terms of intelligence, oratorical power and organizational ability. Some of these revivalist preachers were itinerant evangelists and others were ordained ministers who served in established churches. However, these 'new style' preachers were all united in their desire to reassert essential evangelical truths. Their preaching was passionate, appealing and experiential, and this style was the common denominator that became the trademark of the pro-revival movement throughout this period of colonial history.

These 'new style' preachers emerged from within each of the denominational bodies that existed in the colonies in 1730. In the main, these preachers were Calvinists. Their roots lay in the soil of a theology that had been expounded by the fifteenth century reformers and upheld throughout the English puritan movement. However, whilst the reformers and the puritans were largely involved with issues regarding the polity of the church (Lloyd-Jones, 1976: 103), these revivalists adhered to a different reformed emphasis. It is perhaps of significance that most of these revivalists were generally affected by various strains of pietism. Thus, they became far less concerned with issues regarding church polity and much more interested in matters connected with the application of reformed thinking in the realm of pastoral theology. English casuists such as Thomas Brooks and Richard Sibbes and the German pietists, Spener and Franc,

therefore established the link between Europe and the theological emphasis in the Great Awakening. It could be argued, therefore, that in large measure the preaching or writings of such men impacted upon the thinking and practice of the American revivalists during the mid eighteenth century. Their preaching sought to address the practical or experiential issues of saving faith and this emphasis tended to bring them into conflict with the last vestige of a nominal form of colonial Calvinism.

2.3.1 Theodore Jacobus Freylinghuysen

Theodore J. Freylinghuysen (1691-1747) was a pioneer in the development of the 'new style' of colonial preaching. Freylinghuysen was born to the family of a reformed minister who worked on the border of Germany and Holland. McLoughlin (1979: 81) and Sweet (1965: 26) both indicate that he was strongly influenced by pietism. In all probability this influence was heightened during the time of his university education in Holland. Hope (1995: 130) has identified some of the main aspects of Dutch pietism that were commonly maintained and followed in Europe during the early eighteenth century. Their emphasis upon an 'inner Christianity' and their more 'searching style of preaching', as upheld by Dutch pietists, seems to accord with the development of Freylinghuysen's colonial ministry in New Brunswick. It was here, following a petition from some Dutch farmers to Amsterdam in 1719, that the classis of Dutch Reformed ministers and elders dispatched the newly ordained Freylinghuysen to their settlements in New Jersey. However, amongst the Dutch settlers his 'new style' of preaching and pastoral labour soon provoked strong clashes with those who had originally petitioned the classis for his employment in ministry. Sweet (1965: 48) states that:

"In his preaching Freylinghuysen continually stressed the necessity of a personal religious experience."

The emphasis and style of his preaching thus strongly contrasted with an accepted pattern and this resulted in the development of a religious controversy within the Dutch settlements that continued for several years. This controversy clearly focused on the nature of conversion and its relationship to the process of saving faith. Freylinghuysen supported this connection and stood opposed to the view that faith was not hereditary or

rationally inspired. Faith was the gift of God (Ephesians, 2: 8-10) which was applied to the sinner through the word of the gospel and the regenerative power and agency of the God the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians, 1: 4&5). This view of grace thus resulted in his pro-revival emphasis that an experiential awareness of joy, peace and other beneficences of grace were to be appropriated through faith.

Balmer (1984: 199) has claimed that Freylinghuysen only affected a poorer class of Dutch colonists who had become alienated from the religious establishment. However, this argument is unlikely because the establishment clearly supported his ministry and, because whether he was opposed or received, he had a wide impact on the colonial interests of Dutch reformed church. Thus, (Bonomi, 1988: 131) it would be more accurate to state that Freylinghuysen gained prominence within the system, rather than as a maverick preacher to a disenfranchised class. For this reason Freylinghuysen's influence was far-reaching and significant and McLoughlin (1978: 80-81) has thus noted that many historians have regarded him as being the archetypal American revivalist. Perhaps, even more significantly, this seems to have been the view of his peers and contemporaries. For example, Dallimore (1970: 437) records that during his second visit to America, George Whitefield met with and commended him for his role at the beginning of the movement:

“He mentions meeting ‘several ministers whom the Lord has been pleased to honour in making them instruments of bringing many sons to glory.’ One of these was Theodorus Freylinghuysen, whom he describes as ... ‘the beginner of the great work that I trust the Lord is carrying on in these parts.’”

2.3.2 William Tennent and Gilbert Tennent

Scots and Irish Presbyterians in the middle colonies also experienced a new strain of preaching during the 1720's. Within these circles the challenge came mainly through the initial influence of William Tennent (1673-1746) who began to educate 'new style' preachers within his Log College at Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. Following his studies at Edinburgh University, Tennent had become a priest serving in the Church of Ireland.

However, upon his arrival in America he became firmly identified with the middle colony Presbyterians. Later, he was admitted into Presbyterian ministry and served in several churches before settling at Neshaminy. It was here that he began to use his considerable learning in order to prepare men for the ministry. To begin with, this was conducted from his church and directed towards the preparation of his own sons. Then in 1735 the first Log College was constructed and another sixteen to eighteen men were equipped to serve as preachers within the middle colonies. Tennent's graduates were generally in sympathy with the theological emphasis found in the preaching of Freylinghuysen. Sweet (1965: 29) comments:

“Most of them were either the sons of William Tennent or graduates of his “Log College.”... like Freylinghuysen he was a personalized Calvinist, primarily interested in training young men to enter the Presbyterian ministry and to bring men and women to repentance.”

Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764) was in the advanced guard of his father's graduating students and led the way for this group of preachers. In 1726, Gilbert was settled alongside Freylinghuysen at New Brunswick, New Jersey. During the next few years four other Log College men became ministers in this area and with the endorsement of the Philadelphia Synod they formed and established the New Brunswick Presbytery. However, from the outset this presbytery became the focus of unease and concern within the denomination. In Britain (McLoughlin, 1978: 83), the Presbyterian Church did not test their membership on the basis of a crisis conversion. The New Brunswick Presbytery thus broke with tradition as it continued to ordain preachers who were committed to the doctrine of crisis conversion.

It is clear that the insistence upon crisis conversion was the reason for the successes and the opposition that Gilbert Tennent and other graduates of his father's academy experienced in the 1720-30's. In later years, Tennent confirmed this emphasis when he was asked to provide an account of his method of preaching and of the blessing that he

had experienced during his earliest days in New Jersey. Dallimore (1970: 417) has recorded his method:

“I examined many about the grounds of their hope of salvation, which I found in most to be nothing but as the sand... urging them to seek converting grace ... I did then preach much upon Original sin, repentance, the nature and necessity of conversion, in a close, examinatory and distinguishing way.”

Thus, in line with Freylinghuysen, the New Brunswick Presbytery was committed to an emphasis on the need for conversion. However, whilst Freylinghusen and William Tennent's sons preached in the same geographical area and held similar theological opinions, there is some debate as to the level of their influence upon each other. For example, Milton J. Coalter (1980: 36) has maintained that Gilbert Tennent was profoundly influenced in his thinking and practice as a result of contacts with Freylinghuysen and his Dutch pietism. If this was the case, then the middle colony revivalist movement was the product of theological cross-fertilization. On the other hand, it could be argued that the harmony of thought and practice between Freylinghuysen and the Tennents resulted from the joining of two separate streams. The common denominator was an emphasis upon conversion and this emerged from a convergence of various reformed traditions that were transplanted within the broad region of the middle colonies. In fact, it can be argued that there are several good reasons to favour this interpretation of the historical events.

- **The New Brunswick Presbytery were theologically trained and prepared for their ministries in Pennsylvania.** Thus, by the time they arrived in New Jersey they were all schooled in their theological tradition.
- **The New Brunswick Presbytery was in many respects antithetical to various forms of pietism.** Their Calvinism was applied intellectually. In time, many of these men were instrumental in inaugurating, establishing and maintaining the prestigious colleges of the middle colonies (Sweet, 1965: 30). Furthermore, they were opposed to biblically unsound forms of pietism,

especially (Coalter, 1980: 43) that strand of perfectionism that was held by Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians.

Thus, along with Freylinghuysen, the New Brunswick Presbytery supported a theological position that upheld crisis conversion. Furthermore, in the course of time the work of Gilbert Tennent and the members of this presbytery eclipsed their Dutch friends and their commitment evidently made a deep impression in New Jersey (McCloughlin, 1978: 83). So much so, that some modern articles (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2000: 46164) maintain that Gilbert Tennent was the leading figure of a great religious awakening whilst others (Deitmar Rothermund, 1962: 23) have argued that he was an ambitious religionist with a hidden revolutionary agenda. However, it is possibly best, along with James H. Hutson (1998: 108), to view the revivalists in this colonial period as evangelical activists ahead of being political or social reformers. It was their view that inner conversion was the necessary means of producing a lifestyle that would impact favourably upon the general good of a body politic ordered by the common grace of God.

In reality, however, because of the established connection between the colonial township and the church it was inevitable that the commitment to and the re-emphasis of crisis conversion led to religious faction and political friction. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the revivalists' emphasis became a shibboleth that resulted in argument, debate and deep-seated divisions among the Presbyterians. Eventually, this led to the formation of opposing factions, known as 'Old Sides' and 'New Sides.' In 1738, the divisions between 'Old Sides' and 'New Sides' Presbyterianism were hardened over the proposal that the license to preach in the middle colonies should only be supplied to graduates from Harvard, Yale, or a British University. Thus Tennant went on the offensive and, according to McLoughlin (1978: 84), the divisions within Presbyterianism were effectively sealed when he preached on, 'The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.'

"In the Spring of 1740 Tennent delivered the most vehement blast against the "Old Side" conservatives... He implied that some

antirevival ministers were more interested in their own social status and the “trade” of preaching than in saving the souls of common folk.”

In the following year the Philadelphia Synod censured and formally expelled the New Brunswick Presbytery. However, within five years, those ministers and churches that were sympathetic to the New Brunswick position formed a new Synod. McLoughlin (1978: 85) thus records:

“The Log College men, joined by other prorevival Presbyterians from other presbyteries, formed a new synod, the New York Synod, in 1745, consisting of presbyteries with ministers from Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware.”

During the 1720's Scots Irish Presbyterians in the middle colonies were evidently divided on the issue of conversion. William and Gilbert Tennent played a vital role in re-establishing this aspect of reformed theology. It can be argued that their focus, alongside that of Freylinghuysen, secured a platform for the Great Awakening and that the Tennents were directly responsible for the origin of American revivalism. However, their revivalism was clearly opposed to some forms of pietism within the middle colonies. The New Brunswick Presbytery commitment to theological education and ministerial training reveals that their advocacy of crisis conversion was not founded upon the basis of anti-intellectualism. Scripture (John, 3: 5-8, I Peter, 1: 23-25) the reformed confessions of faith (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1976: 53-56) and puritan preachers (Henry, 1960: 736, 737) all expound on the ‘new birth.’ In this sense the Tennents were actually traditionalists and it is paradoxical that they were referred to as ‘New Sides’ when it was ‘Old Sides’ Presbyterians who had moved way from the reformed confessions in order to adopt a different standard in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

2.3.3 Jonathan Edwards

New England, particularly Connecticut and Massachusetts, was also a theatre of unusual blessing during the 1730's. In Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) this northern part of the colonies gave birth to one of the most formidable and intellectually able pro-revivalists, ever to have been produced on the continent of North America. Edwards was born in the colonies. Furthermore, from the mid seventeenth century his prominent family had played a pivotal role in shaping the development of religious life throughout New England. Both his parents belonged to family trees that stretched back to early colonization and as a result of their marriage; they effectively brought together two outstanding religious dynasties of the colonial era.

In Timothy and Esther Edwards, Jonathan was raised-up by two gifted and well-educated parents. For example, Alexander (1889:2) has claimed that his father possessed a 'more than usual' degree of learning and scholarship and his mother, if anything, excelled him in terms of her abilities and intellectual prowess. These exceptional talents were invested in the education of their ten daughters and more particularly (Murray, 1987: 11&12) in the development of their only son. Murray (1987: 9) is among those who have acknowledged a feminine influence on Edwards' formative growth and it appears highly probable that he owed a significant debt to the impact of a maternal education. Furthermore, he belonged to a family that placed great value on his religious or spiritual well-being. This concern was illustrated within the paragraph of a letter (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958: 14) that was written by his father to this mother during the period of his service as the military chaplain on an expedition to Canada in 1711:

"Tell the children, that I would have them, if they desire to see their father again, to pray daily for me in secret; and above all things to seek the favour of God in Christ Jesus, and that while they are young."

Thus, the formative thinking of Jonathan Edwards was informed through means of an outstanding family background. Moreover, in addition to these advantages there is evidence that suggests that he personally possessed a prodigious intellectual ability that began to show at an early stage in his educational development. During his youth Edwards' active mind was drawn to philosophical issues and to an investigation of natural phenomena. Parkes (1930: 36-37) records that by the age of eleven he had written opposing the viewpoint that the soul was material, and had also produced a competent study upon the habits of the flying spider. However, his precocious intellectual talent was evidently disciplined or tempered by the religious tradition that was accepted by his parents and upheld among the members of his extended family. In reality therefore, even though Edwards was a thoroughly trained, competent and original thinker, his talent was generally subordinated to the prime influence of his childhood religious education. This contention is supported by the view of writers such as Alexander (1889: 21) who regarded this to be the dominant factor in the growth and eventual maturation of Edwards' later published works. However, others have concluded that he was an eighteenth century thinker whose penchant for philosophy and natural science actually obscured the traditional basis of Calvinistic or puritan theology. For example, Parkes (1930: 36) tended to relegate the impact of Edwards' religious conviction when he described him as being '... a pantheist of a type very uncommon before the romantic movement.' Such a description, however, clearly failed to take account of his personal exposure to the power and efficiency of that form of religion that he experienced within his childhood home. Edwards himself (1958: 14) testified that it was here that he first became familiar with that experimental religion through revival blessings which would later produce such a profound impact upon the content of his own preaching and his published works:

"Writing to an absent sister on 10th May, 1716, he says, " Through the wonderful goodness and mercy of God, there has been in this place a very remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God ... I think above thirty persons come commonly on Mondays to converse with father about the condition of their souls."

In September 1716 Jonathan Edwards enrolled at Yale. Five years later, following the conclusion of his studies, he experienced a dramatic change of heart that settled the future direction of his life and the course of his ministry. This change was the foundation on which he would later evaluate a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Edwards described this as an illuminating and intensely personal encounter with that inner principle or power (Romans, 5: 1-5, Peter, 1: 3-9) of spiritual life that is presented in scripture as a feature of saving faith. The effects of Edwards' spiritual enlightenment were graphically recorded (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958: 15) in the preface of his narrative of surprising conversions. This is indicative of the fact that he recognized the reformed emphasis (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1976: 56-63) of both imputed and infused righteousness being applied to the elect. However, it has been argued that Edwards was a classical religious mystic whose view of conversion and personal consecration was more akin to the emphasis or musings of a pre-reformation spirituality. Thus, Anthony W. Novitsky (1997:1) has presented the view that, in contrast to reformed or puritan thinking, Edwards was 'profoundly influenced by continental Roman Catholicism.' This argument, however, can be dismissed on the basis that, in the scripture and in the reformed confessions, imputed and infused righteousness are separate but complimentary beneficences of the gospel. Edwards' conversion and his subsequent desires for personal consecration and mortification were, therefore, fully consistent with the best traditions of the reformers and the thinking of the English puritans. Thus, the historical evidence would best support the view that the highly experiential nature of his conversion was evangelical in both root and branch.

From this point, Edwards was personally committed to the same type of revivalism in New England, which was to be promoted and maintained by Freylinghuysen and the Tennents in the middle colonies. Thus, in keeping with the other pro-revival activists, he was prepared to assert the need for a 'crisis conversion.' Moreover, in time his powers of intellectual and spiritual discernment elevated him to the rank of one of the greatest evangelical casuists ever to have graced the early era of American revivalism. Further, D M Lloyd-Jones (1987: 351) was convinced that 'Puritanism reached its fullest bloom in the life and ministry of Jonathan Edwards' and that his abilities

surpassed those of other revivalists. Edwards' major contribution to the cause of revivalism occurred as he served the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts.

It was here from 1735-1745 that he witnessed, evaluated and documented a number of remarkable religious 'awakenings' that deeply affected many of the townspeople who were under his pastoral charge. Thus, the bent of his scientific mind was applied toward an investigation of the phenomena, and the results of this research established the criterion for an understanding of 'revivals' and 'revivalism.' It is perhaps a significant fact that as an apologist Edwards was less impressionable and far more balanced in his judgments than many of the other pro-revivalists who were active in this period. Moreover, through his writings, Edwards later became internationally recognized as a pro-revivalist. The publication of his works led to the establishment of 'prayer concerts' on either side of the Atlantic that later became instrumental in the development of world mission agencies and societies.

2.3.4 Samuel Davies

Freylinghuysen, the Tennents and Jonathan Edwards represented revivalism within the traditional framework of colonial denominationalism. Their ministries were confined locally to the towns or regional presbyteries that they served. However, as a result of their particular emphasis and success at the local level, the Great Awakening also produced a number of itinerant preachers who began to exercise a freer role among the colonies. Thus, in an innovative fashion, roving new styled preachers from New England and the Middle Colonies became instrumental in representing the pro-revival cause and its message to the southern populace. McLoughlin (1978: 90) indicates that the south was the first great mission field of American revivalism:

“The dedicated new-light missionaries from New England and the new-side itinerants from the Middle Colonies who went south after 1740 in response to manifold calls for their services found a social order rife with confusion and discontent.”

However, the southern aristocracy did not look favourably on the efforts of these itinerant preachers. In 1744, the uneasiness of the southern gentry with the itinerants was exposed in the courtroom at Hanover County, Virginia. Here (McLoughlin, 1978: 91), some church laymen were placed on trial and penalized for providing the unlawful invitation to a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey to preach for them:

“Governor Gooch had agreed to tolerate Presbyterianism after 1720 in the unsettled areas west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but he did not want to tolerate dissenting churches east of the mountains... in April 1745, Gooch denounced those “false teachers that are lately crept into this government who, without orders (i.e., Anglican ordination) or licenses or producing any testimonial of their education or sect, professing themselves ministers under the pretended influence of *new light* or extraordinary impulse and such like fanatical and enthusiastic notions, led the innocent and ignorant people into all kinds of delusions.”

The judgment at Hanover County thus threatened the prospects of the pro-revival sympathizers in the southern colonies. Two years later (McLoughlin, 1978: 91) the Virginia legislature went even further in its policy to prohibit this incursion of itinerant preachers. However, this legal restriction was lifted for a ‘new sides’ Presbyterian, Samuel Davies (1723-1761), who was allowed to preach in Virginia from 1748 having first obtained an official blessing and sanction from the members of the New York Synod. Davies’ acceptance in the south was evidently due in part to his political sympathies, which upheld the British crown. Griffin (1994: 34) provides ample proof that he was so in line with southern sensibilities that he would have been considered as a friend rather than an enemy of established order and government in Virginia. Davies was thus not perceived as a threat to the political stability of the south and his general tolerance of the status quo provided him with an unusual and official freedom to promote pro-revivalism. Sweet (1965:65) states that:

“When Samuel Davies arrived in Hanover, Virginia, in 1748, a young man of twenty-four, the status of dissenters was, to say the least, uncertain. He was the only New Side, or revivalistic Presbyterian minister in the colony... While his work was centered at Hanover, he made preaching excursions into other counties, and his fame as a preacher spread abroad.”

Samuel Davies thus successfully blazed the trail for an acceptance of itinerancy within the south. It is a remarkable testimony to his efforts that he almost single-handedly removed the barriers to religious freedom in Virginia and the Carolinas. Politically, he managed to reverse the governor's policy towards roving preachers when he argued that Virginia was bound to allow for an itinerant ministry on the basis of the Toleration Act of 1689. Thus, increasingly, itinerants flourished in the south throughout the period of the Great Awakening. In time, such political and religious freedom would result in the development of a popular separatist tradition that would later have a major and lasting impact on the southern states after the revolution. Churchman (Dameron and Matthews, 1986: 50) records that there is a marble likeness of Samuel Davies that stands in a small courtyard outside the Presbyterian Historical Society in a 'smog-ridden' area of Philadelphia. Davies who was elected to serve as the fourth president at Princeton deserves such recognition as an instrumental and pivotal member of that powerful group of pre revolution, mid colonial Presbyterians. However, in historical terms it can be argued that his greatest legacy (Savelle and Knopf, 1948: 67) resulted from his work in the south as a pro revivalist, itinerant preacher. In his capacity as a mid colonist Presbyterian, he set the standard and course of religious tolerance that led to the growth of other evangelical traditions through itinerant ministry (Hall, 1994: 136). Ironically, these traditions were quite different from his but they tended to identify more clearly a pro-revival insistence on a crisis conversion and visible church membership. Thus, it could be argued that Davies' evangelicalism as identified in eulogy was in the end best served in the south.

Sweet (1965: 66) comments:

Dr. Finley, his successor at Princeton, said of him in his funeral sermon: "He considered the visible kingdom of Christ as extended beyond the boundaries of this or that particular denomination ... Hence he gloried more in being Christian than in being a Presbyterian, though he was the latter from principle."

2.3.5 Other Colonial Pro-revivalists

The Great Awakening also produced a host of other committed and talented pro-revival preachers who graced colonial America.

- **David Brainerd** (1718-1747). In 1743, following his studies at Yale, Brainerd became a missionary to the American Indians. It has been stated by Frazier (1992: 58) that he was prone to 'emotional instability' and was 'anxiety ridden.' However, by November 1745 he had travelled over 3,000 miles on horseback on behalf of the Edinburgh branch of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and, thereby, claimed to have experienced "a remarkable work of grace." By March 1746, it has been reckoned, more than 130 Indians had been converted by means of his service. Brainerd died of tuberculosis at the home of Jonathan Edwards his close friend and biographer. Edwards, in contrast (Rubin, 1994: 94&95) to the claims that Brainerd was prone to melancholia, put a different complexion on his tendency toward emotional and spiritual introspection. Brainerd, in Edwards' opinion, provided exemplary proof a truly consecrated life that was animated by the principle of a life lived (Romans, 8: 5-17) by the power of the Holy Spirit. This emphasis, of course, is further proof that the early American revivalist movement was fundamentally committed to an understanding of the experimental nature of saving faith.

- **Jonathan Dickinson** (1688-1747). In 1741, following the ejection of the New Brunswick Presbytery, Dickinson allied himself with the Tennents in his support of the pro-revivalist 'new side.' In 1746 he obtained (Choquette, Lippy and Poole, 1992: 363) a charter for the establishment of a new college. The college, which first began to operate in his parsonage at Elizabethtown, later removed to Princeton. Dickinson became distinguished in his role as an educator and a reformed apologist, and Schneider (1958: 171) recorded that he died 'in the midst of a dispute.' Thus, during the Great Awakening the 'new side' commitment to theological education and ministerial training was proven through the commencement and development of the American college system. This, of course, highlights the fact that some of the supporters of the pro-revivalist movement were far from being an ignorant or over emotionalised group of preachers and teachers. Saving faith was experimental but it was not anti-intellectual and they would have understood the interconnection between the mind, heart and will. This was common to the reformed tradition, which emphasized faith as 'notia, assensus and fiducia' (Calvin, 1962: 467-508).
- **Shubal Stearns** (1706-1771). Stearns was one of the first revivalist itinerant preachers to advance the separatist cause in the south. Following his conversion in the mid colonies at the height of the Great Awakening, he moved with a number of families to Virginia and then later into the territory of North Carolina. It was here with significant success that he began to organize and to develop the Sandy Creek Baptist Church. From an initial church membership of sixteen people this *separate* church quickly grew in numbers to just above six hundred. Within another five years, six more congregations organised themselves into the Sandy Creek Baptist Association. However, these early Carolina Baptists were noted for some religious eccentricities and political tendencies that harmed their acceptance and progress within the more Anglicised south. Brekus (1998: 62) records that these *separate* congregations were based upon a highly charged and emotional form of public worship, which allowed for a greater participation by their women. Stearns himself seems to

have been adept (Hudson, 1983: 162) at the art of producing this high degree of fervency in the worship of the first Carolina Baptists. In addition, it would seem that these congregations were later tarnished through political demonstration. Thus, Watson (1994: 1) has claimed that they were badly damaged through their connection to the 'Regulation' or 'Regulator' protest movement that came to the fore in the 1760's. Following the revolution, however, the southern separatists received greater favour and their fortunes were enhanced during the Second Great Awakening.

- **Eleazar Wheelock (1711-1779).** In 1740, Wheelock became the Congregational minister of the North Parish of Lebanon, Connecticut. During the Great Awakening, he became an active member of the pro-revivalist movement and gave himself unstintingly to the cause in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. However in 1743, as the direct result of his itinerant preaching (Axtell, 1981: 91), he was '... deprived of his church salary' through the discipline of the Congregational General Assembly. To compensate for the loss of his earnings Wheelock started to school a number of boys in his own home as a preparation for their entrance into the college system of New England. Significantly, one of his initial students was a Mohican Indian, named Occom. By 1761, 'The Moors Charity School,' as it became known, had enrolled ten other American Indians for preparatory training under Wheelock at Lebanon. This school later moved to Hanover, New Hampshire and became one part of a new educational facility. Wheelock has been popularly regarded as the first great educator of the Native American Indians. Nye (1956: 52) mentions that his exploits were praised in rhyme: '*Eleazer Wheelock, the students later sang, Was a very pious man Who went into the wilderness to teach the Indian.*' This, of course, was patently incorrect because his work as an educator to the American Indians was well established by the time that he eventually moved northwards to New Hampshire. However, it can be claimed that his work as an educator was indicative of a pro-revivalist view that the gospel must reach and teach (Matthew, 28: 16-20) the world.

2.4 A profile of George Whitefield (1714-1770) and an assessment of his special relationship with the Colonies during the Great Awakening

It is generally agreed that George Whitefield was the greatest single influence upon the success of the Great Awakening. From 1739-1770 his itinerant preaching throughout the American colonies provided special impetus to the pro-revivalist movement across existing denominational interests and geographical boundary lines. Dallimore (1970: 1-598, 1980: 1-602) has presented a definitive biography of Whitefield that presents him as both the means and driving force behind eighteenth century Methodism in Britain and America. This biographical contribution could be criticised for a bias in favour of Whitefield, but it does make an overall contribution to the understanding of his part in it, and a useful chronology of eighteenth century revivalism. Whitefield was an Englishman and his childhood was spent (Lloyd-Jones, 1987: 111) amidst surroundings that appeared unlikely to prepare him for his career as an evangelist. However, from an early age he provided proof of a genius for public speaking and he quickly became distinguished (Lloyd-Jones, 1987: 116,117) for his extraordinary array of natural gifts and talents.

Following his conversion as an Oxford undergraduate, Whitefield's natural gifts were dedicated to the pro-revivalist movement. In 1732, he had entered the university through a scholarship, with the intention of working toward ordination. It was during his time at Oxford that he became identified with members of the so-called *Holy Club*. Both John and Charles Wesley were foremost members of this club and it was as a result of their invitation that Whitefield came under the influence of a rigid and ascetic form of religious discipline. Dallimore (1970: 71&72) claims that this *Holy Club* was not based around evangelical teaching or practice. This contention is highly probable and it is indicated by the fact that many of the members did not claim to have experienced their evangelical conversions until a much later date. In fact, the *Holy Club* emphasis on practical religion and the adherence to a strict asceticism appears to have been entirely ignorant of an apostolic or reformed appreciation of salvation by grace through faith. Whitefield appears to have been the first of their number to exhaust these efforts to find peace with God. Thus, contrary to an accepted wisdom, his activities on

behalf of the club appear to have aggravated his desire to find the satisfaction that he sought through rigid religious discipline. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, he developed an intense struggle with his own sensitive conscience and learned by experience what the puritans had described as a '*legal conviction of sin.*' However in 1735, toward the close of his university education, he found the peace he was searching for (Dallimore, 1970: 77):

“God was pleased to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold of His dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of adoption, to seal me even to the day of everlasting redemption ... It may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me and gave me the new birth.”

Dalimore (1970: 79-98) records that Whitefield's commitment to this new found faith was soon expressed in an 'ordination-divine and human.' From religious apathy, Georgian England became the backcloth for the early ministry of an extraordinarily gifted preacher who laboured amid some amazing and unparalleled scenes of religious revival. Whitefield was just twenty-two years of age when he began his preaching career and was unlearned in some points of reformed or evangelical theology. However, it is significant that from the outset and thereafter, he put a decided emphasis on a 'crisis conversion.' On this issue he was firmly fixed. This meant that his evangelistic efforts and his lifelong associations were clearly defined in terms of a theology that upheld the apostolic teaching regarding a new birth by regeneration and conversion. Thus, he became the leading light of the pro-revivalist movement and sought to advance the cause through the complete dedication of his natural gifts and spiritual consecration. Davies (1992: 80, 81) comments that:

“In the months that followed his ordination in Gloucester on Trinity Sunday, June 20 1736, his preaching became the means of awakening increasing numbers of people to their need of peace with God...For the next eighteen months he preached with increasing frequency and with ever-increasing results ... He then spent a short time in a village

church in Dummer, Hampshire, officiating in the place of the rector who was away in Oxford, and while there decided to respond to the appeals of John Wesley to become a missionary to Georgia.”

2.4.1 George Whitefield and his early visits to the American Colonies

Early in 1738, Whitefield set sail from the English port of Deal for the first of his voyages to the shores of America. This visit was focused primarily on serving various educational and religious needs in the newly founded colony of Georgia. The colony was then only five years old and it has been estimated (Dalimore, 1970: 201) that by the time of Whitefield’s arrival the total population was numbered at less than one thousand persons. During this visit steps were made which secured the colonists from the threat of attack from Spanish Florida and developed the social and religious infrastructure of the colony. In terms of revivalism Whitefield’s first visit was limited in its scope and over the duration of six months his preaching and general religious leadership was restricted to the geographical area of Georgia. However, during this period of time he began a girls’ school in Savannah and raised money to build a church in Frederica. Perhaps, more importantly, this first visit led to a philanthropic determination on his part to provide accommodation for the homeless children of the colony. Dallimore (1970: 206) comments that:

“The true need, however, was for something more than these ‘little schools.’ There were a number of homeless children in the Colony, many of them in a deplorable condition, and they could be permanently helped only by the establishment of an orphan house.”

Thus, when Whitefield returned to England, he was committed to the need to raise support for the provision of Georgia’s orphans. From this time the building, establishment and maintenance of an orphanage would remain his lifelong concern and it became the prime reason for a succession of other visits to the American colonies. Between Whitefield’s first and second visits to America, his fame as an evangelist reached unprecedented levels in Britain. In Bristol and London he began to preach in the open air to large crowds of people, who were generally untouched or unreached by

the Church of England or through organized bodies of religious dissent. From the latter part of 1738, his personal fame as a revivalist was established as the result of the press coverage that recorded his movement and the amazing scenes witnessed in the fields of England. This notoriety preceded Whitefield's next voyage to America and when he arrived there for the second time he was received with an expectation throughout the colonies. During this visit that lasted from October 1739 to January 1741, he addressed large and excited audiences within the northern, middle and southern colonies and his ministry precipitated the Great Awakening. Throughout this visit, Whitefield was brought into contact with a number of outstanding new-light ministers in the colonies. On tour, he met with Freylinghuysen, the Tennents and Jonathan Edwards and was also warmly welcomed by churches and colleges that supported the pro-revival cause. The scope of his itinerant ministry, together with his popularity as a preacher, provided cohesion among the various exponents of the revivalist tradition in colonial America. Whitefield's preaching, particularly his focus on the need to experience a 'crisis conversion,' helped to encourage and stimulate evangelism and the success of his ministry, along with his personal affability, was a unifying factor amid the diverse elements of the pro-revivalist camp. In addition, it is a significant fact that many others were drawn into the pro-revival camp as a direct result of Whitefield's preaching. These included itinerant evangelists such as David Brainerd and Shubal Sterns and many other ministers or ministerial students who were brought to an evangelical conversion (Dallimore, 1970: 552, 553).

However, Whitefield's second visit was also marked by the stirrings of opposition to his methods and his theology. Goen (1962: 9) suggests that his evangelistic success was largely accomplished by the 'radical innovation' of his itinerant preaching. Bonomi (1988: 149) claims that this was the cause of 'tumults and divisions' within the established denominations. Thus, Whitefield provided his detractors with a basis for the criticism that he was just a novelty preacher who ran roughshod over the conventional and established order of religion within the colonies. In addition, there were a number of newspaper editors (Copeland, 2000: 94-105) who were firmly opposed to the method and the substance of his evangelistic preaching. Whitefield's negative press attacked

the principle of his itinerant evangelism, claimed he was a schismatic and further suggested that his preaching deliberately encouraged or provoked emotionalism. In turn, such criticisms were countered and defended by many of Whitefield's supporters who wrote favourably to the press about the accomplishments and benefits of his ministry (Copeland, 2000: 106).

The positive impact of Whitefield's second visit to the colonies has been retrieved through the works of sympathetic historians within the latter years of the twentieth century. Dallimore (1970: 495-544), Davies (1992: 96) and others have recaptured his outstanding evangelistic and philanthropic contribution to the ongoing social political and religious progress of colonial America. This said, however, even the most benign and sympathetic historians have challenged Whitefield's support during this visit for the more radical elements that operated in the colonial pro-revivalist movement.

Largely through a friendship with the Tennents and other the mid colony Presbyterians, he became personally embroiled within the controversy over the issue of, '*unconverted ministries*.' Dallimore (1970: 547-562), indicates that Whitefield was theologically opposed to an unconverted ministry but that his action on behalf of this cause was ill-considered and precipitous. Thus, prior to his second departure from the shores of America, he became personally identified with a pro-revivalist party that would wreak havoc in his three-year absence from his colonial ministry.

2.4.2 George Whitefield and his later visits to the American Colonies

In October 1744 Whitefield returned for a third visit to America. However, following his second visit, divisions between pro-revivalist and anti-revivalist groups had hardened within the churches. Many anti-revivalists and some leading pro-revivalists had been concerned over the inflammatory remarks that were made over '*unconverted ministries*' and with the excessive enthusiasms that had caused friction or division in some churches. In principle, Whitefield opposed an unconverted ministry and he had made his stand on this issue during his second visit when he was prepared to preach on his views within the colonial denominations. Furthermore, he was willing to accept that

an experimental faith might result in legitimate enthusiasm. However, within the intervening time it appears that this theological stance became the basis of excess by a group of fanatical itinerants. Whitefield's previous connections with some of these fanatics meant that he returned to a barrage of criticism from anti-revivalists. Thus, at the outset of his third visit, many pulpits were closed to him and pamphlets were in circulation that opposed his views on an unconverted ministry and his association with fanatical revivalists. Seriously for him, some faculty members from the Harvard School were involved in opposition to his revivalism. Whitefield, therefore, quickly journeyed to Boston where he held a meeting with a prominent group of ministers whose favourable opinion of him, according to Dallimore (1980: 195), had been affected by these criticisms:

“They were apprehensive ... that I would promote or encourage separations, and that some would have been encouraged to separate by my saying in my journal that I found the generality of preachers preached an unknown Christ ... I said I was sorry if anything I wrote had been a means of promoting separations, for I was of no separating principles, but came to New England to preach the Gospel of peace.”

Following this meeting, Whitefield set out to regain the confidence of the New England colonists when he began a nine-month evangelistic preaching tour that attracted large crowds of people and re-established his credibility. In this enterprise, it was the Boston ministers who were the first (Dallimore, 1980: 195-196) to open their pulpits to him. Their support thus helped to remove fear that he was prone to the charge of fanaticism. Following this tour of New England, Whitefield's itinerary took him south to oversee some important business affairs and then into an evangelistic tour of Virginia, the Carolinas, Maryland and Philadelphia. In all, his third visit to the colonies lasted nearly four years and thus represented his single longest stay on American soil during his evangelistic career. Thus, although the visit had an unpromising beginning, it became a success and helped to remove many of the common misconceptions that had clung to his brand of revivalism following his earlier visits. It could be argued, therefore, that this visit to America was the point at which Whitefield came of age and that it marked a

vital turning point on his personal road toward greater evangelical maturity. Incidentally, his third visit was also significant because of his contribution (Dallimore, 1980: 201) to the political stability of the colonies:

“On Cape Breton Island, in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, the French had recently completed the construction of a massive military and naval bastion, Fort Louisburg.”

The Fort was used as a base to strike at shipping lanes and trade routes supplying the colonists in New England. The Colonial authorities asked Whitefield to encourage men to enlist in a military force that would assault this base. He consented, and even suggested a motto for the venture, ‘*Nil Desperandum, Christo Duce*’ (‘Christ leads, never despair’) that was then placed upon the flag of the expeditionary force. Dallimore (1980: 203), concludes:

“The event was of high historical importance. The loss of Louisburg cut off communication between France and its Canadian Colony and opened the way for the further losses that later brought about the defeat of the French at Quebec and the establishment of British control in Canada ... Whitefield’s role in the Louisburg affair was a major one. There can be no doubt that, had he not given the venture his support, the majority of the men would not have enlisted and the attempt would have been abandoned.”

Whitefield’s ministry in the colonies was cemented by his personal commitment to the orphanage in Georgia. Furthermore, the preaching tour of 1744-1748 had established him as a popular figure within the colonial life of this period. During his last few visits this bond of affection was further enlarged and strengthened through the continuation of his extensive preaching tours and many deeds of generosity throughout the colonies.

- **1754-1755** Whitefield arrived for this visit at South Carolina. Following his short trip to the *Bethesda Orphanage* he went directly to New York. From there he began preaching for churches in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This tour was notable for the delivery of a commencement address to students at the New Jersey College. He then began a preaching tour in which he travelled to the Canadian border before making the return of a thousand miles through the colonies from north to south.
- **1763-1765** Whitefield arrived for this visit at Virginia. This time he commenced his work by preaching in Philadelphia. From there he travelled to Boston in order to present a gift to help cover the cost of reconstructing parts of the city which had been damaged through a disastrous fire in 1760. Incidentally, he also helped to replace a number of books that had been destroyed in another fire in the library at Harvard.

Whitefield arrived at Charleston for his last visit to the colonies. From here he preached locally for a month before moving up into Albany and New Hampshire. Following his regular pattern of 'preach and return,' he determined to go far north and to trail back through the colonies to Georgia. On the return leg of this tour, Dallimore (1980: 504) states, that an exhausted Whitefield arrived at the home of the Rev John Parsons at Newburyport, Massachusetts, on September 29th, 1770:

"Parsons reported that while they were at supper, 'I asked Mr Whitefield how he felt himself after his journey. He said, "He was tired, therefore he supped early, and would go to bed." But by that time the street in front of the house had filled with people, and as he began to make his way up the stairs, several of them were at the door, begging him to preach ... he responded to the request and stood on the landing, halfway up the stairs, candle in hand, preaching Christ. He was soon greatly alive to his subject and becoming heedless of time he continued to speak, till finally, the candle flickered, burned itself out and died away."

Whitefield died in the early hours of Sunday, September 30th. The 'Great Itinerant,' as he became known, was formally laid to rest at Newburyport, Massachusetts. Perhaps, in view of his colonial ministry, it was fitting tribute that this Englishman was buried on American soil. His contribution to the political, social and religious infrastructure of the colonies was immense and his preaching was a powerful influence amongst the mid-eighteenth century colonists. Further, as a leading pro-revivalist, Whitefield was largely responsible for both the advance and consolidation of that type of evangelical theology that was mightily owned through the ministries of itinerants throughout the developing colonies. His own personal ease and familiarity with all shades of denominational opinion and every strata of colonial society meant that he was uniquely able to bring cohesion to the revival movement. It can be argued, therefore, that although the first Great Awakening of North America did not start with him it most probably died with him.

2.5 Pro-revival theology and methodology

Freylinghuysen, the Tennents, Edwards, Davies and Whitefield were all theologically committed to a Calvinistic and puritan tradition. However, some modern historians (McLoughlin, 1978: 70) have maintained that the pro-revivalists reconstructed or syncretized sixteenth century dogma to fit with elements of enlightenment thinking. Jonathan Edwards, in particular, has been singled out (McDermott, 2000: 132) as an example of such heterodoxy. However, it could be argued that this charge is fallacious and that there was little if any common ground between the essential thinking and practice of the revivalists and the enlightened rationalists. Furthermore, that if there ever was any commonality of thinking or purpose on issues related to political or social philosophy then it was reached from two entirely different avenues of thought and practice. The revivalists' message was governed by a scriptural supernaturalism that was foreign and antipathetic to the rationalism of the eighteenth century. If their essential message was reconstructed in any way then it was with the specific intention of re-emphasising those supernatural aspects of primitive apostolic teaching that had been overlooked for a long period of time. These were men of a Calvinistic and

reformed persuasion who emphasized spiritual law as opposed to natural law and challenged their hearers with evangelistic appeals that they believed had scriptural warrant. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that most of the outstanding eighteenth century colonial revivalists, were antipathetic to 'crusade styled evangelism.' Their Calvinism would have recognized that the new birth was the result of God's prior and sovereign grace. Thus, whilst they felt bound to offer the gospel call to all men without discrimination, they were equally aware that regeneration and conversion was accomplished through a work of the Holy Spirit. Such a theological construct had a profound impact not only on the content of their preaching but also upon the employment of their evangelistic methods. For example, Whitefield never resorted to what would later become known as the 'altar call' and he evidently operated on the basis that his evangelistic appeals were sufficient to be directly and efficiently applied by the Holy Spirit. However, in Whitefield's case, this did not mean (Dallimore, 1970: 379-380) that he was either opposed to or removed from the willingness to offer close personal counselling or individual instruction. This said, like other pro- revivalists he was cautious in his evangelistic methods and he was prepared to wait for evidences of saving faith before claiming conversions. Later, of course, a new form of American revivalism would seriously challenge eighteenth century methods. The evangelistic methodology of the early American pro-revivalist movement seems, therefore, to lend credence to the view that these men were wholeheartedly committed to Calvinism.

2.6 Summary

The years from 1730 to 1770 witnessed unprecedented developments in the evangelical history of North America and this chapter has focused upon the origin of the revivalism that swept throughout the colonies prior to revolution. In this chapter I have attempted to highlight and analyse the basic thought and practice of the revivalists and I have concluded that this was largely a counter reaction to that nominal form of colonial religion which came into vogue during the latter part of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth century.

Thus, in connection with the general content of my thesis I have attempted to establish that the leading revivalists within this colonial period were generally experimental Calvinists who were thus fully and firmly committed to a reformed view regarding the necessity of undergoing a 'crisis conversion.' This as I have tried to show, was the theological factor that commonly linked Congregational, Episcopalian and Presbyterian pro-revivalists, in the pursuit of their evangelistic aims and objectives. The Great Awakening, therefore, was predicated upon a biblical supernaturalism and conversion or the new birth became the fundamental basis for the growth and development of American revivalism. Bushman (1970: xii, xiv), confirms that this emphasis was the crucial factor in the revivals of the period:

"The Awakening reached so many people because Protestant beliefs, which controlled the colonists' view of the world, placed so much importance on conversion... It released forces that were to have lasting effect on American theology and church life and, indirectly, on politics as well."

However, if the revivalism of the Great Awakening was defined in terms of renewed commitment to spiritual experience then this also contained the potential for difficulties or problems within the pro-revivalist movement. It appears to be the general rule of church history that when a legitimate theological emphasis is renewed after a long period of neglect then it tends to be over-emphasized in an unbalanced manner. This might account for the development of religious extremism among some of the pro-revivalists at this crucial period. For example, such extremists tended to put great emphasis upon being guided by 'impressions of the Spirit.' Through such means they would often dare to pronounce their judgement on matters related to a genuine 'work of the Spirit.' Thus, from 1743 the pro-revivalist movement was challenged by a group of opponents who took exception to this extremist faction. In a real sense, therefore, the future of American revivalism was held in the balance and it would require both the spiritual discernment and the theological expertise of one of its greatest sons to distinguish between the 'good and the vile.' The name of this son was Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, Massachusetts.

CHAPTER THREE: JONATHAN EDWARDS: AN ACCOUNT OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF REVIVAL

3.1 General Remarks

The Great Awakening had a telling impact upon the religious and social ethos of North America. Furthermore, it established the enduring reputations of several outstanding preachers and itinerant evangelists. However, it could be argued that historically and theologically the greatest legacy of this awakening was provided in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Through his writings subsequent historians have gained access to a unique portrait of the Great Awakening. During this awakening Edwards' intellectual genius and spiritual wisdom were used to defend, promote and support the cause of revivalism. Within his lifetime, and shortly after his death, the extensive publication of his writings won the favour of a new generation of evangelical leaders who responded to the practical challenge of his theology. In addition, his theological acumen and powers of spiritual discernment has been valued by a long line of reformed apologists. Edwards' works have thus been commended (Lloyd-Jones, 1987: 355, 356) in terms of the highest praise:

“I am tempted, perhaps foolishly, to compare the Puritans to the Alps, Luther and Calvin to the Himalayas, and Jonathan Edwards to Mount Everest! ... He knew more about experiential religion than most men; and he placed great emphasis upon the heart.”

Jonathan Edwards, of course, was fully committed to the theology that belonged to the reformers and the English puritans. Perhaps, on this basis it could be argued that his perspective on revivals was biased and clouded by his prejudices. However, his unique gifts and his personal relationship to the events of the Great Awakening continue to make him a valuable resource for understanding and evaluating this phenomenal ‘outpouring of the Spirit.’ Furthermore, Edwards' works continue to be relevant because they are indicative or illustrative of the theological consensus that formed the basis of mid-eighteenth century revivalism. This said (Murray, 1987: xix-xxx), his works have seemingly defied the explanation of modern historians. In general terms the

modern perception tends to support the view that Edwards was primarily a naturalist, or a rationalist who failed to fully embrace enlightened thinking because he was trapped by the conflicting constraints of an older philosophical and theological tradition. This tragic (McClymond, 1998: 6) portrayal of Edwards, therefore, has tended to obscure the view that he was always, and primarily, committed to a biblical supernaturalism and the evangelical faith.

3.2 Jonathan Edwards and an overview of his commitment to eighteenth century pro-revivalist theology

Conversion as the result of a '*crisis experience*,' was the key theological factor that bound the eighteenth century revivalist movement. In Britain and America there was a pronounced swing in favour of an appeal to repent, believe and be born again. This emphasis was, of course, free from crass or shallow sloganeering and it was generally applied and justified through the exposition of pertinent texts that upheld this biblical teaching. Thus, the evangelistic thrust of the revivalists was focused primarily upon neglected elements of the reformed faith and they sought to win converts by theological conviction rather than pragmatism. In fact, they seem to have been almost indifferent to calculating or announcing their gospel successes unless there was sufficient proof that a 'work of grace' was evident among their converts. In practical terms, this meant that they would wait to see if these converts demonstrated 'the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians, 5: 22-25) or exhibited any of the 'spiritual appetites,' 'desires' or 'evidences' that are illustrated in the accounts of biblical conversion.

Edwards, by virtue of his upbringing and his professed conversion experience, was also committed to the same theological position. Furthermore, as his works indicate, he was fundamentally controlled by his support for this theological construct as opposed to the new thinking of the enlightenment. Thus, for Edwards, theology was the master science and all other researches were subservient to his understanding of and prior commitment to an evangelical or reformed faith.

Drawing on Edwards' works, Murray (1987, 25-73) has provided a helpful overview of the factors that led to the development of his religious thinking and practice in the years that immediately followed his conversion. In contrast to the modern view (McLoughlin, 1978: 71) Murray has argued that the historical data confounds the theory that Edwards attempted to fuse his theology with the philosophical understanding of John Locke and other enlightened thinkers. In fact, Edwards seems to have gravitated towards the works (Murray, 1987: 68) of the reformers and the puritans. This view of Edwards' thinking is supported by other biographers such as Alexander (1889: 5), who was also certain of the fact that he had not accommodated his prime religious convictions to the newer rational philosophical trends of this period. However, it is apparent from Edwards' writings that his religious views provided no barrier to his investigation into and scientific evaluation of matters related to natural phenomena. Thus, apparently, he continues to confound the modern historian because this scientific thoroughness is generally regarded as being the antithesis of puritanism and the justification of rationalism. However, this anomaly can easily be removed if his religious convictions (Murray 1987: 72) are simply considered as being complimentary to his innate interest in natural science.

Furthermore (McDermott, 2000: 132), those historical commentators who have claimed that Edwards' religious views were so affected by the enlightenment that they bordered on heterodoxy have overlooked the supporting evidence that underlines the strength of his commitment to the reformed faith. For example, there is clear proof that as a student, lecturer and minister he endorsed the creed upheld by New England Congregationalism as it was expounded in their statement of faith. During his lifetime, Edwards was never charged or disciplined for heterodoxy and in the light of the extensive publication of his works he certainly provided plenty of ground on which he might have been reproved as being unorthodox. Thus, the proposition that he was a liberally minded minister and that he could ever have survived or succeeded in such a ministry whilst holding these views, is very improbable and highly dubious. However, it can be argued that, as a direct result of his pro-revivalist stance, Edwards' published works contain a slightly modified form of reformed thinking and practice.

Edwards was not convinced that saving faith was accomplished according to a strict *ordo salutis*. In terms of regeneration and conversion, Calvinists in the seventeenth century had emphasized an order in the progress of salvation. In many respects, their view of the new birth was analogous to the process of physical procreation. Thus regeneration began with the implantation or impartation of a new principle of life within the soul. In this initial work of grace the subject was passive and remained unconscious and unaware of this act. However, this hidden and mysterious work would eventually reveal itself prior to the point of conversion through the process of a prenatal spiritual development that included in the following order: conviction of sin, sincere repentance and the confession and exemplification of saving faith. This *ordo salutis* thus maintained the reformed emphasis that such salvation was a prevenient and sovereign work of grace that resulted from the free and prior agency of God the Holy Spirit.

In general terms, Edwards would have been in full agreement with the fact that salvation was sovereignly ordered, dispensed and applied by the free and prior agency of God. Moreover, he would have accepted that a conviction for sin, sincere repentance, and the open confession and profession of faith were vital components of the apostolic message and method of evangelism. However, it would appear that Edwards was antipathetic to the view that the *order of salvation* was to be too rigidly defined. It can be argued that this antipathy resulted from the fact (Murray, 1987: 47) that his own conversion had not followed the prescribed order of salvation 'in those particular steps wherein the people of New England, and anciently the dissenters of Old England, used to experience it.' The main incentive to Edwards' initial faith was not a legal conviction of sin but rather the delightful, glorious and soul-energating appreciation of the glory of God. It was later that he became aware and repentant for the natural bias or tendency of his lawless or sinful self. In his experience, therefore, the progression and order of salvation had reversed a commonly accepted *ordo salutis*. Thus, Edwards and other revivalists were much less rigid in their definition of the order of salvation. In practice this had an impact on their evangelistic method. Unlike many of the puritans who preached discriminately in favour of the regenerate and sought only to evangelise the

awakened, the eighteenth century revivalists were prepared to be far more open to the varied workings of grace. Certainly, they were convinced that there was a biblical imperative to preach the 'free offer' of the gospel. In the preaching of the revivalists, this was done without distinction, to all men, and without discrimination to only those who gave hopeful signs of being elect.

In addition to his slight differences with the accepted reformed tradition regarding the *ordo salutis*, Edwards was also convinced from his understanding of scripture that there was a moral aspect to saving faith. Faith, for Edwards, was the gift of God. However, it was also the only appropriate or proper intellectual, emotional and volitional reaction of mankind to the revelation of divine power and testimony both in creation and scripture. For some historians, this element of his thinking has been interpreted to mean that he was not a consistent Calvinist or that he was a secret supporter of enlightened philosophical thinking. McClymond (1998: 3-8) has referred to Edwards as the 'artful theologian' and has maintained that he was plainly guilty of theological and philosophical syncretism.

However, his argument seems to overlook the fact that although saving faith is a gift of God's sovereign grace, the scripture also supports the view that mankind is accountable and responsible for its wilful disobedience, in unbelief, to the preferment of natural and supernatural revelation. For example, Jesus broadcast '... that men loved darkness *instead of the light* because their deeds were evil' (John, 3: 19). Paul states (Romans 1: 18&19), that men, '*suppress* the truth by their wickedness since what may be *known about God* is plain to them.' In addition to this, the scriptures clearly teach that mankind was and is morally and spiritually culpable for the neglect of divine invitation. This is illustrated in the words of lament that Jesus pronounced over the city of Jerusalem (Luke, 13:34) and is also supported by the fact that the preaching (Acts 17: 32, Acts 26: 27-29) of Christ's apostles was often wilfully rejected. Thus, it can be claimed that Edwards and the other pro-revivalists were not generally sympathetic with certain aspects of a hyper-Calvinist or logical predestinarianism. In short, they

recognized 'biblical antinomy,' and this was the basis on which they sought to proclaim a gospel that honoured both sovereign grace and mankind's moral accountability.

Edwards was also convinced that the love of God, or a love for God, was the means and incentive for personal consecration and holiness. For him conversion was the beginning of a lively principle of spiritual-life that willingly rather than legalistically responded in faithful obedience to the claims of the revealed word of God. In his writings this inward principle of spiritual-life was fed by 'beautiful,' 'delightful' or 'sweet' comprehensions and experiential contemplations of the being or attributes of God. For example he states that his conversion was characterised (Murray, 1987: 35) by an awareness of, *'the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I experienced before.* Furthermore, it seems that this appreciation of the divine being was not confined to his conversion and that he was subsequently overwhelmed by experiences that stirred his affections and personal consecration.

This contemplative and experiential aspect of Edwards' spirituality has led to the conclusion (Novitsky, 1997:1) that he more properly belonged to a Catholic or neo-Catholic tradition. However, this hypothesis fails to recognize that in all his writings Edwards invariably attempts to justify his reasoning by making prior appeal to the scriptures as the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Thus, in his famous work entitled, 'The Religious Affections,' he used 1 Peter 1: 8, as the basis for a reformed argument in favour of the view that saving faith is accompanied by an experiential spirituality. On this basis he attempted to prove that his thinking was not contrary to apostolic teaching or antithetical to the best reformed tradition. In real terms, Edwards' emphasis upon an experiential spirituality defined his judgement of an authentic revival. Thus, in works (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1965: 7-147) such as his, 'A Narrative of Surprising Conversions' and 'The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God,' he majored on *spiritual* experience. Edwards held that an authentic revival was demonstrable and evident, not so much through physical phenomena but rather through the work of the Spirit on the heart leading to a lively inner principle of spiritual-life. This became visible only in the sense that it led to the

re-direction or re-orientation of former lifestyles and primarily resulted in changed and reformed attitudes and habits.

However, in this sense it was visible and this led Edwards to re-appraise his view of church membership. From his exposure to the revivals at Northampton, Massachusetts, he came to stronger convictions that communion should only be offered to those who professed and demonstrated saving grace. In fact, it was his support for this unwelcome stance that eventually led to his dismissal from the pastorate of the Congregational Church at Northampton, on 1st July 1750. Thus Edwards paid a personal price for his convictions concerning the nature and outworking of evangelical conversion and this provides further proof, if it were needed, that the recovery of this reformed emphasis was fundamental to pro-revivalism in the American colonies during the mid eighteenth century.

3.3 Jonathan Edwards and his personal acquaintance with the awakenings that took place at Northampton, Massachusetts

Revivals or awakenings were not uncommon within the history of the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts. From 1679, this church had experienced several 'spiritual harvests' under the ministry of Rev. Solomon Stoddard. It seems that as Stoddard's grandson, Edwards was familiar with the unusual occurrences (Select works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958; 72), which had preceded his own ministry to the same congregation:

“He had *five harvests*, as he called them. The *first* about 57 years ago; the *second* about 53; the *third* about 40; the *fourth* about 24; the *fifth* and last about 18 years ago.”

However by 1726, when Edwards arrived to assist his grandfather, the blessings had more or less dissipated and the climate was less encouraging. The 'harvests' of bygone days had been replaced by spiritual apathy in the church at Northampton. This trend, however, was indicative of a general mood and, according to Sweet (1965: 21),

'... religious leaders were painfully aware of the sad state of religion in the latter seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.' Following Stoddard's death in 1729 Jonathan Edwards became his successor and the senior pastor of the church at Northampton. During the early 1730's, he was exposed to the same trend of spiritual indifference that was being commonly felt in the rest of New England. Furthermore, along with the other ministers of his day he was (1958: 72) evidently concerned about the condition of a town that appeared to be overrun with the colonial disinterest in religious matters:

"After the *last* ('harvest' of 1718) ... came a far more degenerate time... I suppose, than ever before... The greater part seemed to be at that time very insensible of the things of religion, and engaged in other cares and pursuits."

However, during 1734, there was another extraordinary awakening in the church at Northampton. Edwards was at hand both to witness and to record the dramatic impact of this movement of the Spirit within the town. Three years later, his recollections of this localised revival were published under the title: '*A Narrative of Surprising Conversions.*' The title of the narrative can be regarded as being instructive. This revival, rather than being an organised religious event, was evidently not expected or planned. Edwards himself (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958: 74) appears to have been surprised by early signs of the awakening and records his response to hearing the news that a 'young woman' had become 'serious.' However, this surprise was but the prelude to a more general and widespread revival that developed in Northampton and its immediate vicinity in the first six months of 1735. During this period of time Edwards reported that the people became: 'sensibly impressed' and 'influenced' 'in the degrees both of awakening and conviction, and also of *saving light, love, and joy.*' Thus, he tended to typify the response of this local revival in a way that was consistent with his theological convictions and in a manner that supported his commitment to an experiential spirituality. Without any corroborating historical evidence it has to be questionable, at least, as to whether or not Edwards' reporting of the effects of this awakening was biased in favour of his theological prejudice. Further, he tended (1958:

75) to describe the effect of the revival subjectively rather than scientifically and this inclination is clearly illustrated at several points in his narrative of surprising conversions.

“There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world ... so that in the spring and summer following, *anno* 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God...”

For example, what did Edwards mean by ‘*unconcerned* with great things about the eternal world’ or that the town ‘*seemed to be full of the presence of God*’? By what practical means or by which process of measurement did he make these definitive claims? The narrative is clearly descriptive but is it the product of accurate and verifiable reporting or was it prone to an interpretative genius that embellished the facts of the case to suit his theological cloth? This problem cannot be easily ignored and, in general terms, modern revisionist historians (Conforti 1995: 11-36) are beginning to challenge the credibility of the Edwardsian revival tradition.

However, there are good historical reasons to support a more favourable view of Edwards reporting. First, Murray (1987: 121) points to the fact that Edwards’ narrative of surprising conversions was first published in Britain and this was done only after the publishers had first satisfied themselves that the revival was genuine and that the facts could be verified by their contacts in New England. Second, Edwards was renowned for his meticulous and objective study of natural phenomena and it seems out of character to think that this discipline would desert him in a report on the awakening. Third, it would have been very difficult to have scientifically quantified a ‘movement of the Spirit.’ Jesus himself had taught that the Spirit’s work was to be likened to the movements of an unseen wind (John 3: 5-8) and on this basis it would be difficult for anyone else to illustrate the phenomenon of an awakening without need for similitudes, biblical subjectivism or an inexactitude of language. Fourth, Edwards’ was a well-known public figure and, had his reporting of 1735 been anything less than a fair

reflection of the claims that he made in his narrative, then certainly he would have been speedily exposed as a charlatan and a fraud.

Five years later in 1740, Jonathan and Sarah Edwards welcomed George Whitefield to the church at Northampton. This visit occurred when a larger and more general revival was taking place throughout the colonies. Dallimore (1970: 537) reveals that before his first visit to the Edwards' home, Whitefield was aware of the awakening that had taken place there earlier in 1735. Then, upon his arrival this town was once again 'awakened' and witnessed scenes that were reminiscent of those times. Murray (1987: 164) records that: "In about a month or six weeks, there was a great attention in the town, both as to the revival of professors and the awakening of others."

Edwards, therefore, by his connection with the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts, witnessed the *surprising* power of revival. Moreover, as the minister of this church he became intimately acquainted with the effects of such awakenings. Historically and pastorally, therefore, this connection to the church at Northampton was the main reason for his personal identification with the advancement and maintenance of the pro-revivalist cause. Thus, from the mid 1730's, and then for the rest of his life, Edwards actively promoted such 'revivals' and many of his works helped to provide an effective apologia for the pro-revivalist cause. In short, Edwards held that God was the first or primary cause of revival and his works contained positive and negative arguments in support of this basic view. His firm apologetic approach was due in large part to his attempt to discriminate between true and false claims in connection with a genuine work of the Spirit. Thus, in his 'narrative of surprising conversions' he appealed for the acceptance of revival by offering his theologically reformed friends a positive and judicious account of the first awakening at Northampton. However, in his later works he had to answer the criticisms of anti-revivalists who had undermined the awakening by focusing on a fanaticism that became associated with the pro-revivalist movement. Perhaps, therefore, no other person at any other time in church history has published so directly, discriminately or extensively on the subject of revivals as Jonathan Edwards.

Hulse (1991: 30, 31) has thus noted that his full catalogue of works on revival were all composed during the space of eleven years:

“The first was *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, which describes the revival in Northampton in 1735 in which 300 souls were added to the church. The second was *Thoughts on the Revival in New England in 1740*, the third *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), the fourth *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1744) and the fifth, which was his deepest and fullest work, *The Religious Affections* (1746) The last-named was really a development of the third title listed above.”

3.3.1 Revival is a sovereign work of God

Within his writings, Edwards tended to illustrate the phenomenon of revival in terms of a prior work of God. Thus he wrote of the ‘awakenings’ by using language and imagery that was clearly inspired by, or in line with Old Testament scriptures such as Isaiah 64:1 or Hosea 10:12, where the emphasis is upon a downward blessing. In his earliest works (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958: 77, 78) the following phrases and words are used freely and interchangeably to convey the sense that revivals were the direct result of God’s sovereign action or movement.

- *The pouring out of the Spirit.*

“This remarkable *pouring out of the Spirit of God*, which thus extended from one end to the other of this county, was not confined to it, but many places in Connecticut have partaken in the same mercy.”

- *Effusion of the Spirit of God*

“There was also no small effusion of the Spirit of God in the north parish in *Preston*, in the eastern part of Connecticut...”

- *Shower of divine blessing.*

“But this shower of divine blessing has been yet more *extensive*: there was no small degree of it in some part of the *Jerseys*...”

Edwards’ use of synonymous expressions such as ‘pouring out,’ ‘effusion’ and ‘shower’ appear to indicate that he was consciously trying to describe revival in terms of the operation of an external pre-emptive force that operated *upon* his congregation. Thus, in contrast to later developments within American revivalism he considered that this was a phenomenon that came down by divine agency rather than being worked-up through human methods. Adams, Duffy and Yarborough (1993: 27), however, have claimed that the Northampton revival of 1734-35 was little more than a product of human efforts to stir up fanaticism and religious frenzy.

On the basis of their arguments, Edwards was a religious enthusiast whose assertion of his authority resulted in profound psychological disturbances that affected this localised part of New England. However, this view fails to account for the fact that Northampton (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1965: 148-160) witnessed similar results by means of itinerant preachers in 1741-42. Furthermore, this later ‘work of God’ occurred across a wider geographical area and was reported by others (Gillies, 1981: 339, 344) through a use of similar expressions or the same terminology. Thus, Edwards was conceptually in line with the other eighteenth century pro-revival archivists in his definition of revivals. Definitively, he maintained that revival constituted a ‘divine work.’ God, without any necessary pre-condition, freely and sovereignly acted upon (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1965: 225-244) mankind in accord with his own inscrutable, mysterious and pre-determined counsel and will.

3.3.2 Revival is a surprising work of God

Jonathan Edwards often used words such as ‘wonderful or ‘glorious’ to describe the impact of the awakenings at Northampton. These descriptions abound in his early works as he tries to articulate the outward manifestation of the revivals. Furthermore, he seemed unprepared for and somewhat surprised by the results of these revivals.

Thus, in his narrative of surprising conversions, he was particularly impressed (1958: 74) by the speed and suddenness of the saving process as it affected people during the awakening of 1734-35.

“The Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work amongst us; and there were, very suddenly, one after another, five or six persons, who were to all appearances savingly converted, and some of them wrought upon in a very remarkable manner.”

Edwards' experience of revival seemed to have confirmed his view that the operation of the Holy Spirit was not necessarily confined to the *ordo salutis* supported by consistent or hyper-Calvinism. Thus, what he witnessed at Northampton once more impacted on an accepted view of conversion that supported 'preparationism,' and had long underpinned the foundations of logical predestinarianism. The accepted wisdom had considered that conversion was a slow, methodical process whereas the revival converts were *suddenly* awakened and provided evidences of 'saving process.' McClymond (1998: 41) has thus recognized that Edwards differed from earlier reformed thinkers on the *ordo salutis* and has, therefore, noted his: '... rejection of the Puritan morphology of conversion.' However, the contrast between Edwards the puritans can be overplayed. This is largely due to the mistaken assumption that all seventeenth century Calvinists were of one mind (Adams, Duffy, Yarborough 1993: 95) on the order of salvation. Thus, it is probably best to state that Edwards recognized that the precise order and the particular operations of the Holy Spirit in conversion are mysterious and beyond classification. In the 'revivals' he found that the 'work of the Spirit' was full of surprises.

3.3.3 Revival is an extraordinary work of God

Edwards referred to the Northampton 'awakenings' in terms of their being an *extraordinary* work of God. Prior to 1734, Edwards had known what it was to serve the church within the context of a non-revived and apathetic condition. However, his work as a minister was faithfully administered and he was clearly prepared to uphold those 'means of grace' that belonged to the good order and well-being of his reformed

congregation. Thus, during a five-year period, he had ministered in the common style to the church at Northampton, Massachusetts. The relationship of the Northampton 'revivals' to the regulative principle of reformed worship is therefore of historical and theological significance. Did the awakenings overturn an accepted or regulated pattern of order and worship? If so, in what way was the church altered or affected by the 'glorious' and 'surprising' outpouring of the Spirit? Did Edwards establish any new practices in worship that were contrary to those that had pertained in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the awakening in 1734?

It can be argued that for Edwards the result of the 'awakenings' were not extraordinary in terms usurping the accepted 'means of grace.' In fact, his writings seem to indicate that it was quite the reverse and that the revivals actually seem to have enhanced and re-vitalised that form of worship that had been previously exercised and practised. Therefore, when people gathered for instruction and worship according to the established pattern they evidently did so with a new enthusiasm or renewed sense of delight in their spiritual duties. Thus, the revivals heightened an appreciation of the means of grace (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1958: 76) that were normally employed within the regular life and ministries of the church:

"Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was *alive* in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every *hearer* eager to drink in the words of the *minister*..."

These scenes, of course, contrasted sharply with the spiritual indifference that had prevailed at the outset of Edwards' ministry. Understandably, therefore, it is hardly surprising that he should have defined this in terms of an *extraordinary* work of God. However, it was *extraordinary* only in the sense that it resulted in a greater enthusiasm for those means of grace that were commonly used for the benefit and blessing of the church. Thus, in terms of 'revivals', Edwards' use of the phrase *extraordinary* requires some caution and is probably best understood as referring to differences in the degree of blessing rather than in the kind of blessing.

3.3.4 Revival is an experiential work of God

Edwards' *'The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit God'* and *'The Religious Affections'* represent his best apologetic efforts to present the biblical argument for the legitimacy of revivals and a defence of the Great Awakening. His theology, which held a high view of the inspiration of scripture, was readily applied to an assessment of both the phenomenon and excitement that would often accompany revival in the colonies. In these works Edwards held that revival was consistent with the apostolic testimony and witness. Further, he argued that an authentic or genuine work of the Spirit could be determined by *objective tests*. These tests, (Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1965: 87) therefore, presented the church-age with the definitive means of discerning or validating a true 'movement of the Spirit:'

"My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God...
Doubtless that Spirit who indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him."

For his efforts, Edwards has been described (Hulse, 1991: 30) as being 'the theologian of revival.' This designation is probably best deserved for his monumental treatise on the religious affections. In this publication he attempted to highlight the apostolic tension between the place of objective truth and that of subjective blessing. In his opinion, truth and experience were inexorably combined in a genuine movement of the Spirit. Thus, Edwards argued (Murray, 1987: 251-267) against fanciful impression on the one hand and rationalism on the other. His biblical treatment and assessment of these issues was insightful and through these writings he presented the American colonies with an apologetic that was balanced, constructive and well argued.

From 1743, this apologetic was much needed to combat the influence of a fanatical wing of pro-revivalists whose extremism had caused offence in towns across New England and the Middle Colonies. Through his balanced exegesis of the scriptures Edwards managed to extricate American revivalism from the destructive tendencies and

practices of those enthusiasts who belonged to his own party. Further, the *religious affections* helped to shape the thinking and practice of a new generation of evangelical leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Many of these leaders played an active part in preparing post-revolution America for the next great awakening, whilst others became instrumental in the development of the foreign missionary movement that began in the early nineteenth century. Thus, as an apologist, Edwards' works had a profound impact not only upon his own time but also on the advance and stability of the pro-revivalist movement over the next eighty years. Indeed, it could be argued that his contribution to the revivalist cause became the singular most important influence within the developing history of North American evangelicalism.

3.4 Jonathan Edwards and his concern over the fanatical elements that emerged within the pro-revival movement

George Whitefield's second visit to the colonies led to his first meeting (Murray, 1987: 161) with Jonathan and Sarah Edwards. The evangelist's visit to Northampton provided Edwards with an opportunity to consider the man and his ministry. In short, the visit led to a joining of mind and heart that evidently resulted in mutual respect and a lasting friendship. However, while the evangelist's ministry was blessed it also seemed to have caused some uncertainty. Murray (1987: 162) states that, after Whitefield's visit, Sarah wrote not only about the impact of his preaching but also of her husband's misgivings over some of his personal leanings and practices:

"It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible ... Perhaps I ought to tell you that Mr Edwards and some others think him in error on a few practical points; but his influence on the whole is so good we ought to bear with little mistakes."

However, at the time of their initial meeting, Edwards was convinced that Whitefield lacked discernment on two main issues. These issues, though not a major hindrance to their co-operation as revivalists, were nevertheless symptomatic of faults that would later de-rail the progress and support of the Great Awakening. The fact that Edwards

was aware of these tendencies and that he attempted to address them reveals that, at this early stage, he was already applying his theological acumen to the phenomenon of 'revivals.' Whitefield's genius, power and popularity did not blind Edwards to the fact that 'little mistakes' can result in large problems.

- First, it appears that at this time Whitefield was too closely identified with a group of pro-revivalists who tended to be aggressive and judgemental in their opposition to 'unconverted ministries.' Edwards feared that the Log College graduates within the middle colonies were often guilty of over reaction and that profitable ministers might be unfairly challenged. He foresaw the dangers of an 'ultra-separatism' that threatened to injure the revivalist movement. The evangelist was in error, because he failed to appreciate that his association with such 'separatists' would be viewed as the endorsement of their radicalism. In fact, the historical record clearly reveals that Edwards was justified in his opinion. Whitefield's second visit to America in 1744 was over-shadowed by a controversy on this very point and he was required to reconsider his position.
- Second, Edwards was disturbed that Whitefield seemed to lack discernment in the realm of personal guidance. In 1740, the evangelist to relied heavily on immediate 'impulses' or 'impressions,' of the Spirit. Murray (1987: 240, 241) comments on Edwards' personal antipathy to this practice:

"His reading of history and his own observation had convinced him that where Christians based their actions or plans upon subjective impulses unsupported by the clear teaching of Scripture, they were liable to be greatly disappointed."

Edwards' cautious approach to these matters later prevailed on the good sense and spiritual maturity of Whitefield. Thus, after the death (Murray, 1987: 241, 242) of his only child the 'great itinerant' amended his views and thus became much more orthodox in his understanding of guidance.

However, Whitefield's earliest tendencies to be guided by 'immediate impressions' did develop into extremism amongst some of his closest friends and associates over the two years after his departure in 1741. James Davenport was a major offender in this practice and his influence (Murray, 1987: 223) had a major impact on colonial good will toward the pro-revival movement:

"Davenport seems to have believed that the Holy Spirit can give such direct guidance to Christians by 'impressions' made upon their minds that they may be infallibly sure of the will of God."

Edwards maintained that all such 'special leadings' or 'subjective impressions' must be tested by the word of God. In his mind, scripture was the basis upon which such claims were to be evaluated and judged. His opposition to the fanaticism of the extremists was, therefore, indicative of his reformed tradition. Thus, within the historical context of the Great Awakening, he was convinced that every claim to the work of the Spirit had to be assessed by reference to scripture as the standing rule for guidance within the church. Bamford Parkes (1930: 153-165) has outlined the impact of Davenport's fanaticism and the part that Edwards and Wheelock played in the attempt to curb extremist tendencies among pro-revivalists. However by 1743/44, the damage had been done and the articles and sentiments of an anti-revivalist press soon began to alter the tide of public opinion in New England and the Middle Colonies. Thus, while modern historians have tended to paint Edwards in fanatical colours his published works suggest that he was opposed to extremism within his own camp.

3.5 Jonathan Edwards and his other significant contributions to the pro-revival movement as a preacher, pastor and missionary

Edwards' personal involvement in the pro-revival movement extended far beyond his apologetic works. He was also a pastor, preacher and pioneering missionary during the period of the Great Awakening. Moreover, in these roles he remained true to the claims of an evangelical Calvinism. The consistency of his position was evident in his pastoral decisions and by his general approach to ministry.

3.5.1 'Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God'

Edwards' theology and his manner of preaching have been criticized by a succession of historical commentators. For example, Murray notes (1987: xxi) that his famed sermon '*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*', preached at Enfield on 8th July 1741, has become the particular focus of opprobrium amongst those who have been critical of his presentation:

"In a parody in verse on 'The Theology of Jonathan Edwards,' Phyllis McGinley wrote in 1961:

And if they had been taught aright,
Small children carried bedwards
Would shudder lest they meet that night
The God of Mr. Edwards.
Abraham's God, the Wrathful One,
Intolerant of error –
Not God the Father or the Son
But God the Holy Terror."

This common impression of Edwards has meant that he has frequently been considered as an angry, ranting and terrifying preacher. Bamford Parkes (1930: 102) goes so far as to suggest that he was prone to being sadistic and morbid. However, this perception has been challenged by others, such as Lloyd-Jones (1987: 353), who have maintained that he was not guilty of a belligerent and graceless form of preaching:

"'Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God.' You can hear references to that sermon not infrequently on the television and elsewhere... They just go on repeating what others have said about it, and it is regarded, as you see from the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, as just an assault, a ranting assault upon the sensibilities, and as violence done to reason, and so on. This is, of course, quite ridiculous..."

Further, McLoughlin (1978: 46) has recorded that at the conclusion of this sermon there was a warm evangelistic appeal, which emphasized that the 'gates of heaven were open wide' in mercy to the repentant. Moreover, Edwards' published sermons suggest that his preaching was didactic and well reasoned. Murray's (1987: 179-199) 'personal portrait' of Edwards has also presented another perspective on the commonly accepted image of the method and style of his preaching. His observations throw doubt upon the caricature of Edwards as a ranting, revivalist styled preacher. Moreover, it is significant that some of his sermons, published around the time of the Great Awakening, expounded upon positive themes of biblical theology. For example, in 1738 he preached on 'Christ Exalted' from 1 Corinthians 15: 25, 26 and from John 5: 35 he preached upon 'The true Excellency of a Minister of the Gospel' in 1744. Thus, it could be argued that his image as a masochistic, terrorizing, old covenant type preacher is insupportable. The 'God of Mr Edwards,' therefore, was not only terrible in wrath but also, gracious and beneficent in his acts of mercy and loving-kindness.

3.5.2 The humble attempt to promote prayer

Edwards' publications, led to the call for and the development of prayer concerts across Britain and the Colonies. These concerts (Murray, 1987: 293) first began in 1744 when a group of 'evangelical ministers in Scotland' formed a prayer union for the worldwide extension of the kingdom of Christ. The Scottish prayer union set a pattern that became generally accepted and was soon transported, via Wesleyan Methodism, to evangelical churches and societies throughout England. Ironically, perhaps, this international prayer movement in its organized form returned to the continent of North America at the instigation of John Wesley. Edwards' response to these developments was published in *The Christian Monthly* in November 1745. Murray (1987: 294) comments that:

"Such an agreement and practice appears to me exceedingly beautiful, and becoming Christians; and I doubt not but it is so in Christ's eyes."

In January 1748, Edwards added his support for the international concert for prayer by a sermon that he entitled: *'An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer, For the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Time.'* The publication of this sermon gave added impetus to the pro-revival movement in Britain and America. Furthermore, it tended to encourage a view of evangelicalism that was broad and expansive rather than confined or parochial. The contents of this sermon are indicative of the fact that a post-millennial eschatology emerged from the Great Awakening. Edwards and the other leading revivalists took a positive view of evangelism and world mission. This view was predominant and lay at the heart (Alexander, 1889: 223) of an international call to prayer. The mid eighteenth century revivals in Britain and America thus engendered the belief that the whole world would experience the post-millennial glory prior to the return of Christ. It was this view of eschatology that eventually led to the formation of Anglo-American foreign missions around the turn of the nineteenth century. Edwards thus articulated an eschatology that became dominant in revivalism for over a century. The prayer concerts were predicated on a millennial viewpoint that encouraged successes for the church age and thus was far removed from the pessimism of the dispensational or pre-millennial view, which later came to prominence in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

3.5.3 Opposition to the 'The Halfway Covenant'

Edwards' pro-revivalist stance later became the basis of his dismissal from the pastoral charge at Northampton. Like the other new light preachers Edwards was convinced that church membership should be tested. Thus, he maintained only those who could provide credible evidence of 'saving grace' should be welcomed to enter into the privileges and ordinances (baptism and communion) of the church. However, this view was opposed to the *'halfway covenant.'* This covenant, which was adopted by the church under the leadership of Solomon Stoddard, tolerated a far more comprehensive view of church membership. People were received into the membership of the church without the need to provide a 'profession of faith' or 'personal testimony' as evidence

or proof of the validity of their regeneration. The issue was eventually brought to a head in Northampton in 1750. By a vote of 230 to 23 the church meeting was in favour of retaining the 'half way covenant' and this meant that Edwards' twenty-four year ministry was ended. Lloyd-Jones (1987: 349) has thus commented:

“That was one of the most amazing things that ever happened ... Here was this towering genius, this mighty preacher, this man at the centre of a great revival-yet he was literally voted out of his church.”

3.5.4 The Colonial Missionary

In 1750, Edwards removed from Northampton to Stockbridge. Thus, he exchanged the relative security of life at Northampton for that of being a pioneer missionary at work amongst American Indians in a frontier town. This choice of ministry was apparently inspired by his personal acquaintance with the work that had already been developed and accomplished in this particular field by David Brainerd. Brainerd had died in 1748. Edwards thereafter published the diaries and a biography of his famous and beloved missionary friend. Brainerd may have broken the ground but it is clear that the eight years' work that Edwards performed at Stockbridge provided an equally important contribution to this mission field. There appears to be strong historical evidence to support the view that Edwards was easily able to adapt to the limitations of his frontier congregation. Thus, in connection with the problems and difficulties of this new sphere of ministry Gerstner (1996: 11) records:

“Pastor Edwards kept his sermons exceedingly simple for the primitive parishioners. ... While the mission outpost of Stockbridge remained exposed to complete annihilation from the enemy without, daily duties were discharged with extreme and tender care, being given to those of the same race who were friends within.”

3.5.5 The College President

Edwards' ministry at Stockbridge concluded when he received an invitation to become the President of Princeton College. Thus, in January 1758, he arrived at Princeton and it is noteworthy that his presidency was taken-up after another extraordinary 'awakening' amongst the student body (Murray, 1987: 431,432,433) during the previous year. However, this welcome was short-lived. Edwards died at Princeton, on 22nd March 1758, after he had fallen ill from a small pox vaccination. His last recorded words were: '*Trust in God and you need not fear.*'

3.6 Summary

Jonathan Edwards made a significant contribution both to the defence and development of North American revivalism. His major works published during the 1740's, contain a vivid and analytical description of the phenomenon of revival and a sound apologetic in favour of the pro-revivalist movement. In this chapter I have attempted to highlight and analyse Edwards' basic understanding of 'conversion' and the impact that this had upon his theological appreciation of 'revival.' I have concluded, that the ideas of John Locke and other eighteenth-century rationalists did not influence his basic thinking but that he was governed by the constraints of biblical theology. Edwards, I have argued, remained fundamentally committed to the reformed creedal statements and theological views that surfaced in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. He was, and ever remained, a committed Calvinist. However, in one or two particulars he questioned the thinking of consistent or hyper Calvinism. First, he challenged an overly rigid and conditional view of the reformed *ordo salutis*. Second, he taught that biblical faith was experimental and that it led to an apprehension or comprehension of those moral excellencies or spiritual perfections that belonged to true deity. Piper (2001: 26) thus comments:

“As the great eighteenth-century preacher, Jonathan Edwards, said,
“Part of God’s fullness which he communicates, is his *happiness*.
This happiness consists in enjoying and rejoicing in himself; so does
also the creature’s happiness.”

Furthermore, I have argued that Edwards' views of revival were determined by biblical criteria and by scriptural expressions. 'Revival' was something that came down rather than was worked-up and it was the result of sovereign grace. Thus, his view of 'revival' was significantly different from the philosophical bias that was introduced into the revivalist mainstream during the mid nineteenth century. Finally, I have tried to highlight the fact that his millennial viewpoint gave impetus to an evangelical idealism, which eventually led to world evangelisation.

Thus, Edwards was a major figure in the historical progression of American revivalism. Others, such as Whitefield, may have possessed greater evangelistic gifts and preaching skills but Edwards' intellectual and spiritual discernment helped to establish and secure the revivalist movement. From the 1740's and onwards, it was his published works that effectively defined and shaped American evangelical revivalism and these publications were clearly instrumental in laying the ground for the next great sequence of American 'revivals' that formed the Second Great Awakening.

CHAPTER FOUR: 1770-1820 AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

4.1 General Remarks

The years between 1770-1820 gave rise to some to remarkable developments in the commercial and political life of the colonies. This began, of course, with the growing agitation and unrest amongst the colonists that led to their *declaration of independence*. Following the successful revolutionary war with the British, these newborn political freedoms were gradually shaped and formulated into a distinctive national identity. In socio-political terms (McLoughlin, 1978: 98) this was a crucial phase in the development of the young and independent nation.

In addition to these post-war uncertainties, significant strains began to develop within the religious life of the nation. The general acceptance of 'enlightened thinking' impacted on the lives of more and more people and this trend became a serious threat to the advancement of traditional religious teaching and practice. Moreover, during this period growing numbers of people began to migrate from the eastern seaboard into the new western frontier. These migration patterns stretched the limited resources of the churches. This combination of factors tended to militate against religion and to depress the prospects of the American church. The revival historian Sweet (1965: 117) thus comments:

"In the period of the Revolution, and in the years immediately following, religious and moral conditions of the country as a whole reached the lowest ebb tide in the entire history of the American people. And it was in the very midst of this period of moral and religious depression that the great western migration began ... If morals and religion were at low ebb in the older settled seaboard regions, what could be expected in the newer, ruder sections west of the mountains?"

However, from 1790-1830 North America experienced the power of a *Second Great Awakening*. During this period, the established churches in the east were strengthened by another series of unusual 'awakenings'. Moreover, through the ministry of a fresh generation of itinerant preachers many people who had moved to settle in the frontier towns were also confronted with the power of an effective revivalism. This awakening is of historic interest because it reversed the trend of intellectual rationalism and re-asserted the Judeo-Christian world-view.

4.2 A survey of the social and religious background in the colonies prior to the Second Great Awakening

Jonathan Edwards maintained that the effects of the Great Awakening began to decline in the colonies during the late 1740's. However, as Hardman (1990, 5) has pointed out, a series of smaller, localised revivals continued to take place among the colonists in the years immediately prior to the death of Whitefield:

"In actuality, however, awakenings had hardly ceased since the 1740's. Numerically they were small by comparison with the Great Awakening, but they did continue despite the depressed conditions. There were some small awakenings in New England in 1763 and 1764."

It could be argued, therefore, that these smaller 'awakenings' represented the flickering embers of the *greater fire* that had swept across the colonies throughout the previous few decades. From 1770-1800 however, secular affairs and intellectual trends were less favourable to the cause of revivalism. Hardman has indicated (1990: 4) that the French and Indian War of 1754-1763 affected '... all Americans especially in the areas of morals and religion, as deism first began to invade the country.' Then, following the American War of Independence, leading lights such as Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson started to champion these new intellectual and philosophical trends among the highest levels of polite society, and within the process of civil government. It can be argued that the best indicator of the mass defection to enlightened thinking and practice was found amongst students in the post-war period. Pro-revival activists and educators,

who were primarily concerned for the development of religious ministerial training, had largely established the college system of the late colonial era. Thus, the curriculum was dominated by their primary commitment to evangelical religion. However, by the 1790's, a new generation arose 'which knew not Joseph' (Exodus, 1: 8) and the founding principles of the college system were heavily assaulted by the enlightenment.

Thus the student-body at Bowdoin (Maine), William and Mary (Virginia) and Yale (Connecticut) agitated against the older standard that was based on the Judeo/Christian world-view. Moreover, some of the more 'enlightened' colleges were so engrossed by the new trends that they became virtually free from any religious influence. Hardman (1990: 5) has claimed that in 'Maine's Bowdoin College there was but one professed Christian in the student body in the 1790's, and things were almost as bad at Presbyterian Princeton.' Thus, this time favoured men of liberal thought and manners while revivalist thinking was regarded as an outmoded and outdated hangover of the colonial past. However, some colleges remained fixed on their founding principles and many of the students from within these institutions became leaders of the Second Great Awakening. Indeed, it could be argued that the colleges that emanated from the 'awakenings' of the 1740's were the principal means by which North America was re-visited by this second and more powerful outpouring of the Spirit.

In addition to the fashions of thought, the new republic was also faced with a significant increase in the population. Further, cheaper land on the frontiers had encouraged a large number of the established population to move from east to west. Sweet (1965: 114,115) records that between 1790 and 1820 population growth and movement were graphically demonstrated in the results of the early censuses of the United States. This demographic change represented a huge missionary challenge to denominational churches among the old colonial territories. However, as a mission field it appeared as impenetrable as those that were attempted on foreign soil. This responsibility was hindered by limited numbers of evangelistic and pastoral agencies, many of which were confronted with the logistical problem of supporting widespread and isolated communities where (Hardman, 1990:6) '... lawlessness seemed the order

of the day.' However, the overwhelming enormity of this missionary challenge was dramatically reversed in favour of religion as the direct result of the Second Great Awakening.

4.3 A survey of those agencies that were used to bring about change in the new republic during the Second Great Awakening

There seems to be a difference of opinion among religious historians as to when and where the Second Great Awakening began. Some maintain that it originated amongst Presbyterians within the old middle colony territory. However, others seem convinced that it started with enthusiastic southern Methodists. It could be argued, however, that this awakening began simultaneously in a variety of different places. Furthermore, this awakening was not based around the talents of one or two uniquely talented or gifted evangelists and preachers. There were, of course, some outstanding contributions made by very gifted and able individuals but the awakening was advanced and consolidated through a far wider compliment of pro-revivalists. Moreover, it was mainly accomplished through the work of homegrown agencies. Methodism, which developed within the south, was the one major exception to this general trend.

4.3.1 The contribution of orthodox and established colleges

In the years that preceded the Second Great Awakening many colleges in New England and the Middle Colonies conceded to enlightened thinking and thus departed from their founding principles. However, there were other colleges who maintained a commitment to their founding principles. Historians are generally agreed that from 1770-1800 many of the tutors and students among these particular colleges made a profound contribution toward the next turn in favour of religion. In New England the presidencies at Princeton and Yale were placed into the hands of men who continued to support the old standards of evangelical Calvinism. Through their instruction and example the students learned to recognize the power of an evangelical faith. For example, in 1768 the Princeton trustees secured Rev John Witherspoon (Douglas, 1974: 1056,1057) to serve as the president of their college. Princeton, under Witherspoon's direction, remained nominally committed to the reformed faith. During the twenty-five years of his presidency, a large number of

students were prepared to serve in the new republic on much the same basis that had inspired the pro-revivalists of the 1730-40's. Furthermore, in the early 1770's, it would appear that Princeton became the focal point of an unusual 'awakening.' Murray (1994: 47) records that:

"Foote referred to the event as a 'great awakening which resulted in the hopeful conversion of many' and recorded that of the twenty-nine graduates of the Class of 1773, twenty-three became ministers of the gospel and three Governors of states."

The same fidelity to the reformed position was also in evidence under the presidency of Timothy Dwight, at Yale. Dwight was Jonathan Edwards' grandson. During 1783-1795 he had served the Congregational Church at Fairfield, Connecticut. Dwight's leadership amongst the Congregationalists was awarded with honorary doctorates from Princeton and Harvard. In 1795, he was elected as Yale's president and he occupied this strategic position until his death in 1817. Thus, although the 1790's were marked by a decline in the religious or spiritual life at Yale, a decided turn in favour of pro- revivalism was made in the early years of the eighteenth century. Further, it could be argued that Dwight was one of the first to witness the initial stirring of what became known as the Second Great Awakening. Murray (1994: 132, 133) records that:

"The change at Yale came suddenly in the Spring of 1802... About seventy-five out of Yale's 230 students were converted and united to churches... the number of men coming forward for the gospel ministry was suddenly greatly multiplied."

In addition to Princeton and Yale, pro-revivalism was retained among faculty members and student bodies (Sweet, 1965: 119) who were educated in the Presbyterian Colleges of Pennsylvania and Virginia. In the early nineteenth century such academies produced leaders who became instrumental in turning back the tide of public opinion in favour of religion in the growing population of the west. However, whilst the college system was a factor in the next great phase of American revivals, Shiels and Trumbull (1980: 410) have noted that the leaders of the Second Great Awakening, 'were not all young men'.

Thus, in terms of leadership it would seem that this 'awakening' was cross generational and that it owed equally as much to the college revivals that had occurred in the late 1760's and the early 1770's.

4.3.2 The contribution made by men, churches and other agencies in the south

During the Great Awakening, Whitefield and other itinerants had made a number of significant forays into the southern colonies. Thus, by 1770 settlements in Virginia the Carolinas and Georgia were familiar with the impact of the pro-revivalist movement. However, in terms of their church government, southern colonists generally favoured a commitment to a modified form of Anglicanism that was opposed to the separatist tradition of the northern and middle colonies. This religious tradition largely operated amongst the southerners until the revolution.

Traditional southern loyalties thus paved the way for the emergence of some prominent Anglican and Methodist ministers whose leadership and preaching became instrumental in the Second Great Awakening. Thus, Devereux Jarratt (1733-1801) became a leading pro-revivalist in the south during this time. In his capacity as an Anglican minister, he began to expound the same theological convictions that belonged to the pro-revivalist ministers and itinerants in the middle colonies. His efforts in Virginia were marked by a fundamental commitment to preach on the need for a 'crisis conversion.' Sweet (1965: 87) records that:

"He thus describes the religious situation in his parish when he arrived: I found the principles of the gospel-the nature and condition of man-the plan of salvation through Christ-and *the nature and the necessity of spiritual regeneration* as little known."

Jarratt faced antagonism from other members of the Anglican Communion in Virginia. However, his ministry was fearless. During the trying years following the revolution he remained committed to his pro-revivalism. Further, he supported the work of a growing number of Methodist itinerants in the south. For example, it was through his contact with the Wesleyan Methodist George Shadford that he was to experience personally an

awakening within his own parish during 1775-76. Sweet records (1965: 99, 100) that it resulted in the first great Methodist revival in America, which produced between ten to twenty converts each day 'for weeks and days together.' Methodism took advantage of its pro-revival associations with southern Anglicanism and this co-operation meant that their movement gained credence in Virginia and other parts of the south. However, there is historical evidence for diversity within the early development of the American Methodist movement. Sweet (1965: 95, 96) thus comments:

"The Methodist colonial revivalists were of three kinds; first the local preacher immigrants who came to the colonies of their own volition ... A second group were the lay preacher missionaries, sent over by John Wesley and the English Methodist Conference; a third group was made up of the native American preachers who by the end of the Revolution had become the dominant element in American Methodism."

The popularity of Methodism can be assessed by the speed of its growth in Virginia and the south. The figures indicate that between 1773-1784 this movement as a whole made large gains in terms of its membership. Murray (1994: 74) has calculated that within the space of about ten years Methodism '... increased approximately 1,400 percent ... or at a rate of about six times the increase of the American population.' This explosive growth was in Murray's view largely dependent upon the Virginian revival: 'No real sense,' he has concluded, 'can be made of these figures without taking into account the awakening in Virginia.' However, the figures fail to highlight the disillusionment of the south with one offshoot of Methodism. During and following the War of Independence, Wesleyan Methodism suffered a decrease in popularity because of its loyalty to the British crown. By 1778, Wesleyan Methodism was in almost complete disarray in North America and Murray (1994: 77) states, '... with one exception, every Methodist preacher who had been sent across the Atlantic had returned to England.'

It was Francis Asbury (1745-1816) who was the one exception to those Methodists who returned to Britain. He remained loyal to American Methodism. This loyalty was tested and rewarded when he later became the first acknowledged leader of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. Murray (1994: 77) comments that:

“For nearly half a century Asbury’s calm leadership in the work of evangelistic itinerary and church organization did more than any other figure to establish Methodism in North America... Methodism was inherently a spiritual movement and the temporary taint of political disloyalty was already fading by the time its societies became the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784.”

By the late 1780’s both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the re-organized Anglican Protestant Episcopal Church had formed into two distinct and comparably sized church traditions that served the post-war south. However, the changing pattern of religious affiliation also worked in favour of the Baptists. From 1750, the south also became the home of Baptist churches formed by itinerants such as Shubal Stearns. However, whilst these separatists had initially witnessed significant growth, southern civil administrators confined their influence during the late colonial period. This antipathy notwithstanding, the 1770’s marked an important decade for the Baptists. Like the Methodists, their cause was enhanced by the ‘revival’ that occurred in Virginia. Furthermore, following the war they benefited from that general disintegration of colonial Anglicanism and Methodism. Thus, in addition to post-war Episcopalian reconstruction, the Baptists became the third member of a religious triumvirate that emerged from the vacuum created by the demise of southern colonial churchmanship. Moreover, it could be argued that the changes that occurred in the south during 1770-1790 gave an additional impetus to the Second Great Awakening. The older religious structures were re-constructed and replaced by new and vibrant ones. Because this new religious mainstream resulted from rapid growth, it was arguably more easily adapted to the vision and challenge of church mission on the western frontiers.

4.4 A survey of the origins, development and spread of the Second Great Awakening

Revivals within the colleges and through itinerant preachers of the south were regularly experienced in the 1770-90's. By and large these 'awakenings' followed the same basic pattern that had been documented in the Great Awakening. The only difference seemed to be that they lacked the breadth and cohesion of those that took place in the 1740-50's. It could be claimed that these revivals represented small isolated showers rather than a large and heavy downpour. However, by 1800, the Second Great Awakening had begun to sweep through the nation. The accounts suggest that this advanced with great speed and lasted for a considerable period of time. It seems clear that within the space of the next twenty years there was a dramatic reversal in favour of revivalism. The older paths that had been upheld by the puritan fathers rose once more to challenge the intellectual and moral liberalism that had become fashionable in the post-war period. Thus, Murray (1994: 116,117) has commented:

"Voltaire is said to have claimed that by the early nineteenth century the Bible would have passed 'into the limbo of forgotten literature.' Instead, by 1816 many Americans considered themselves to be living in 'the age of Bibles and missionaries.'... the Second Great Awakening has to be one of the most significant turning-points in church history."

From the outset it seems that the effects of the Second Great Awakening were soon felt in all parts of the nation. Moreover, in contrast to the first Great Awakening, the second was far more diverse in terms of the theological views of those individuals and agencies employed in its promotion. Evidently, the people and agencies that were used in the Second Great Awakening were not bound by the same theological consensus that had been accepted, adopted and promoted by pro-revivalists during the 1740-50's. This diversity, of course, resulted in the acceptance of a different strain of thinking about the essential nature of revivals. Thus, a consideration of this 'awakening' and the development of its divergent parts is essential for an appreciation of alternative thinking and practice.

4.4.1 Congregationalism and its part in the Second Great Awakening

Congregationalists in New England had played a vital part both in the development and progress of the first Great Awakening. Boston was the scene of great excitement during the second visit of George Whitefield in 1740. Moreover, Jonathan Edwards had emerged from their own ranks as the 'theologian of revival.' Following the revolution, it is clear a pro-revivalist theology was maintained within the walls of Princeton and Yale. In addition, prayer concerts for revival continued to function during the last few decades of the eighteenth century. New England Congregationalism, therefore, had a theological view of the nature of 'revivals of religion.' Further, Edwards' writings had encouraged the need to exercise scriptural and spiritual discernment over the claims of a true movement of the Spirit. There were 'distinguishing marks' by which a genuine awakening could and should be tested and approved.

Furthermore from 1780-1800, Congregationalism had been seriously challenged by the rise of deism. Thus, they were perhaps, even more anxious and prone to '... test the spirits to see whether they were of God'. (1 John 4 vs.1.) New England, therefore, became the focal point of conservative revivalism during this awakening. The pro-revivalist stance that was adhered to during the 1730's- 40's remained in place and any new innovations were critically evaluated by an earlier standard. Furthermore, many of their outstanding pro-revival ministers and itinerant evangelists maintained evangelical Calvinism during the Second Great Awakening. However, during this period, significant changes affected New England Congregationalism. In the colonial era this had been the dominant church tradition in the north and it had been practically maintained according to the system that had operated in the *old world*. New England Congregationalism was upheld through the implementation of taxes, tithes or other levies. Following the revolutionary war this old support system faced increasing pressures for reform. Further, immigration and western migration within the new republic resulted in inevitable readjustment of the colonial order and the religious establishment. Olmstead and Prentice Hall (1960: 212-213) refer to the fact that the new republican legislature was quickly involved in making moves to break the connection between church and state. Thus, from as early as 1779 there was a political

force behind the principle of disestablishment, which impacted upon the life of all thirteen original states. The New England states gradually conformed to this political agenda and many were disestablished during that same period of time covered by the Second Great Awakening.

In addition to disestablishment, New England Congregationalism was further weakened by the popularity of Unitarianism. During the first quarter of the eighteenth century this became increasingly fashionable among the more civilised and erudite congregations of Boston. Thus, revivalist ministers in the culture centres became alarmed at the potential damage that this offered to their cause. From 1804-1833, Cayton (1997: 1) has mapped out the progression of the revivalists' response to this threat and has thus enquired as to 'Who were the Evangelicals?' in the controversy over Unitarianism. It could be argued that in terms of the development of American revivalism this is not a spurious or totally unfair question. This is because, in their defence against Unitarianism, the Calvinism of the 1740-60's was clearly re-modelled or re-packaged by some of the leading revivalist Congregationalists of the 1820s-30's. In all, therefore, the northern phase of the Second Great Awakening tended to be more defensive and far less innovative than it was in the middle and southern states. However, this said, the results of the New England phase of the awakening did have a profound impact on the development of foreign missions and on the birth of American Bible Societies

4.4.2 Presbyterianism and its place in the Second Great Awakening

From the early 1700's, Presbyterians had mainly settled around New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Presbyterian Church was formally established within the middle colonies during the first Great Awakening and soon began to provide ministry to people in the south and along the western frontiers. For example, William Tennent's graduates were among the first to preach in parts of Virginia and these itinerant preachers became largely involved in the growth of American Presbyterianism.

By 1790, Presbyterianism was faced with the problem of an increased movement of the mid-colonial population to the west. Awareness of this demographic shift provided them with the impetus to train more ministers. This was done through the foundation of new colleges in Virginia and Western Pennsylvania. Clearly, therefore, the pioneering spirit of the 1740-50's was still flourishing within this church at the beginning of the Second Great Awakening. Further, it could be argued that, in contrast to the Congregationalists of New England, the Presbyterians were far less insular and a lot more active in seeking to expand into the new territories. Historians are generally agreed that a new generation of Presbyterians offered a significant contribution to the Second Great Awakening. For example, some of those students who were powerfully affected by the 'college revivals' in Hampden-Sidney and Washington eventually became leading lights at the beginning of this awakening. Sweet (1965: 119) comments that:

"Out of these college revivals came some of the most influential leaders in American Presbyterianism in the next generation. Not a few of them became educational leaders of prominence ... But their principal significance lies in the fact that they trained a ministry for the new West over the Alleghenies. The Presbyterian revivalists thus were, as a rule, men who had been college trained—a fact that has a significant bearing on the different strains of revivalism which soon began to appear on the frontier."

However, at first, it would appear that their missions in the west were largely developed through a network of existing contacts. In the 1790's, therefore, Presbyterian itinerants mainly concentrated their attention in seeking to support the people of their own church order who had moved (Sweet, 1965: 120) to the western frontier. Then, at the turn of the nineteenth century, there was an innovative move among the Presbyterians of Kentucky. It was here in 1800 that a considerable number of people gathered together for the first recorded outdoor 'camp meeting.' For some, this innovation was regarded as being the start of American 'revivalism' and the camp meeting format soon became a popular and common feature of life on the western frontiers. Sweet (1965: 122,123)

records that the camp meetings ‘... originated among western Presbyterians, and ... Once inaugurated, the movement spread like wildfire throughout the length and breadth of the frontier.’ In hindsight, however, it could be claimed that the ‘camp meetings’ were divisive and that they produced a point of cleavage between revivalists. Perhaps this is best supported by the fact that from the point of their inception, these ‘camp meetings’ resulted in divided opinions between pro-revivalist ministers on the western frontiers. Within a short space of time these divisions would lead to a fracturing of their unity, and the development of two opposite strains of revivalist thinking and practice. Sweet (1965: 123, 124) has thus concluded:

“The great Cane Ridge camp meeting in Bourbon County in August 1801, is the dividing point in western Presbyterianism... From this time forward western Presbyterianism sharply divided over the camp meeting and revivalism, and the controversy which ensued between those who favored and those who opposed them soon resulted in division.”

Western presbyteries quickly began to realise the influence of those ministers who were sympathetic to the camp meetings. However, this development was in direct opposition to a stated view on revival that had formally been agreed upon by the prior resolution of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. That Presbyterians were divided in their support for the western style ‘camp meetings’ is indicated through the development of disputes within the denominational courts. Later, during the 1820’s, Presbyterianism was further affected and divided by the development of a similar strain of revivalism in New York, State. It was there, from 1824-1827 that the evangelist Charles G. Finney emerged from the confines of established Presbyterianism to spearhead a series of revivals based upon his ‘*new measures*.’ This time divisions of opinion would eventually lead to debate and to a radical realignment that permanently affected the older established order within the denomination. The Second Great Awakening, therefore, had serious repercussions upon Presbyterianism. ‘Camp meetings’ produced an innovative strain of revivalism that told on the unity of this denomination. These divisions were so strong that the denomination

began to separate over the theological and practical issues and eventually branched into two different bodies in the mid- nineteenth century.

Presbyterianism thus had a mixture of trials and blessings during this general revival. Geographically and missiologically it was caught between the conservative revivalism of the northern states and the emerging radicalism of innovative revivalists on the western frontiers. However, it can be argued that in the 1850's this combination of Presbyterian orthodoxy and missionary enterprise came to the rescue of evangelical revivalism in North America. The New York revivals of 1858 largely resulted from the residual agency of a conservative Presbyterianism that had flourished during the Second Great Awakening.

4.4.3 Baptist and Methodist contributions to the Second Great Awakening

Following the revolution separatist churches quickly began to multiply across the south. By 1800 (Murray, 2002: 145,146) Baptist congregations had increased significantly and they quickly became a powerful force throughout the Carolinas, Virginia and Kentucky. The Baptist presence in such areas placed them in a good position to exploit the western phase of the Second Great Awakening. Moreover, it could be argued that their less rigid and more democratic church polity was more easily adapted to the rapidly growing and mobile population in the west. Thus, the combination of these factors secured a greater Baptist following among the frontier population and a significant increase in the overall size of their churches. Sweet (1965: 129) records that:

“By the eighteen-twenties the whole settled portion of the West was covered with a network of Baptist Associations, which were voluntarily organizations made up of Baptist churches.”

The Methodists also made a vital and distinctive contribution to revivalism amongst the expanding population of the west. Their major efforts developed around a continuation of the ‘camp meeting’ formula that had first become so popular amongst frontier people at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It could be argued that, although these ‘camp

meetings' clearly originated with the Presbyterians, they were theologically more in line with the thinking and practice of Methodism. Therefore, the 'camp meetings' later became commonly identified with the labours of the Methodists. So much so, that some historians and social commentators (McLoughlin, 1978; 131-138) have failed to realize that the 'camp meetings' began with Presbyterianism. This oversight is indicative of the extent to which the true origin of the 'camp meetings' has been lost. However, it would be more accurate to state that Methodism assumed the 'camp meeting' format and used this means to advance the cause in the west. McLoughlin (1978: 134,135) records that under Methodism the 'camp meetings' adopted a theologically less reformed and much more Arminian or counter reformation tendency:

“The Methodist itinerant revivalist Peter Cartwright may be taken as typical of the camp-meeting prophets who revitalized the South after 1800... At first, Cartwright said, the Presbyterians and Baptists tried to uphold the old doctrines, but soon “they almost to a man gave up these points of high Calvinism and reached a free salvation to all mankind.” The Methodists, who had always believed in free will and a general atonement, came into their own at last.”

Cartwright's view that the Presbyterians and Baptists had abandoned their commitment to 'uphold old doctrines' was overstated. His evaluation might have been coloured by a common failure to understand the difference between *hyper-Calvinism* on the one hand and evangelical Calvinism on the other. Further, the facts would seem to indicate larger numbers of Calvinistic Presbyterians gave up their support of 'camp meetings' because they disagreed with, or were opposed to, their excesses. In this event the Methodists adopted the 'camp meeting' format (Sweet, 1965: 129-131) and it became the platform for their particular brand of revivalism. Through such means, Methodism made strident progress throughout the Second Great Awakening and it was well able to reach the new western population. The 'camp meetings,' became the principal method of reaching and engaging with those who lived on the isolated frontiers. Contacts were then sustained or consolidated by the means of circuit riders and Class Meetings.

As a result, the Baptists and Methodists grew in greater numbers in the southern states and on the western frontiers. To a large extent their successes must be attributed to the fact that they had structures well adapted to mission. Further, in contrast to the established forms and organizational structures of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, they must have benefited from the originality of their methodology. Religious innovations of their kind, would have appealed to broader trends in the new republic. Perhaps this would account for the fact that, within the space of thirty to forty years, the western strain of revivalism became the dominant force throughout North America.

4.5 An analysis of the favourable religious effects that were produced by the Second Great Awakening from 1800-1820

There was a calculable turn in favour of religion during the period of the Second Great Awakening. The outworking of this revival produced some significant developments in the religious and social life of the states.

- **There was a sharp increase in church membership.** The Presbyterian Church grew from 70,000 to 100,000 between 1800-1810. Baptist membership was also increased from 95,000 in 1800 to 160,000 in 1810. The rapid increase within the Methodist Episcopal Church is indicated by the facts that over nine consecutive years from 1801-1809 the totals of its annual growth in membership were: 7,980; 13,860; 17,336; 9,064; 6,811; 10,625; 14,020; 7,405; and 11,043. These figures meant that the Methodist Episcopal church increased by 167.8 per cent while in the same period the population within the United States increased by only 36.4 per cent.
- **The foundation of several church mission agencies.** The awakening produced an increased interest in and commitment to foreign mission. In 1810, the American Board of Foreign Missions was founded and within two years of its formation it sent out their first missionaries to Calcutta. By 1821, this Board had sent out eighty-one missionaries. The Methodist Episcopal Church soon developed a similar foreign missionary society. Other, home-based agencies

were founded at the same time. These included the work of the American Bible Society (1816) and the American Tract Society (1825). The Sunday School unions also came into existence during the same period.

- **The growth of colleges and theological education.** Between 1780-1830 it is claimed (Sweet, 1965; 149) that forty colleges were established to meet the increased demands for ministerial training. Furthermore, the established colleges began to adapt in order to meet the need of providing more preachers. For example, this was the case at Princeton (Murray, 1994; 135,136) where, in 1812, a new seminary was established from which students were trained for a preaching ministry. Congregationalists and Presbyterians were largely responsible for the development of these new colleges. However, there were also four Baptist Colleges in operation by 1830.
- **Humanitarian action and political democratisation.** The second great awakening also provided a stimulus for the American anti-slavery lobby and led to the calls for political and social reform. During the awakening it became common for revivalists to press for an eradication of slavery on their home soil. Furthermore (McLoughlin, 1978; 103, 104), it has been argued that the new form of church government that emanated from the awakening defined the democratisation of the nation.

Thus, it could be argued that America's Second Great Awakening provided the defining moment in the young history of the nation.

4.6 Summary

The Second Great Awakening occurred within an historical and social context that was far removed from the 1740's. North America had emerged from its colonial rule and in the late eighteenth century began to rapidly develop into an independent nation through the process of political and demographic change. Thus, in this chapter, I have attempted to establish that this change led to the diversification of revivalist thinking and practice across the nation throughout 1780-1820. I have, therefore, tried to highlight the factors

that precipitated the Second Great Awakening. Then, I have drawn attention to the fact that diverse theologies and ecclesiologies were prominent in this awakening and I have elaborated upon their varying degrees of success. In summary, I have tried to show that:

- Pro-revivalism was maintained in many of the colleges, which had been formed during the Great Awakening. Furthermore, their commitment to revivalism was further strengthened by a sequence of revivals in the late eighteenth century that impacted upon the student bodies. In addition that new seminaries were founded that were sympathetic to revivalism and concerned to meet the growing needs of an expanding population in the west.
- Pro-revivalism, after the revolution, was established in the south and to the west by the emergence of a new religious mainstream. Thus, Baptists and Methodists became a significant force, and their structures were easily adapted to meet their evangelistic opportunities on the western frontiers. Furthermore, that their brand of western revivalism soon manifested itself across the geographical boundaries of the new republic.

However, in addition to establishing the means that were used to achieve this reverse in favour of religion, I have also attempted to highlight the point that there were significant differences over the nature of revival. Thus, in summary, I have attempted to show that from 1800-1820:

- Congregational and Presbyterian revivalists were opposed to the development of the 'camp meetings' and to the excesses that often accompanied and characterised the western revivals. This innovation was seen as being opposed to the accepted view of revival that was expounded in the published works of Jonathan Edwards and the earlier revivalists.

- Baptist and Methodist revivalists presented an innovative style of revivalism on the western frontiers. In particular, Methodism readily adopted 'camp meetings' and continued to endorse their usefulness. Such innovations, therefore, became part of an accepted tradition within the culture of a new religious mainstream in the south.

It could be argued that the points of division that arose among the revivalists during the Second Great Awakening were secondary. However, whilst it may be true that Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians had a common purpose their different brands of revivalism became a source of contention. In time, these alternative strains of revivalism would clash and champions from both sides of the divide would be called on to offer an apologia on behalf of their convictions. It was Charles G. Finney who would become the main spokesman for western revivalism while Asahel Nettleton represented the revivalism of a conservative Congregationalism.

CHAPTER FIVE: ASAHEL NETTLETON AND AN ACCOUNT OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

5.1 General Remarks

The Second Great Awakening was accomplished by means of a large and diverse group of church ministers and itinerant evangelists. Those within the old colonial northern and middle territories held to a reformed tradition. However, throughout the southern states and on the western frontiers, people began to drift from the older established theological tradition in preference for the modernizing trend. From the outset, therefore, the revival lacked the theological consensus of the 1740's. Diverse theological opinions led to the implementation of different evangelistic methods. It was at this point that the divisions became the most pronounced and hotly contested.

Traditional revivalists supported a methodology that honoured the sovereign grace and power of God. Their evangelistic practice, therefore, was regulated by the view that the work of regeneration and conversion was a divine initiative by which individual sinners were led to faith and repentance in Christ. However, modernizers disowned the doctrine of an inability due to original sin and began to preach that conversion was nothing more than a response of the human will by persuasion. Thus, traditional and modern thinking on the nature of conversion became the real focus of differences in evangelistic method during the Second Great Awakening. Thornbury (1977: 151) contends that the divisions that were forged at this time had a significant bearing upon the development of western evangelism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

“The debate between the defenders of the old orthodoxy and the new liberalism is unquestionably one of the most significant in the history of American theology and evangelism. It signaled the beginning of a new and mighty force called usually by the name of “modern evangelism” and spotlighted a theological cleavage which remains unresolved until this day.”

During the Second Great Awakening, Asahel Nettleton achieved great prominence as a traditional pro-revivalist. It has been estimated (Thornbury, 1977; 233) that the number of his converts ran into thousands. Nettleton remained loyal to the same basic reformed view that had belonged to Edwards and Whitefield. Thus, his evangelistic methodology was determined by a commitment to the claims of the older established tradition and his itinerant ministry was indicative of those practices that were endorsed and supported by a conservative revivalism.

5.2 Asahel Nettleton and his connection to the Congregational Church at Killingworth Connecticut

Nettleton was born at Killingworth, Connecticut in 1783. Early public records indicate that he was descended from Samuel Nettleton who had the distinction of being amongst the first settlers (Thornbury, 1977: 25, 26) in this colony. Nettleton's parents adhered to the *halfway covenant* that allowed for the right of church membership without the need for an outward profession of faith. From his childhood, therefore, Nettleton received his religious education through the regularities of worship and instruction performed by the local Congregational Church. Thornbury (1977: 26,27) states that:

“The parents of Asahel Nettleton were not notably religious, though they had respect for the church and saw that their children received religious instruction... Their son Asahel, who was born on 21st April, 1783, underwent the rite of infant baptism when he was only six days old...Asahel and his brothers and sisters received the basic religious instruction required of their parents' church.”

In 1801, however, the Second Great Awakening affected people as it swept through the church at Killingworth. It was at this period that Nettleton was first confronted with the demands of an evangelical conversion. In his case, it would seem that the development of spiritual enlightenment was a lengthy business. Moreover, Thornbury (1977: 29-31) indicates that the process of his conversion followed an *ordo salutis* that was in keeping with consistent Calvinism. In his case, therefore, conviction of sin and repentance were experientially prior to the rest of faith. Thus, unlike Edwards, Nettleton was led to faith

(Thornbury, 1977: 29) through an intense inner conflict: "... not without a great struggle in his feelings.... he was brought to bend the knee to Jehovah." Such a conflict, of course, was fully consistent with a reformed and puritan emphasis upon the prior need for legal conviction of sin. The sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians had supported the view that evangelical conversion required a preparatory 'law work.' This emphasis was allegorized in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where it was depicted by his reference to the 'slough of despond.' This illustrated that the Holy Spirit first operated to produce a heightened sense of accountability for sin through direct appeal to the conscience. Nettleton, it appears, became fully conversant with the experiential processes that were part and parcel of this view of conversion.

Thus, throughout the years of ministry that followed, his initial spiritual crisis impacted upon his preaching and on the methodology that he employed as an itinerant evangelist. He was convinced that such convictions or preparations generally served as a prelude to an assured faith in the saving grace of God. Nettleton, like the revivalists who preceded and followed him, was largely dependent upon his experience of conversion in connection with his later thinking and evangelistic practices. Thornbury (1977: 28) thus states:

"His own conversion set the stage for his eventual evangelistic ministry and was a pattern for the thousands of converts he eventually saw as the result of it."

In general terms, it would seem that particular features of 'crisis conversions' and the *ordo salutis* have had a significant impact on the tenor of revivalistic ministries and the application of their methods. It could be argued that the correlation between the initial experience of the revivalists, and their thinking and method, has a basis of support in the 'calls' of the Old Testament prophets. In scripture, these covenantal ministries all generally began with a 'crisis encounter.' Thus, Moses as the proto-typical prophet was called into special service (Exodus, 3: 4-6) by way of a 'crisis encounter' at the burning bush. This was also characteristic of the 'calls' given to Isaiah, Jeremiah and a number of other prophets under the Old Testament economy. It is also significant that the initial

'call' to these prophets had a determinative impact upon their subsequent ministries and their prophetic emphasis. For example, the holiness of the Lord is frequently referred to in the prophecies of Isaiah, and this surely reflected the heavenly vision that he received (Isaiah, 6: 3-8) within the temple. Whilst it would be difficult to argue that such special 'callings' provide an exact parallel or illustration of a new covenant conversion they are generally indicative of the effect of 'crisis encounters.' Nettleton's personal conversion, therefore, became a crucial factor in the development of his ministry as an itinerant evangelist during the Second Great Awakening.

5.3 Asahel Nettleton and his training and preparation for his work as an itinerant evangelist at Yale College

Following Nettleton's conversion he became conscious of an 'inner calling' to the work of full time ministry (Lloyd-Jones, 1998: 100-120) that was harder to resist though his personal circumstances were unfavourable. Thornbury (1977: 34), has indicated that he was unprepared for life outside the farming community and this was compounded by the burden of his responsibilities following the deaths of his father and younger brother. In 1802, the prospects of realizing his calling seemed unlikely and potentially remote. However, he was committed to his call (Thornbury, 1977: 35&36) and became determined to succeed:

"He thought it best to do everything possible to prepare himself for college if the door of opportunity should open... By the autumn of 1805, four years after his conversion, Nettleton had mastered the preparatory studies for the college. In the middle of the autumn term he entered the freshman class at Yale."

Nettleton's determination to honour his 'call' is revealing because it illustrated a settled principle of faith. Thus, it could be argued that revival 'conversion' in his case was not (Lloyd-Jones, 1987: 61-89) just psychological. Following the resolution of his spiritual crisis, faith led to spiritual growth as his mind was transformed, his heart was enthused, and his will was engaged. Nettleton's conversion, therefore, seemed to provide a classic example of the marks of regeneration. Scripture called people to (2 Peter, 3: 18): '...

grow in grace and in the knowledge of God.’ The apostolic church was encouraged to mature in life and service through ‘means’ (Ephesians, 4: 11-13, 1 Peter, 2: 1-3) that developed through faith and the power of spiritual renewal (2 Peter, 1: 3), to the pursuit of ‘glory and virtue.’ The concept that conversion was the starting point of progressive sanctification and spiritual maturity was, therefore, clearly understood by American revivalists during the Great Awakenings. In terms of timing, they did not separate a believer’s immediate justification by faith with progressive renewal or sanctified growth through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in keeping with the reformed tradition, the eighteenth century revivalists regarded justification by faith and the sanctification by the Spirit as being complimentary parts of a *biblical* salvation. Further, justification and sanctification were regarded as contingent upon and commensurate with each other. Historically it was later, through the views of revivalists in the nineteenth century, that American evangelicalism later adopted a time-gapped or staggered view of faith and renewal. Under this thinking, it became common to differentiate in time between the volitional act of faith and the commencement of the process of sanctified renewal. People were thus encouraged to take Jesus as ‘Christ’ by faith and later as ‘Lord’ through the Spirit. In some cases this second phase was linked with the need to receive a *baptism of the Holy Ghost*. However, Nettleton was evidently unfamiliar with these later distinctions and his conversion was both the ground of hope and the basis of his renewal. For him, justifying faith was proven through the presence of sanctified works or the production of spiritual fruit. This view had a profound impact on his evangelistic ministry and it may be the reason why some historical commentators, such as Olmstead and Prentice Hall (1960: 348), have described the form of Nettleton’s revivalism as being: ‘strongly intellectual’.

His training at Yale largely influenced the intellectual and theological standards that Nettleton applied to his evangelism. In 1805, when he enrolled at the college, Timothy Dwight had presided over the college for ten years. During the period of his presidency Yale had produced a phalanx of talented graduates who eventually became outstanding figures in the political, religious and social re-development of the north-eastern states of

America. Nettleton's connection with the college meant that he later became personally involved with the following men.

- **Lyman Beecher:** *Pastor* at Litchfield, Connecticut, from (1810-26) and Hanover Street, Boston (1826-1832). Beecher later became the president and professor of theology at Lane Theological Seminary. His daughter Harriet, was the authoress of '*Uncle Toms Cabin.*'
- **Edward Dorr Giffin:** *Pastor* at New Hartford, Connecticut (1795-1801) and also Newark, New Jersey (1801-1809, 1815-1821). From 1810-1815 Giffin taught at Andover College and after his second spell at Newark he then became president of Williams College, Williamsburg.
- **Gardiner Spring:** The *Pastor* of the Brick Church, New York City (1810-1873). This was his only church. By 1865, there were only four people left amongst the congregation who had invited him there in his youth. He lived to see New York City grow from a population of 100,000 to about 1 million, and the numbers of Protestant Churches there to increase to over 300.
- **Bennet Tyler:** *Pastor* at South Britain, Connecticut, he became the president of Dartmouth College in 1822 before serving the Second Church, Portland, Maine in 1828. His last years were spent as president of the *Theological Institute, East Windsor* (later the Hartford Seminary) where he maintained traditional reformed and Calvinistic teaching.

However, many of these illustrious names had passed through the college course during the years just before his enrolment. Furthermore, it would seem that by the time he arrived to begin his studies the 'awakening' which had been experienced by the student body in 1802 had largely dissipated.

Thornbury (1977: 37) states:

“In fact, in the freshman class he was “ the only professor of religion.” ...But one thing was evident to all, this young man was serious about his faith... The dedication and sincerity of Asahel did not escape the notice of the college president. Once he remarked of him, “He will make one of the most useful men this country has ever seen.”

Nettleton’s academic career was largely undistinguished and for a variety of reasons he struggled to gain his qualification. However, he appeared to excel in theological studies and seemed to possess a capable grasp of those trends of thinking that were in vogue in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Further, he was decidedly opposed to certain strains of theological thinking (Thornbury, 1977: 43-47) to which he became exposed throughout the course of his training at Yale. Nettleton preferred a reformed emphasis that fundamentally upheld (Columbia University Press, 1954: 22) ‘ the old conservative ideas of original sin and moral inability.’ Thus, he tended to oppose those teachers who adopted a more open or liberalized form of Calvinism. In later years, this antipathy was revealed in his reaction to Charles G Finney, Nathaniel W. Taylor and Lyman Beecher. Nettleton represented from his student days the more conservative and traditional face of New England Calvinism. However, his was not a *‘hyper-Calvinism’* because he also had a well-developed sense of mission. Thus, in his student days, he was drawn to some new friends who shared his desire for working in evangelized fields. For example, it was at this crucial period of his life that he met Samuel J. Mills. Following the famed *‘haystack prayer meetings’* at Williams College, Mills later became the founding father of American Foreign Mission. Furthermore, in addition to new friends, he was actively involved in evangelism amongst the students during another awakening that took place in his final years at the college.

Thornbury (1977: 38) thus records:

“During the winter of 1807-08 he was involved in the second revival of his life. It took place at Yale and in the outlying region in New Haven... Often he would be seen in the late evening hours walking arm in arm with some fellow student who was seeking peace for his soul. The revival “seemed almost to absorb his mind by day and by night.”

Thus, Nettleton was prepared for his evangelistic career through his interaction with the mighty evangelical men of Yale. However, in contrast with the more fashionable trends of theological thinking he retained a commitment to a Calvinistic and reformed position that had been commonplace in the 1740's. It could be argued, therefore, that he was the last embodiment of *original* American revivalism. Toward the end of his life, however, this form of revivalism was almost entirely overrun and his basic thinking and methods began their slide into obscurity.

5.4 Asahel Nettleton and the development of his evangelistic ministry in Connecticut and the northern territories

Following his college course, Nettleton was eager to become a worker within the newly formed American Foreign Mission. However (Thornbury, 1977: 41, 42), because of the burden of some domestic problems and responsibilities he was prevented from pursuing this course of action. In hindsight, it could be argued that this prevention was necessary for the further preparation of his ministry. Nettleton's circumstances led to an extra year being spent serving as the butler at Yale College. This arrangement meant that he missed out on the opportunity to apply to foreign mission, and it made him reconsider a leading to ministry on the home front. In 1810 this leading was further explored when he began to serve the church as a probationer minister. New England Congregationalists had long adopted the policy of offering 'parsonage schools' where graduating collegiate students, as a precursor to ordination, would be put under the care and supervision of an experienced minister. Nettleton, therefore, used and benefited

from this form of probation following the extension of his time at college. Thornbury (1977: 42) comments:

“After his extra year at Yale, Asahel arranged to be an assistant to the Rev. Bezaleel Pinneo, who served as pastor of a church at Milford, Connecticut... Plans were then made to license him to preach. The New Haven West Association performed this function on 28th May, 1811.”

Thus, in his preparation for the ministry, Nettleton had revealed a personal integrity and a proper deference to accepted convention. Moreover, it would seem that by the time of receiving his license to preach he was settled on the substance of his theology and ready to use his training and experience as a revivalist. Perhaps, crucially as an evangelist, he had learned in practice to distinguish between Arminianism on the one hand and hyper-Calvinism on the other. Nettleton's commitment to God's sovereignty did not blind him to human responsibility or militate against his emphasis that mankind was accountable to God for sin and the lack of obedience. However, Nettleton was equally opposed to a presumptuous or a superficial profession of faith. In his view, the conviction for sin that led to sincere contrition generally preceded the gift of faith. Thus, he was opposed to an 'easy believe-ism' and was unprepared and unwilling to present the '*triumphalist*' view of faith. Thornbury (1977: 83) states:

“Bellamy, Hopkins, and Nettleton were of the old rugged New England school, who believed that assurance does not normally come easily. No one, in their view, had any right to claim salvation unless he sees in himself positive evidence of a change of heart. The debate between these two camps has a modern counterpart in the controversy over whether conversion includes submission to the Lordship of Christ, and whether repentance, as distinguished from faith, is a condition of salvation.”

Nettleton was an evangelist whose theological view was founded on the claims of a reformed tradition. His preaching and methodology rested on his convictions and after receiving his license to preach he began to do so in accordance with his principles to a number of churches throughout Connecticut.

5.4.1 1811-1816 Stonington, South Britain, Litchfield and Salisbury

During the 1740's, New England Congregational churches had suffered badly from the actions of pro-revival extremists. The eccentricities of these revivalists was largely due to an over reliance upon subjective guidance and an insistence that religious excitement was an essential accompaniment to revivals. In some cases their attitude and behaviour was so bizarre that it led to factions, and fragmented a settled pattern of church worship, order and discipline. Furthermore, they tended to arouse in others a harsh, legalistic and negative opinion of other church leaders. The behaviour of James Davenport provided a (Thornbury 1977: 49,50) classic example of this kind of extremism:

“In 1741, he held a series of meetings in southern Connecticut, at Stonington and further west. When he came to North Stonington he met the pastor of the church, Joseph Fish, but was not satisfied with the pastor's level of enthusiasm...Davenport soon began to encourage outright revolt on the part of his followers and urged them to leave their church... All in all it was a most unfortunate schism, as unnecessary as it was hurtful.”

In 1811, Nettleton began to evangelize at Stonington. However, he soon discovered that the deleterious effects of the division that had been caused by Davenport had continued, and that Stonington had become a *'waste place.'* Thus, Nettleton, in this early sphere of ministry was confronted by the high price that had been paid in this community through the rash and reckless enthusiasm of earlier revivalists. These divisions in the 1740's had continued and the problems that had been caused in the town during that time still could not be satisfactorily overcome or healed sixty years later. For Nettleton, the lessons that he learned here clearly impacted upon his thinking and practices as he

began to develop his itinerant ministry in Connecticut. The danger of a 'revival-styled' itinerant ministry, therefore, was evidently well understood. Thornbury (1977: 52) has made the following observations:

“If this visit to the Stonington area accomplished anything, it was to teach him that great wisdom is required in carrying on revival activities... Itinerants, he concluded from what he had observed, were not to intrude into parishes without the explicit invitation of the local pastors... This experience would stand him in good stead in his career as an itinerant evangelist.”

During the autumn of 1812, Nettleton was invited to preach at South Salem, New York. The journey took him throughout Connecticut and en route he stopped for a week in the parish of the Rev Bennet Tyler. This stay at South Britain marked the beginning of a life-long friendship with Tyler and more importantly the commencement of his career as an accepted itinerant evangelist. From this point onward he would become the means (Thornbury, 1977: 18-20) of awakening thousands of people to their need for conversion through repentance and faith. Nettleton's success at South Britain paved the way for his pattern of itinerant evangelism amongst the Congregationalists. First receiving a church or a pastor's invitation, he was allowed to hold his preaching and counselling sessions in a growing number of towns throughout Connecticut.

His sensitivity to the good order of the churches meant he was welcomed as an itinerant evangelist and such was his respect for the incumbent minister that his visits were never regarded as an intrusion. Furthermore, Nettleton would often spend several months at a time in the towns where he was invited to preach. This provided accountability to his work as a roving, itinerant evangelist. By such means he was enabled to reverse the negative impression of pro-revival itinerancy that had surfaced in the Great Awakening and that had continued to affect public opinion. From 1812-1813, Nettleton's successes at South Britain, South Salem, and in other towns, enhanced his growing popularity and reputation as a trustworthy revivalist. His evangelistic methods gained general approval and positive results accompanied his efforts. As an outcome, his ministry was greatly

appreciated in many established churches in Connecticut. In the autumn of 1813 he was welcomed into the parish of Lyman Beecher, a church leader whose two-year-old daughter would later ignite the flames of civil unrest over the issue of slavery. Once again and as before, his ministry made a definite impression upon this parish. In 1814, Nettleton returned home for rest and recuperation but by the autumn of that year he resumed his ministry. It can be argued that the next two years of his life provided the most productive period of his ministry as a revivalist. During 1814-1816 East Granby, Bolton, Manchester and Salisbury were Connecticut towns that all benefited from the height of his powers as an itinerant evangelist. Thornbury (1977: 69,71) comments:

“In the summer, autumn and winter of 1815-16 he preached in Salisbury, Connecticut, where a revival occurred, which was in some respects more remarkable than any he had witnessed thus far... The harvest of souls in this place was considerable. About three hundred proclaimed their new life in Christ... During this revival, religion became the topic of conversation everywhere in the town. Nettleton became a sort of celebrity. Large groups of people followed him about wherever he went.”

5.4.2 Nettleton and the lasting effects of his evangelistic methods in Connecticut

Nettleton's ministry was conducted in regulation style and with a respect for the proper order of the churches. Consequently, he tended to avoid many of those unhelpful results that followed the pro-revival extremism of the 1740's. Furthermore, he was in favour of Jonathan Edwards' view regarding religious excitement and the need for exercising some caution and discretion over the handling of intense feelings. It would seem, as a general rule, that Nettleton was careful not to overplay the need for enthusiasms and that he did not assume that these displays were not necessarily indicative of a mighty movement of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in contrast to the exuberance that was found in the western '*camp meetings*,' the tenor of his 'revival' meetings was generally noted for their being 'still,' 'quiet' and 'silently efficient.' Some (Columbia Press, 1954: 22) have regarded his less than exuberant style as 'unspectacular' and symbolic of the 'obsolescence of orthodoxy in the nineteenth century.' However, the records seem to

show that Nettleton's converts stood the test of time and that the doctrinal thoroughness of his preaching, together with the wisdom of his evangelistic approach, produced lasting and solid professions of faith. For example, this was true of those who were converted under the evangelist during his visit to Salisbury, Connecticut. Thornbury (1977: 71 & 72) states:

“Twenty-seven years later, Jonathan Lee reminisced about these memorable days. He recalled the unobtrusive manner of his old friend Asahel Nettleton... “This revival was distinguished for its stillness and solemnity, for deep conviction of conscience, for discriminating views of divine truth. He was aware that the converts of this revival had been the backbone of the church through the years. “Not a few, in the twenty-seven years since elapsed, have died in the Lord. Those remaining still constitute the strength of the church.”

It could be argued that lasting impact of Nettleton's ministry is indicative of the fact that his evangelistic practice was highly effective and productive in comparison with that of later American revivalists. However, the staying power of his converts has generally been overlooked in favour of the evangelical pragmatism that immediately followed his place in the *Second Great Awakening*. Thus, for example, his theology and evangelistic methodology have been unfavourably (Rowe, 1931: 377) compared to that of Charles G. Finney. Certainly, Finney's western model of revivalism later became the dominant force in American evangelicalism, but it is debatable as to whether or not this provided more effective or lasting conversions. Moreover, there is supporting evidence to suggest (Murray, 1994: 289) that in the late 1830's Finney began to entertain serious reservations over the lasting impact of his 'new measures.' Thus, although the force of change overcame Nettleton's mode of operation it can yet be argued that his evangelistic practices stood the test of time. His particular converts, therefore, were demonstrated not through the number of public professions, but in spiritual fruitfulness and through the continued perseverance of the saints. History, perhaps, would better be served by basing an evaluation and judgment of Nettleton's success as an evangelist on the basis of this criterion.

5.5 Asahel Nettleton and a brief summary of his other contributions to the Second Great Awakening

By 1820, Nettleton was one of the leading revivalists within the New England tradition. However, in 1822 he suffered an attack of typhus that almost claimed his life. From this time forward he struggled with his health and the physical energy that had once marked his ministry was missing. Furthermore, in the mid 1820's Nettleton became involved in a theological controversy with Charles G. Finney. Due to poor health he was, therefore, unable to be at his best in the debate over an issue surrounding the use of new evangelistic measures. Nevertheless, he was prepared to stand against any threatened deviation from the older paths. During the late 1820's (Thornbury, 1977; 189-214) the strength of his doctrinal convictions regarding the essential nature of sin and conversion were tried and tested even to the point of defying his closest friends. Nettleton, however, was not at his most comfortable in the role of an apologist and in the climate of debate he was quickly overwhelmed by the superiority of Finney's talents.

Nettleton's ineffectiveness in the controversy has generally cast him in an unfavourable light and he has since been viewed as an 'old school' traditionalist who resisted change and innovation. However, this fails to take account of his place within the development of hymnology in the United States. In 1820's, Nettleton both compiled and published a hymnbook entitled *'Village Hymns.'* Ninde (1921: 117) notes that the hymnal clearly had a missionary emphasis: 'in the *Village Hymns* were fifty-one on missions, a proportion hitherto not approached in any collection.' This hymnal was also innovative (Thornbury, 1977: 136) because it challenged an established tradition of psalm singing among the churches of the northeastern states:

"It is the only book that Nettleton himself published during his lifetime ...Nettleton's efforts represented a considerable advance in the science of hymnology in America, a fact that has not gone unrecognised. Louis F. Benson said "Nettleton knew a good hymn when he saw it and produced the brightest evangelical hymnal yet made in America."

Nettleton therefore, was at the cutting edge of progressive worship. Sanjek (1988: 110) has also commented that his hymn book was partly responsible for the adoption of new musical instrumentation in worship because it: ‘... touched off a demand for an instrument less costly than the pipe organ.’ Thus, he not only left his mark on American revivalism through his converts but he also encouraged the use of new forms of praise that led to the adoption of new musical accompaniments.

Nettleton spent his last years at East Windsor, Connecticut. This town became the base of his operations and it was here that he was personally involved with the development of the *Connecticut Theological Institute*. Bennet Tyler was selected to preside over this college that was established with the aim of preparing preachers who were sympathetic to revivalism based upon evangelical Calvinism. Following several surgical operations Nettleton’s health gradually deteriorated and he died at his East Windsor home on 16th May 1844. Thornbury (1977: 225) records:

“He told his old friend Bennet that he had no worry at the prospect of death and testified a few hours before the end, “It is sweet to trust in the Lord.”

5.6 Summary

The Second Great Awakening gave birth to a new form of revivalism that developed on the western frontier. Innovations such as the ‘camp meetings’ began to replace accepted and traditional revival practices. By 1830, Charles G. Finney and supporters of his ‘*new measures*’ had successfully injected western revivalism into the evangelical mainstream of the more conservative northern states. However, western revivalism had to overcome the effective and spirited endeavours of those northern evangelists who were committed to reformed theology and traditional methods. Thus, in this chapter, I have attempted to represent the force of conservative revivalism by focusing on the ministry of the evangelist Asahel Nettleton and his part in the Second Great Awakening.

In summary I have tried to illustrate the prominent features of ‘conservative revivalism’ during the Second Great Awakening. Nettleton was a *revival convert* and yet it appears

that he was untainted by any undue enthusiasm. On the contrary, he seems to have been exemplary in the fulfilment of his domestic or social responsibilities, and unprepared to rush prematurely into life-changing decisions. Furthermore, his conversion resulted in a greater desire for intellectual study. At college he was noted for the sincerity of his faith and developed a keen interest in world mission. Then, in his maturity and in the pursuit of his evangelistic ministry, Nettleton was careful to operate according to the principles of good order in the churches and a proper deference to ministers. Unlike the extremists in the 1740's he was 'pastor friendly' in the sense that he worked with and alongside of his settled ministerial colleagues.

In addition, I have highlighted the fact that his revivalism was far less excitable than the western model. In contrast to the exuberance of the 'camp meetings', his were noted for their stillness and quietness. Moreover, in his meetings he exercised a degree of caution or restraint among 'awakened' people. Nettleton's theological stance combined with his discrimination in matters of 'experiential religion,' resulted in balance and efficiency in his ministry. Furthermore, I have attempted to show, that Nettleton's contribution to the Second Great Awakening included some innovation. He was evidently a 'traditionalist' in his theology but, in practice, he was prepared to introduce new elements to the praise and worship of the churches in his own day. Nettleton's hymn book, shows that he was not bound blindly to the tradition of the fathers.

In terms of the overall history of American revivalism, it could be argued that Nettleton was one of the last originals. His thinking was in line with Edwards and Whitefield and his practices were consistent with theirs. However, unlike these illustrious predecessors, he lived to witness his thinking and practice eclipsed by other 'human agents.' From the 1820's and onwards, North American evangelicalism would rapidly begin to drift away from the moorings of evangelical Calvinism. 'New measures' replaced old methods and as a result revivalism was cast in a different light.

CHAPTER SIX: 1820-1835 AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF THE 'NEW MEASURES' CONTROVERSY

6.1 General Remarks

By 1820, the Second Great Awakening had been in progress for just over twenty years. Throughout this period the significant increase in church membership, together with the birth of foreign missions and other evangelistic agencies, served to reshape the religious foundation of the new republic. The growth and consolidation of evangelicalism was so marked that the effects of this 'awakening' were later described (Murray, 2000: xiv) as being truly Pentecostal. However, during the same period, some sweeping demographic changes and innovative evangelistic practices began to threaten a theological consensus that had existed since the colonial era. Revivalists, therefore, began to divide over many doctrinal and practical issues and the result of this cleavage meant that divergent revival traditions began to divide the churches of North America.

The seed of division among revivalists was a direct result of a long-standing divergence. From 1801, the western 'camp meeting' had become a basis of contention in traditional church denominations. However, the geographical distance and the relative isolation of the eccentricities on the western frontiers meant that this contentious innovation did not directly affect the east. Inevitably and inexorably, however, the western frontiersmen of the 1790's became integrated within the new nation. Furthermore, religious practices in the west that were either dismissed or ignored by orthodox churchmen in the east began to gain ground in the heartland of the eastern denominations. Thus, it was only a matter of time before there was a conflict over the new thinking and its practice. In the 1820's, the point of argument among eastern and western pro-revivalists became centred on the '*new measures*' controversy. Initially, the focal point of this debate was a disagreement over practical rather than theological issues. However, in time, it became clear, that the measures themselves were founded upon a new or distinctive philosophical/theological rationale. This controversy, therefore, is essential to an appreciation and understanding of the development of American revivalism.

6.2 The political and social background to the 'New Measures' controversy

The first quarter of the nineteenth century gave impetus to wide-ranging changes within the political and social climate of North America. In general terms these changes meant that the national uncertainty following the revolution was generally replaced by optimism that was largely based on *enlightened* thinking. Therefore, some historians (McCloughlin, 1978; 103-106) have argued that this optimism began to encroach on the religious mood of the developing nation. Accordingly, the churches soon amended their thinking and practice in order to accommodate the intellectual trends and embraced instead the view that man was the captain of his own destiny. This argument, of course, completely fails to acknowledge the strength of the evangelical commitment to revealed truth as it was articulated in the reformed creeds. Religion, according to these creeds, was not a human construct that was governed by the fluctuation of popular opinion but the outworking of transcendent and divine revelation. In reality, therefore, this construct, which had provided the accepted standard and pattern of belief and practice within American churches since 1620, was not easily or quickly overhauled.

However, the scriptures clearly indicate that churches can be, or have been affected by the social attitudes and conditions that have surrounded their life and witness within the world (Revelation, Chapters 2-3). In this sense, it could be reasonably argued that the church is never totally divorced from the pressures of conforming to the fashions of thought and practice in common society. Thus, the '*New Measures*' controversy cannot be entirely divorced from the prevailing fashion of thought that steadily forced itself on the national consciousness of a young, growing and vibrant nation. In many ways, these *measures* were in keeping with the mood of the times and they undoubtedly appealed to the self-elevating or liberalizing tendencies within the nation that developed throughout the first few decades of the nineteenth century. The political and social developments in America during these times served to strengthen the elevation of human ability. Several key factors had combined to underscore the sense of human achievement and autonomy within the nation.

- The purchase of the Louisiana Territory (1803) and discovery of the Northwest Passage (1804-1806) both meant that the nation expanded its trade and began to prosper economically. Furthermore, the construction of canals that linked the eastern seaboard with the frontiers was seen as a major feat of civil engineering and human ingenuity. Perhaps the most successful and economically prosperous was the Erie Canal which, when opened in 1825, linked the western lakes to the great trading houses of New York City.
- The mid 1820's also witnessed the beginnings of political democracy within the United States of America. Thornbury (1977: 147) states:

“On the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, 4th of July, 1826, something happened which seemed to symbolize the end of one era and the inauguration of another. On that day, by a curious coincidence, the two elder statesmen of the Republic, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both chief architects of the political system and signers of the Declaration, died. The federal period, when there was only one political party, was over and in the next two years the campaign for the presidency between the Whig party, led by John Quincy Adams, and the Democratic-Republican Party, led by Andrew Jackson, began.”

In the light of the *'New Measures'* controversy it is perhaps noteworthy that the first presidential contest took place between two candidates whose politics were defined on east and west lines. In the event, following an acrimonious and bitter fight, it was the westerner Andrew Jackson who claimed the presidency and this victory emphasized the rise of a new America. This rise was mirrored within the subsequent history of the pro-revival movement, where western influences were to gain a significant hold over eastern sensibilities. Furthermore, the democratic principle also had a great bearing upon the religious structures of New England. By 1818, Congregationalism was disestablished in Connecticut. This meant that the churches were no longer maintained by tithes levied on citizens living in this

state. During the 1820's, other eastern states followed this lead and it resulted in a greater breadth of denominational activity and provided the ground for greater interaction with other ideas and methods.

Thus, the times were changing, and it could be argued that the secular trends provided a climate that produced a strong incentive for a significant renewal of traditional religious thinking and practice. Furthermore, following the first presidential election in 1826, the transference of political power from east to the west meant that western influences were legitimized and became more acceptable. Economically and politically, therefore, these underlying trends in the 1820's also opened the way for the cross fertilization of eastern and western revivalist thinking and practices. The '*New Measures*' that were introduced to churches of the Northern States, at this period of time, thus tended to fit well with the expansive, popularist and innovative national mood.

6.3 Charles Grandison Finney and his rise as the champion of 'New Measures'

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) was one of the last wave of pro-revivalists that were used collectively to reinvigorate American evangelicalism throughout the Second Great Awakening. However, in terms of historical recognition his revivalistic activity appears to have eclipsed the ministry of many other outstanding evangelists who equally graced the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Finney's claim to fame as a revivalist was not due to the fact that he was the originator or mainspring of the awakening, or to the fact that his *methods* were altogether entirely original. In hindsight, it can be claimed that his prominent place in American church history was directly connected to the *timing* of his appearance as an evangelist and a revivalist. Further, Finney earned his reputation in the west, and it could be argued that he was tailor-made for the 1820's where the economic, political and social integration between east and west was under way and the ordered society of the nation was in transition. The successes of his '*New Measures*' were thus largely dependent upon the intellectual trend within the nation and his genius was forged on the anvil of progress and modernization. History placed him at a critical juncture in the social development of the United States.

6.3.1 Finney's background and early religious experiences

Finney's family tree can be traced back to the early colonial period. During the 1630's (Hardman, 1990: 28) his paternal forefather had left England to commence his new life in America:

"Sometime before 1635 a John Finney, Sr., and his wife, known as "Mother Finney," came from England to Falmouth, Massachusetts, with their daughter and two sons."

However, the family connection with Massachusetts was broken in the early eighteenth century when the grandson of John Finney Sr. became one of the first people to settle at Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut. Josiah Finney became a major figure in this new township and according to Hardman (1990: 28&29) he was instrumental in securing the land for a settled place of religious worship:

"The town records indicate that it was he (Josiah) who purchased the ground upon which the first church was built and then gave it to the Congregational society."

Throughout the time of religious fervour and political upheaval that occurred during the mid to late eighteenth century, this particular branch of the Finney family tree remained firmly rooted in Connecticut. Charles G Finney's father, Sylvester, was born and raised there during this critical period of colonial history. In the 1770's, Sylvester served in the revolutionary war, after which he married Rebecca Rice and settled down to a farming life in Connecticut's frontier towns. Their seventh child, Charles *Grandison* Finney, was born at Warren, Litchfield County on 29th August 1792 and was named after the hero in a popular book (Hardman, 1990: 29). Like many others, however, Sylvester Finney was attracted by the opportunities that were starting to open up on the new western frontiers. Consequently, in 1794 he uprooted his family and moved away from his Connecticut home to those towns that were rapidly being developed by settlers in the mid to northern area of New York State.

Thus, Finney spent his formative years in frontier country. There is no accurate account of his childhood education but there is a strong probability (Hardman, 1990: 30) that he went to a backwoods school where he received an adequate training. Furthermore, there appears to be a hint that he later enrolled at an academy that was not far from his family home at Kirkland. In his biography of Finney, Keith J. Hardman contends that, although unproven, his attendance at an academy would help to explain (1990:30) his subsequent interests, friendships and career movements. Perhaps the strongest evidence that he had received an adequate or competent education is connected to the fact that he later spent several years being employed as a schoolteacher. However, his employment as a roving schoolteacher was interrupted when his mother's health began to deteriorate and he had to return to the family home at Henderson in 1818. It was at this point in his life that he was encouraged by friends to enter the legal profession and started training with Wright and Wardwell in the neighbouring town of Adams.

Finney's spiritual history cannot be accurately traced or assessed before this entrance into the legal profession. However, there seems to be good ground for the argument that he was exposed to the general influences of religion. Hardman states (1990: 30, 31) that although his parents were not 'professors of religion' he was, nevertheless, occasionally confronted by the sermon of some 'traveling minister.' In reality, however, this cursory recollection may well have been a classic understatement of the real facts of the matter. During Finney's formative years the frontier people of New York State were frequently confronted with heightened religious activity. There must be a strong possibility that he was not unaware or untouched by such religious excitements. Hardman (1990: 25, 26) has stated:

"An entire gamut of experiments promoting the perfection of humanity and the bringing of millennial bliss, unorthodox religious beliefs, new cults, and new political parties caused the area even then to be called a "burnt" or "burned-over district."... Of the many enthusiasms that agitated the region, among the first was Mormonism."

In addition, Finney's education must have contained some form of religious instruction. Religion generally formed the basis of the curriculum within most of the academies operating during this period. Furthermore, on his occasional visits to Connecticut he was also exposed (Hardman, 1990: 32) to the '*Calvinistic*' pulpit. However, religious instruction and occasional brushes with organized religion failed to impact on the course of his life. The spiritual '*power*' and '*living principle*' of '*saving faith*' were still remote when he became an apprentice at law. Between 1818-1821, Finney studied law at Adams. It was here that he was first really challenged to contemplate the personal implications of faith and obedience in Christ. Two vital influences began to make a profound impression on his thinking at this crucial period.

- Finney was impressed by the references to biblical law that were incorporated in his legal textbooks. Hardman (1990: 37, 38) records the impact:

"I found the old authors frequently quoting the Scriptures" he said..."This excited my curiosity so much that I went and purchased a Bible... and I read and meditated on it much more than I had ever done in before my life."

- Finney came under the influence of George Gale, who was then the Presbyterian minister at Adams. This man (Hardman, 1990: 39) attempted to evangelize him:

"Gale got into the habit," Finney wrote naively, "of dropping in at our office frequently, and seemed anxious to know what impression his sermons had made on my mind."

Finney eventually reached the point of an '*evangelical crisis*.' He would later recall that he experienced a profound religious awakening after an enquiry meeting that took place during the autumn of 1821. For several days afterwards he became increasingly agitated and wrestled with a deep sense of contrition. Finney's conversion experience, therefore, appeared to encapsulate the combination of deep conviction of sin and a rich assurance of faith, which resulted in an instantaneous deliverance. Furthermore, as he stated it, his experience was not untypical of that understanding of conversion that was presented in

reformed literature. The marks (Hardman, 1990: 41, 43) of converting grace were clear and a puritan preacher such as Bunyan, for instance, would surely not have doubted the genuineness of his conversion experience. Later, Finney's philosophical and theological rational was strongly contested and his form of revivalism was seriously questioned, yet Asahel Nettleton and other opponents of Finney's '*new measures*' never cast any doubt on the validity of his conversion. The psalmist (Psalm, 40: 1-3 NIV) once stated that the Lord 'put a new song in my mouth' and these words seem to have poetically anticipated the outcome of Finney's experience on 10th October 1821. Thus according to Hardman (1990: 43):

“He went back to the law office, which he found empty, took out the bass viol, and began to play and sing some of the hymns he knew. That caused him to weep, and it seemed “as if my heart was all liquid.”

6.3.2 Finney's rise as an evangelist and pro-revivalist

The New Testament upholds the principle of applying caution in the elevation of young converts (1 Timothy 3: 6) to the public ministry. Exceptions, of course, can often prove the rule but the apostolic counsel has generally been acknowledged within the reformed tradition and the principle has been implemented. From 1821-1827, Finney experienced a meteoric rise as a popular revivalist but there are grounds to doubt whether or not this speedy climb was gained at the expense of conventional wisdom. For example, it could be argued that he was under-prepared for his entrance into the ministry. Furthermore, it seems that he managed to side step many of the normal requirements of denominational ordination. On this basis, there are some legitimate questions as to whether he was an exception to the apostolic rule. Finney stated that on the same day of his conversion he experienced an intense blessing, which resulted in the immediate desire to pursue the call to become an evangelist rather than a lawyer.

Hardman (1990: 43) records that this motivation resulted from a phenomenal encounter:

“As he sat by the fire he received “a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost,” an altogether unexpected phenomenon... The next morning Finney told Squire Wright what had happened... Soon after Mr. Wright had left the office, Deacon Barney came into the office and said to me, “Mr. Finney, do you recollect that my cause is being tried at ten o’clock this morning? ... I replied to him, “ Deacon Barney, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and I cannot plead yours.”

Finney’s account of this blessing and his reaction on the day after of his conversion can certainly be questioned. Was it attributable to the flush of *‘first love’* enthusiasm, or the immaturity of a new convert to Christ? Or was it the response of an individual who too easily or presumptuously claimed to have a calling to preach, without submission to the judgment of the church or scriptural qualification? The immediacy of this determination is striking when compared to that of eastern revivalists such as Nettleton who adopted a more cautious and traditional attitude to the ‘call to preach.’

Exceptions permitted, it seems to be a dubious fact that Finney should thus immediately have renounced his responsibilities as a trainee attorney-at-law on the basis that he been ‘retained’ to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, this was apparently done without any profession or test of his conversion experience and without seeking the approval or discernment of experienced believers. It can be claimed, however, that the combination of Finney’s natural abilities together with his spiritual fervour produced an exceptional and unconventional leader who challenged those conventions or traditions that had long formed the ground of an accepted standard. In contrast, it could also be argued that from the outset Finney’s natural abilities and independence were allowed to go unchecked and this led to eccentricity or inconsistency. For example, in the immediate aftermath of his conversion he very quickly became opposed to *reformed doctrine* and began to chafe at the contents of the Westminster Confession of Faith. His predilection

against Calvinism was so strong that it soon resulted in friction between himself (Hardman, 1990: 45) and the Rev George Gale in the Presbyterian Church at Adams. Finney preferred to build on the foundation (Barlow, 1997: 8) of his own sanctified reasoning: ' I had nowhere to go but directly to the Bible, and to the philosophy and workings of my own mind.' Thus at an early stage of his spiritual-life, the independence of his thinking resulted in a decided and life-long antipathy towards traditional systematic theologies. From this moment on, therefore, he became adamant in his disdain for and opposition to the reformed credo and its confessions of faith.

Between 1821-1823 Finney lodged at the home of George Gale, who actively supervised his theological training and later sponsored his candidature for ordination in the traditionally reformed Presbyterian ministry. Gale (Hardman, 1990; 48-53) seems to have had reservations over taking this step but was sure that denominational procedures would provide the necessary fail-safes. In Finney's case, however, the procedures were somehow relaxed and in only six months from the time that he was adopted for training *under the care of the presbytery* he was tested and presented with his licence to preach. The St Lawrence Presbytery (Hardman 1990: 54) conducted his examination at Adams on 30th December 1823. Thus, Finney received a licence to preach from the presbytery in just over two years after his conversion. Following this confirmation, the Presbyterian Church at Adams was then exposed to his ministry. This took place on several Sundays when he became the substitute preacher for the Rev George Gale. Hardman (1990: 54) records the outcome:

"As Finney came from the pulpit after the (first Sunday) service, he recalled that Gale came up to him and said "Mr. Finney, I shall be very much ashamed to have it known, wherever you go, that you studied theology with me." As usual, Gale's recollection of the period differed... a 'prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.' Some were not pleased."

Finney's performance in these early days of his ministry at Adams should, however, be treated with a fair degree of latitude. His lack of pulpit experience and the limitations of his doctrinal and experiential understanding would have contributed to the frustration of the more discerning members of the congregation. The youthful vigour and eccentricity was unwelcome to them but may have been attributed to immaturity and tolerated in the hope he would mellow in time. Perhaps for this reason, Finney retained the good will of his mentor George Gale who became instrumental in securing a commission for him in the northwestern parts of the State. Consequently, for a three-month period that began on 17th March 1824 he was supported in his labours as a frontier evangelist (Hardman, 1990: 54, 55) and stated an intention: '... to go into the new settlements and preach in school houses, and barns, and groves as best I could.'

Finney's spectacular rise as an evangelist began in the northern frontier towns of New York State. However, his unconventional style of ministry was welcomed and would soon become acceptable in the more prosperous and influential towns along the banks of the Erie Canal. His acceptance with these mid-state towns was sealed by his marriage to Lydia Root Andrews. She was from central Oneida County and some (Sellers, 1991: 228) have recorded that it was she who was the means of his conversion and that her feminism provided the impetus to and core support of his future ministry. However, this is clearly wrong because Finney had already received his licence to preach and was engaged in his evangelistic ministry prior to their wedding on 5th October 1824, after which her family connections would begin to offer even more openings for his method of revivalism. Charles and Lydia Finney were happily married and, from the outset of their life together, she was an active and tolerant supporter of his extensive itinerant ministry. Following his marriage, Finney enhanced his growing reputation with another sequence of western-styled revival meetings that gained momentum throughout the winter months of 1825. His greatest successes came within the entrepreneurial class and amongst those towns that were beginning to comprise and define the new American urban culture.

- *Evans Mills* (1824). It was at Evan Mills on 1st July that Finney finally received his ordination into the Presbyterian ministry. Later that year a presbytery report (Hardman, 1990: 61-63) stated that '*at least eighty people had followed Christ*' in this town. In filing his own missionary report for that period, Finney claimed that he had preached 77 discourses and had attended 36 prayer meetings as well as making 469 family visits.
- *Brownsville, Le Rayville and Gouverneur* (1824-25). It was in these three towns that Finney first received notoriety as a pro-revivalist. It was here, on the border of the new frontier that he developed his particular brand of aggressive, harsh and argumentative evangelism. Further (Hardman, 1990; 66), it was here in these towns that his practice of upbraiding other ministers for their 'coldness' or 'indifference' began.
- *Western, Rome and Utica* (1825-26). These towns were based in mid New York State and had been established for some twenty years or more. The development of the towns was the result of their proximity to the Erie Canal and the churches were more refined and better resourced than those Finney was first called to serve in 1824. It was his mentor, George Gale, who introduced him to the church prayer meeting at Western and this was the beginning of the process whereby he was to establish a more innovative form of revivalism (Hardman, 1990; 69-77) and method of evangelism in these towns.

Thus, at the time of the '*New Measures*' controversy, Finney had emerged from being a backwoods western-style preacher to become a revivalist accepted within the more influential and prosperous towns. In many respects, the broadening of his influence was made possible because he possessed personal charm and an educated mind that could easily adapt to different societies. However, his form of revivalism never became refined or traditional and his philosophical rationale and evangelistic methods were determined by his early exposure to those western influences that he encountered in the northern townships of New York State. Thus, far from being checked by conventional means, or of maturing into an orthodox preacher, Finney's intellectual independence

from and his disdain for the eastern religious establishment was accentuated. Within a short space of time, as he continued to travel from west to east along the newly established trade routes, he became the champion of 'new measures' that were based on western revivalism and a model that was unfamiliar to and unwanted by traditional revivalists. These measures produced a defining moment in the history of American revivalism.

6.4 Charles Grandison Finney and the examination of his 'New Measures'

From the late 1830's onwards, the '*new measures*' was a term that became very largely politicized. It became synonymous with the 'benevolent empire' and of a millennialism that sought to establish the kingdom of heaven through the processes of social action or political agitation. However, in the mid 1820's this term was strictly applied to methods of evangelistic or gospel outreach. Thus, the fundamental issue that divided eastern and western revivalists was not the outworking of the sanctified life within common society but the proper or appropriate 'means' of evangelism. Nettleton and Finney were mainly concerned with the 'salvation of sinners' rather than the 'amelioration of social ills' and it was best evangelistic practice that became their bone of contention. The long-standing differences between eastern and western models of revivalism would thus finally come to a head through a crucial debate in July 1827.

Conventional wisdom, certainly amongst reformed churchmen in the eastern states, was theologically and practically opposed to those eccentric practices that had been adopted by James Davenport during the 1740's. Furthermore, for years there had been problems within the main-line denominations over the support of frontier 'camp meetings,' which encouraged liberal 'practices.' However, Finney's philosophical presuppositions placed together with his novel evangelistic practices produced a new, or hybrid, 'methodology' that threatened the Presbyterian heartland. Perhaps it could be argued that if he had not received ordination by this denomination then his impact on the historical development of American revivalism could have been minimized, if not completely obscured. Finney would then have been just one more lone voice crying out for hopeful recognition in the 'burned-over' district. Be that as it may, Presbyterian and Congregational church

leaders and their ecclesiastical courts soon became alarmed by reports of Finney's acerbic style and of his practices within New York State. Asahel Nettleton appears to have been one of the first 'old style' revivalists to have been alerted to the criticisms of these methods. In 1826, Nettleton was involved in his own evangelistic meetings at Jamaica, Long Island when he heard news of the developments that were taking place in Western, Rome and Utica.

Nettleton was notified that the peace of the '*Presbyterianist*' churches in these towns had been disturbed by the use of 'new measures.' Hardman states (1977: 154-157) that these practices included: '... a bold and harsh method of addressing the unconverted,' the policy of, '... permitting women to speak in mixed assemblies' and the '... practice of calling upon people to make some kind of physical movement in the meetings in order to assist them in securing their salvation.' These measures thus broke with an accepted standard and with conventional evangelistic practices. In addition to this, Nettleton would have been alarmed by the report that the measures were being vigorously applied and impressed in these towns, irrespective of the peace of the churches. This report would have raised the spectre of James Davenport's previous eccentricities and Nettleton was well acquainted with the disastrous consequences of that debacle from his own first-hand experiences as a young evangelist. Thus, although he was not an able apologist and suffered from poor health, Nettleton (Hardman, 1990: 157) was inexorably drawn into the role of being the champion of conventional practice.

"Churches near and dear to his own heart were in turmoil, and pastor friends were turning to him for a solution to the problem. Silence was becoming impossible. In the latter part of 1826, he decided that the time for confrontation had come. Nettleton crossed a sort of Rubicon when he left Jamaica and headed for Albany, to see for himself what was disturbing the churches in that vicinity."

When Nettleton arrived at Albany he found that the *'new measures'* had been unsettling the established pastors and their churches. In early 1827 Nettleton and Finney first met with each other, privately, on two separate occasions. Their exchanges went unrecorded and the content of what was considered or discussed is not available for assessment by historians. However, from the personal correspondence of the two men, it would appear that the major issues connected with *'new measures'* were never really focused upon or properly addressed. Historians can, therefore, only speculate as to the reason but it has been assumed that Nettleton gave up a glorious opportunity to resolve some of their personal differences or to repair the damage. Perhaps, however, the meetings were used by each man as a way of sizing-up the other. If this was the case, then it is possible that each read the other well and that they quickly realized that there was but small hope of settling their differences. Thus, controversial questions surrounding the *'new measures'* were deferred for a short time. The issues would later be addressed and fully debated at larger gatherings of pro-revivalists.

6.4.1 The New Lebanon conference and its deliberations on the 'New Measures'

Whilst he was at Western, Rome and Utica, Finney's evangelistic measures became the focus of denominational concern. By mid 1826, the Oneida Presbytery was involved in an attempt to curb or moderate his practice in the interests of maintaining unity amongst the churches of mid New York State. These initiatives, taken by the local church courts, could also possibly account for Nettleton's personal reluctance to discuss matters in full with Finney when they first met early in 1827. Finney, at this stage, was already subject to denominational scrutiny and Nettleton may well have deferred to the discipline of the presbytery as the proper means of dealing with the issue. Furthermore, on the surface, it would appear that this local presbytery was the means of providing some balance in the thinking and the practice of their young and troublesome evangelist. Finney was placed, therefore, under the conventional influence of Rev. Samuel C. Aiken who was the well-respected pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Utica and also a leading and valued member of the Oneida Presbytery. This mild form of disciplinary action seemed to offer some hope of reformation (Hardman 1990: 83), and Aiken was soon convinced that this had made an impact upon Finney's outlook:

‘When I first became acquainted with him, I think he used too frequently the word “devil” and harsh expressions’, Aiken wrote in a letter to Lyman Beecher, ‘but he is greatly reformed.’

However, Aiken’s influence on Finney did not cause him to abandon the measures that were and continued to be so controversial. In fact, his influence on these issues appears to have been reversed with Aiken soon offering his support for Finney. In practical terms, this twist of events meant that the Oneida presbyters soon began to change their opinion in favour of the ‘*new measures*.’ Oneida County thus became less disciplined and more open to those innovative practices that were rapidly spreading across the middle of New York State. In terms of a traditional revivalism, the denominational dam was effectively breached at this point in American church history and thereafter, the western model that had begun on the frontiers of Kentucky began to pose a greater and much more substantial threat to the more conventional understanding of revival that was held along the eastern seaboard. By the middle of 1827, this clash had become the focus of heated discussion and, as the debate raged, divisions within the churches began to deepen over the acceptability of Finney’s evangelistic methods. In terms of its principal protagonists, an attempt was made to bring this matter to a constructive conclusion through a number of meetings that took place at New Lebanon in July 1827. The conference aimed at promoting discussion and debate and for just and practical purposes it united the leaders of diverse strands of revivalism into equally divided groups who lobbied for, or against an acceptance of the ‘*new measures*.’

However, if the aim was commendable, in actuality it could be argued that the meetings were doomed to failure or irresolution before they began. In the first place, the aims and goals of the conference meetings had not been clearly defined and so, from the outset, it seemed to lack a constructive agenda or any clear direction. Moreover, because many of the issues had been hotly contested in religious press, and often with vitriolic aspersions cast on the integrity of revivalists on either side of the main questions, the conference at New Lebanon rapidly descended into a point-scoring exercise. Thus, the debate became confrontational and as the participants became embroiled in personal

disputes over a variety of claims and counter-claims this tended confirm the prejudice of both sides and served to seal rather than heal (Hardman, 1990: 176-179) these divisions. With the advantages of modern historical hindsight, it could be argued that the New Lebanon conference lost a unique opportunity for these leading revivalists to engage in a constructive debate and to jointly formulate positive actions on behalf of a common cause. However, they came in the spirit of contest rather than concession and in the end both sides finally seemed to settle for the fact that they had each managed to stand their ground. The extent to which this conference became frustrated is confirmed by the closing words of Lyman Beecher (Hardman, 1990: 144): '*Finney I know your plan,*' he claimed, '*and you know I do,* you mean to come into Connecticut and carry a streak of fire into Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the State line, and call out all the artillerymen, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I'll fight you there.' However, this great asseveration of Beecher's at the end of the New Lebanon conference was later proved to be a worthless boast. In the early 1830's, he eventually sided with Finney against Nettleton and began to actively facilitate his form of revivalism.

It can be argued, therefore, that the apparent stalemate or lack of resolution that resulted at New Lebanon worked in Finney's favour. The meetings were historically significant because they did little, if anything, to effectively prevent the eastern advance of western thinking and practices, or the development of the new revivalism. Traditional revivalists had tried and failed to dent or halt the '*new measures*' and in order to stop its advances a respectable draw was not enough. However, at this stage Finney only needed a draw to win and to come out of this conference with the added authority of being a westerner who had survived the scrutiny of the eastern establishment. The general perception was, therefore, that his new evangelism had stood the test and that his methods were a credible alternative or substitute to the older colonial traditions. Hardman (1990: 178) thus gives his judgment on this landmark in the evangelical development of American revivalism: '*Finney came away from this conference the victor.*'

Contrary revival traditions, therefore, came face-to-face for a vital encounter in 1827 and it was a showdown that resulted in a momentous shift in patterns of thought and practice in both the church and nation. In reality, the New Lebanon conference was little more than a badly organized debate in the wilderness and yet it had major consequences upon the evangelical history of North America. From this time the door gradually and inexorably began to close on the memory of Edwards and Whitefield. Furthermore, from this point in history a western revivalist tradition began to dominate the evangelical sub-culture of North America. From 1827, these '*new measures*' increasingly served as the '*norm*' by which revival or revivalism was understood. By the end of the nineteenth century these measures constituted a form of evangelicalism that had fully ensconced itself within the religious mainstream and had established itself as '*the means*' of reaching the urbanized class in cities and towns across the United States.

6.5 Summary

In broad terms, North America became less diverse and more integrated within the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Trade and industry between the east and west tended to unite the economic and social infrastructure of the nation. Further, the growth of the nation was clearly reflected in the greater cross-fertilization of political and social ideas and of democratic power sharing in the established states and the pioneering territories. In this chapter, therefore, I have attempted to highlight the secular trends that led to the emergence of Charles G. Finney. Further, with regard to Finney himself, I have tried to assess his meteoric rise to fame and to analyze the motives and rationale that lay behind the employment of his '*new measures*' in the 1820's.

Moreover, I have attempted to demonstrate that from an historical point of view the '*new measures*' controversy was an inevitable consequence of a division between eastern and western revivalism. Finney's evangelistic practice had been accepted and established on the frontier long before his conversion or his subsequent work as an itinerant evangelist in the northern and central parts of New York State. However, the gradual political and social integration of the nation meant his '*measures*' were

destined to become the basis of a major controversy between the factional interests of these two independent revival traditions. The uneasy peace between these competing traditions was finally confronted in the mid 1820's and, as I have tried to indicate, the gathering of revivalists at the New Lebanon conference was the turning point for the development of a single, or dominant, American revival tradition. Finney's '*measures*' carried the day and eventually became embodied in the American evangelical mainstream. However, as time would reveal, the philosophical/theological bias of his thinking was far removed from the support of that form of doctrine as expounded in the reformed confessions. It is, therefore, somewhat of a surprise that Finney's thinking was never thoroughly examined at New Lebanon. Thus, it could be argued, that those who opposed the new measures were guilty of missing an opportunity of getting to grips with the *major cause* of many of the practical issues that had become the basis of their concern.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CHARLES G. FINNEY: AN ASSESSMENT OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE AMERICAN REVIVAL TRADITION

7.1 General Remarks

In July 1827, Finney's '*new measures*' became the focus of heated debate amongst pro-revivalists at the New Lebanon Conference. However, this conference concentrated on specific practical issues, without ever really questioning the underlying philosophical or theological rationale that formed the basis of these innovative methods. Thus, when Finney left this conference, he was in the position where he had effectively managed to survive the scrutiny of traditional pro-revivalists without any real pressure being exerted on the essential bias of his thinking. Furthermore, this conference became a significant turning point in the growth of his reputation. From this time forward, he was invited by leading churchmen to conduct revivalist-style meetings. In time, the great denominational pulpits in Philadelphia and Boston welcomed him and he began to enjoy unprecedented success in the major cities of the new republic. However, by the mid 1830's the essence of Finney's thinking was increasingly exposed by the religious press and his radicalism was challenged by a number of capable theologians whose sympathies clearly belonged with the reformed position and to a traditional revivalism.

By this time, of course, Finney had effectively planted the seeds of a westernized model of revivalism into the traditional heartlands. Perhaps the delayed reaction was crucial to his success for had he been exposed to a more rigorous examination of his views in the mid 1820's he would not have gained such an exalted status. However, be that as it may, it was only at a later date that his thinking and practices began to have a serious impact upon the common mind or that any real doubts or uncertainties were reflected in the eastern churches. This delay may also account for the way in which historians have differed in their appreciation of his place in the transition to, or the unfolding of a new American revivalist tradition. For example, some have claimed (Sweet, 1965: 138) that his innovations presented a mediating position: 'The Finney type of revivalism came to occupy a position midway between the Congregational-Presbyterian revivalism on the

right and the Baptist-Methodist revivalism on the left.' In contradistinction, others have indicated that Finney's revivalism was heterodox and that it was the product of thinking that undermined accepted tradition. Thus, McLoughlin (1978: 125) states: 'Finney said, "Americans did not need to rely on the authority of English and Scottish divines of two centuries before... Calvinism was nothing but an old "fiction".' Historians are, therefore, seemingly divided or unresolved in their assessments, but it seems evident that Finney's essential thinking cannot be divorced from his '*new measures*' or from the development of American revivalism.

7.2 Finney and the rationale that governed his approach to evangelism

Reformed theology, as confirmed in the sixteenth century confessions of faith, was still the accepted standard for the American church throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century and was the basis on which leading eastern revivalists such as Asahel Nettleton had preached. George Gale, the Presbyterian minister at Adams, was also fully committed to a reformed theological position. Finney's conversion took place several years after this minister led the church through a revival. Hardman (1990: 40) thus records:

"B.B. Warfield has written... Sixty-five converts were added to the little church in Adams in 1819, at the opening of Gale's ministry there."

This revival, under George Gale, occurred after Finney first arrived at Adams in order to begin his apprenticeship at law in 1818. Indeed, this revival may have been the primary reason for his initial contact with the church. Hardman records (1990: 38) that for some years before his conversion Finney became a regular worshipper at this church and that this led to his appointment as the church choirmaster. Moreover, according to Finney's biographical account, Gale made repeated attempts to visit and counsel him prior to his conversion in 1821. Before his conversion (Hardman 1990, 38&39) Finney's own thinking had already become antipathetic and determined in its opposition towards the traditional standard of doctrine and the general practice of historic Presbyterianism. Perhaps this antipathy might have been justified if Finney had

been confronted with the effects of a logical or hyper Calvinism. However, his objections to Gale's thinking were curious given the fact that this man's preaching had been so effective during the second wave of revival that occurred at Adams in 1818. Further, Finney's biographical account reports that Gale was an active rather than a passive evangelist. Gale, therefore, was not a hyper-Calvinist whose practice was prone to logical predestinarianism and he seemed to have modelled a mode of evangelism that equally respected God's sovereignty and man's accountability. Finney's aggressive attitude to Gale's theology cannot, therefore, be attributed to an inactive or passive model of Calvinism that led to a badly performed or an evangelistically indifferent ministry. Thus, it can be argued that Gale was not and cannot be held to blame for Finney's unorthodox views. This tendency appears to have emanated from the fact that Finney was, and always remained, intellectually opposed to a reformed view of original sin and to the correlative doctrines of sovereign grace and human inability. Hardman (1990: 47&48) confirms this view:

“The idea of a fallen will, necessitated and unable to freely choose, was especially repugnant to the young attorney... Therefore, he began to think, regeneration was... merely a change in the overall preferences of the mind, brought about by the moral influence of the Holy Spirit in persuading people through interior motives, to embrace the truths of the gospel... What held them back was not that they were not of the elect, but their own obstinacy and lack of determination.”

Finney's repugnance of the doctrine of human fallenness and moral inability meant that he adopted a different rationale. This rationale minimized, or altogether dispensed with, the traditional and reformed emphasis upon God's sovereign and unconditional grace in granting (Ephesians 2: 8-10) saving faith. Finney elevated 'free will' to the level where human action became the sole or determinative factor in procuring personal salvation or in accessing the realm of redemptive blessing. Hardman (1990: 47&48) has argued that Finney's rationale was in step with that '... advanced by Pelagius, attacked by Augustine, and condemned at the Third General Council in Ephesus in the year 431

(and that was) advanced by Erasmus and attacked by Luther in 1524 and 1525.’ Thus, whether or not Finney was aware of the history of this dialectic, his basic rationale was opposed to the deliberations of early church councils and the doctrines upheld by the sixteenth century reformers. Furthermore, in his role as a revivalist, the acceptance and maturation of this rationale became the motive that led to the adoption and prosecution of his evangelistic methodology. In practical terms, therefore, Finney’s exception to original and inherited sin, his reluctance to accept the fallen will, his reduction of the work of the Holy Spirit, and a purely mechanistic view of regeneration and the gift of saving faith, substantially differed from earlier pro-revivalists. His approach to evangelism, and the promotion of his ‘new measures,’ were thus based upon a philosophical and theological rationale that was far removed from that of Edwards or Nettleton. The bias of his thinking, therefore, had a direct impact upon the application of his methods

7.3 Finney and the development of his style of evangelistic preaching

Finney’s rationale had a determinative influence on the development of his method and style of preaching. Consistent with his view that men and women had both a moral duty and the *voluntary ability* to believe and repent, Finney tended to press his hearers to the point of an immediate and decisive submission to Christ. Furthermore, he tended to use means or tactics to secure such conversions that would have contrasted sharply with the methods that were employed by traditional revivalists. For Finney, the point of decision became the primary motive and the leading purpose of his evangelistic presentation and he adopted ‘any means’ available to secure this objective. His rationale presumably led to those ‘new measures’ that related to publicly calling on people by name to change their ways, or asking people to make a *public pledge* of their commitment. Further, it could be argued that Finney’s rationale meant that his preaching became less didactic or dogmatic in comparison with that of the traditional revivalists and much more personal, persuasive and pragmatic. His preaching style, therefore, was directly related to the bias of his thinking and demonstrated his mind.

In 1824, prior to his ordination, Finney demonstrated his style of preaching to members of St Lawrence Presbytery at Adams. His performance on that occasion would become indicative of a style that he would later develop on the frontier and eventually bring into the evangelical mainstream from the 1830's. Hardman records (1990: 61) that this early examination of his abilities offended traditional sensibilities:

“He arose to preach when asked, but disdained the “high small pulpit up against the wall,” ... and chose instead to walk up and down the aisle... (Finney) claimed that he was criticized for speaking too much like a lawyer, and in a colloquial manner, using “you” to shock the audience, and that his entire approach to homiletics brought down the dignity of the pulpit.”

However, if Finney's style offended the more didactic and dogmatic approach that was common among traditional preachers, it was more acceptable amongst the communities of northern New York State. His unorthodox presentation and abrasive or declamatory style of preaching seems to have been welcomed in frontier towns which demanded the use of rugged preachers who were prepared to be aggressive and fearless in the face of openly godless thinking and lifestyles. Finney's style and method of preaching were thus well adapted to this environment and, as a result, he tended to become much more of an apologist than a capable or sound expositor.

In part, Finney's apologetic ability could be accounted for in terms of his legal training. However, it would appear that he was intellectually and temperamentally well suited to the role of an apologist and was generally in his comfort zone in the realm of presenting challenging argumentations. Indeed, his fame largely resulted from his ability to assault the mind of the godless and irreligious. He tended to become and remain an attack-minded preacher whose chief weaponry was argument rather than warmhearted pastoral appeals or powerful expositions of the scriptures. Finney, of course, cannot be criticized for using his ability or for playing up to his strengths for, after all, church history is full of examples of gifted apologists whose argumentations have proved to be an invaluable aid in the defence or progress of evangelical theology. However, he seems to have been

particularly aggressive and militant in his pulpit presentation and the recorded accounts of his style (Hardman 1990: 99) appear to indicate that he had a severe, or even warring quality as a preacher: '... throughout his life, the aspects of Finney that struck others most were his fierce countenance, and his powerful "denunciatory" style of preaching, which tore at public composure and lethargy in an attempt to wake his audiences to a revival.' Thus, it can be argued that Finney's argumentative style of preaching was developed in line with a rationale that tended to regard the preacher rather than the Holy Spirit as the decisive agent of conversion. His preaching was not characterized by a calm or measured didactic approach that acknowledged that it was the Spirit's work to apply the truth for salvation (I Thessalonians, 1: 5, 13), but with the fervency of an evangelist whose preaching was founded on a different premise.

In consequence, during the mid 1820's Finney's pulpit presentation would have been regarded as radical departure from the norm. The aggressive tendency of his preaching was in stark contrast to the conventions of the time and the urgency with which he pursued his aims as an evangelist was clearly untypical of historic revivalism.

However, Finney retained this characteristic style (Smith, 1957: 92, 93) throughout his life and, in time, his western style and method became a part of his legacy to the American revival tradition. It could be argued that others such as D. L. Moody and Billy Graham more or less adopted the same type of presentation. In contrast to Finney, these evangelists may not have been as aggressive or acerbic, yet nevertheless their preaching styles like his were less didactic or expository and far more personally challenging. Finney, therefore, was the founding father of that more confrontational pulpit presentation which later became closely connected with American revivalism. Energetic and argumentative, rather than didactic and expository, his preaching style was the antithesis of that more subdued and rigorous style that had been practised in previous revivals. In fact, it could be argued that in time Finney's western style and presentation became almost synonymous with the American concept of revival as a *mechanism* for conversion. The very term '*revival*,' thus became associated with an organised evangelistic campaign designed to produce the desired end of attaining 'conversion' by means of a (Razelle, 1987: 32): 'rational, goal-oriented process'.

7.4 Finney and the development of his evangelistic methodology

The evangelistic methods that Finney endorsed, employed and promulgated were clearly adapted to suit his intellectual bias. However, it seems probable that his 'new measures' were derived and then re-packaged as a direct result of his exposure to and contact with the wide-ranging forms of frontier religion. Finney's formative years had been spent in frontier towns that were acquainted with unorthodox religious practice and he later met with other agencies and methods during the time that he served as a young evangelist in northern New York State. It is hardly possible, however, that he was able to develop or to advance '*innovative measures*' to the point of general acceptance in the short number of years that ran from 1823-1826.

Finney thus adopted 'measures' or evangelistic practices that were already extant in the western revival tradition. More particularly, he chose those methods that complimented his philosophical/theological thinking or were best suited to expedite his own unique and particular views of evangelism. This, of course, could be viewed as being opportunistic. However, it is probably better to see his '*new measures*' in terms of assimilation rather than innovation. In 1823, when Finney arrived in upper New York State, several people and agencies were operating there that served as catalysts in the development of his 'new measures.' Hardman (1990: 55,56) records:

"It was at this time that Finney became acquainted with the Reverend Daniel Nash (1774-1831), one of the first and most resolute members of Finney's "Holy Band" ...After hearing Mr. Finney he experienced a sort of new conversion, and he went about a good deal with him. He had great fluency and fervor, prayed very loud... He often had impressions with regard to the conversion of individuals, felt assured that they would be converted."

Finney's labours as a backwoods evangelist meant that he also became acquainted with the work of the Methodists. In contrast to the Presbyterians, Methodist circuit preachers were not constrained in their evangelism by conventional modes of thinking or practice. It could be argued that Finney's contact with these itinerant circuit preachers became a

major link in the chain that led to the development of his evangelistic practice and the emergence of his 'new measures.' Broadly speaking, he would have discovered that the 'Arminianism,' which they preached was antipathetic toward reformed theology and was thus more in line with his own rationale. Furthermore, their adoption and use of the 'camp meeting' format meant that he was confronted by the operations of an alternative evangelistic methodology. Thus, while Finney rejected most of the eccentricities that he encountered in the 'burned-over' district, he was evidently disposed toward the thinking and practices of the Methodists. Indeed, Hardman (1990: 66) states, that he soon began to publicly support their form of revivalism:

"From Gouverneur Finney went to De Kalb ... He came with the approval and cooperation of the local Presbyterian pastor, but he found that the town had been riven by a feud between the Methodists and the Presbyterians several years before. The Methodists had been engaged in evangelistic meetings, and during the services some minor excesses had occurred, especially fainting, which the Methodists called "falling under the power of God." The Presbyterians disapproved of the fainting, and there had been hard feelings between the two congregations ever since. When Finney heard of this, naturally he sided with the Methodists..."The Presbyterians had been decidedly in error," he pronounced."

Finney was an ordained Presbyterian. It could be argued, therefore, that this concession to Methodist practices and his willingness to take sides against his own denominational position was a dereliction of his ordination. These and other irregularities thus provided grounds for denominational concern and led to his being disciplined by members of the Oneida Presbytery during 1826. Finney's 'new measures' evidently did not originate from the teaching or practices found in Presbyterianism. His evangelistic methods drew their inspiration (Holte, 1992: 103) from that eclectic mix of personalities and revivalist traditions that he first came across among remote western frontier towns in the years during 1823-1826. It was Daniel Nash and the Methodists who presented Finney with a methodology that was best suited to his rationale. Finney's absorption and re-packaging

of the western revival tradition thus provided another part of his legacy to the American revival tradition. The 'anxious seat', 'enquiry room', or a 'call to the platform to receive Christ', were all directly or indirectly connected to those changes in practice that he first brought into the evangelical mainstream.

7.5 Finney and his advocacy of 'new divinity' thinking and practice

Finney's intellectual antipathy to reformed theology was evident shortly after his conversion. Furthermore, as an evangelist he was willing to adopt practices that had been disavowed by many successful 'reformed revivalists'. The proposition that Finney provided a new centre-ground for pro-revivalists is, therefore, misinformed and unsupportable. Revival historians who take this view fail to appreciate that he was aggressively opposed to an older, traditional view of revival. Thus, far from attempting to maintain the centre ground, his prejudices very often led him into conflict with the views of other pro-revival activists who were bound by reformed thinking and practice. Between 1827-1851 Finney became a nationally and internationally recognized figure in the pro-revivalist movement. Coincidentally, throughout the same period of time there was a major shift in the theological outlook of a number of younger ministers amongst the established Presbyterian and Congregational churches. This occurred as a direct result of the development of the so-called 'new divinity'.

In 1822, Nathaniel William Taylor (1786-1841) had become a professor of theology at Yale. Taylor was a pro-revivalist who, under increased pressure from the challenge that was then being mounted in New England by the Unitarian polemic, attempted to remodel the doctrine of original sin. His views tended to emphasize man as a sinner 'by choice', rather than man as a sinner 'by nature.' Traditional theology, therefore, was challenged within the existing denominational mainstream and, as a result, Taylor's 'new divinity' became the basis of divisions in Presbygationalism. Some pro-revivalists, such as Lyman Beecher, welcomed the 'new divinity' while others remained resolute in their support for and defence of an '*old school*' revivalism. These largely internal differences within the traditional camp became the focus of increased tensions within the churches of the eastern States. Murray (1994: 265, 269, 271) has

recorded, that from 1828-1837, argument between the modernizers and the traditionalists steadily reached critical mass as the differences between the two groups hardened:

“From about 1828 men in the Congregational churches of New England divided over the views of Nathaniel Taylor and the New Divinity of Yale... Through rival magazines and theological seminaries, the dispute was to rage in New England for years. ... By the early 1830's, able spokesmen for the new views were to be found in a number of leading Presbyterian pulpits...During these years, church courts in the Presbyterian Church, from presbyteries to General Assemblies, were racked with charges and counter-charges on doctrinal issues.”

Finney benefited as the 'new divinity' began to make inroads in denominational circles. In fact, this theological trend had been well under way for several years before the New Lebanon Conference. Indeed, some historians (Thornbury, 1977: 178) have postulated a theory that a growing acceptance of Taylor's 'new divinity' was a reason why Finney's thinking was not examined more thoroughly in 1827. Whilst there is no direct evidence to support this theory, Finney was welcomed into the churches of a growing number of 'new divinity' ministers after New Lebanon. His acceptance by the eastern modernizers was finally sealed after Lyman Beecher invited him to Boston. Following this occasion Beecher and Finney formed a lasting friendship based upon their common commitment to the 'new divinity.'

Finney, however, was well ahead of Beecher in contesting for the thinking and practice of the '*new divinity*.' In December 1827 he was on the offensive (Hardman, 1990: 159) for the modernizers when he took the opportunity to attack traditionalists on their home ground at Wilmington, Delaware. It was on this occasion, that Finney first preached on the words: 'Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?' as a case for conversion by *voluntary* choice. This was the evangelistic corollary to Taylor's view that men were sinners by choice and not by nature. If sin was a voluntary act, then

Finney reasoned, the acceptance, gift and promise of redemption was also predicated on the same basis and involved nothing more than a choice in favour of good (a decision to serve God) as opposed to sin (the decision to serve the devil). In January 1828, he took this 'new divinity' to Philadelphia, where he conducted a revival campaign on behalf of Rev James Patterson and the staunchly traditional Presbyterian churches within the city. The campaign brought Finney into contact with a bastion of 'old school' orthodoxy and according to Hardman (1990: 163) his evangelistic practice on this occasion was clearly indicative of 'salvation by choice':

"Patterson had taught his congregation that they should not expect instantaneous conversion. At this early point in Finney's visit, Patterson had not yet understood Finney's demand that people choose for Christ immediately, because "every moment they remained impenitent, without submission, repentance, and faith, they were increasing their condemnation."

Thus, in his thinking and practices, Finney was committed to a principle of *voluntarism* in his evangelism. In his case, however, this principle went well beyond the limits of an evangelical or moderate Calvinism. Davenport (1910: 182) is indicative of a number of writers who have failed to appreciate that the true import of Finney's teaching opposed rather than moderated nineteenth century Calvinism. It was not simply that he believed that there was a moral imperative within the call to faith, or even that he held mankind to be accountable for a neglect of proffered grace. Finney championed a 'new divinity' and he expounded the view that the salvation of God was solely determined through the *voluntary* ability of his hearers to believe and repent. Thus, he promoted a different type of revivalism that opposed the traditional pattern because it was based on an alternative philosophical rationale and practical focus. Taylor's insistence that men are not sinners by nature but choice provided Finney with the incentive he needed to force change and aggressively to promote his form of revivalism in America. Finney, therefore, exploited the 'new divinity', and his encounters with 'old school' revivalists and their churches in the 1830's clearly revealed where his personal sympathies belonged.

7.6 Finney and the progression of his philosophical/theological rationale

During the 1830's, Finney's views received greater scrutiny through the religious press. The publication of his sermons and lectures along with magazine articles and editorials reflected upon the essential bias of his thinking and his sympathy for the 'new divinity' was clearly exposed. Moreover, it was apparent that his methods of evangelism differed from other pro-revivalists. Thus, the bias of his reasoning became clearer, and his views could be properly assessed and categorized. His view regarding primary doctrine can be summarized through the following headings:

- **He was Trinitarian.** Finney strongly resisted Unitarianism. He stood, therefore, with other 'new divinity' men such as Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel W. Taylor, who encountered opposition from this particular source in the 1820's. Hardman (1990: 212, 213) thus records:

“One hundred and twenty-five churches had formed themselves into the American Unitarian Association by 1825. According to Lyman Beecher ... All the elite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches. ... In December 1843 Finney ... was again distressed with the pall the Unitarians seemed to have spread over the city: I have labored in Boston in five powerful revivals of religion, and I must express it as my sincere conviction, that the greatest difficulty in the way of overcoming Unitarianism, and all the forms of error there, is the timidity of Christians and churches.”

- **He was post-millennial.** Finney viewed the Second Great Awakening as being the commencement of a millennial dawn that would fully establish God's kingdom upon earth. The growth of foreign missions and other evangelistic agencies had fuelled the expectation that the future would see greater success in the promotion and furtherance of the kingdom. Finney's millennial views were in line with the general optimism of other revivalists. In this connection, he became a patron of the 'Benevolent Empire,' which attempted to inject the

benefit of the millennial blessing into the general political process and into the realm of social action and welfare programmes. Hardman (1990: 152) states:

“All American Christians were invited to contribute, by their labors and funds, to the many-orbed activities of the “Benevolent Empire” in which Finney became so central. It was not hoped in some vague fashion, but expressly believed, that with massive efforts toward eradicating slavery, war, alcoholism, and a myriad of other human ills, the gospel would reign in human hearts and overshadow the world. “If the church will do all her duty,” Finney thundered with incredible confidence, “the millennium may come in this country in three years.”

- **He was committed to a doctrine of sin.** Finney challenged the Augustinian and Calvinistic view (Hardman, 1990: 229) that men were sinners by nature and that they were unable to ‘save themselves.’ Nevertheless, however, he remained firm in his support for the biblical teaching of original sin. Further, his understanding of sin as an offence against God’s law had a central place within his evangelistic preaching. Finney’s view of sin meant that he aggressively pressed the claims of biblical law on the conscience of his hearers. Thus, irrespective of his definition of sin, he was an evangelist who probed at the moral laxity or indifference of his audiences. Perhaps, therefore, it could be claimed that the basis of this approach was not wholly dissimilar to that of the puritans. Bunyan and his contemporaries had recognized the evangelistic necessity for bringing a conviction of sin through close application of the law of the Lord. The effect of the moral imperative in Finney’s preaching is attested to by anecdotes that reveal that he was reputed to be a convincing and convicting evangelist. This was clearly illustrated by an event that occurred during the years that he served as the president at Oberlin College, Ohio.

Hardman (1990: 354) records:

“On one occasion he preached to a large audience on the theme, “the signs of a seared conscience.” At one point he stated: Just consider the condition in which I found myself yesterday. I engaged a number of men to make the garden and put in my crops; but when I went to look for my farming tools, I could not find them. Brother Mahan borrowed my plough some time ago, and has forgotten to bring it back. Brother Morgan has borrowed my harrow, and I presume has it still. Brother Beecher has my spade and my hoe, and so my tools were all scattered. Where many of them are, no man knows. I appeal to you, how can society exist when such a simple duty as that of returning borrowed tools ceases to rest as a burden on the conscience... The effects of this sermon on Oberlin were amazing... Throughout the (next) day, farming tools came in from all quarters, and many of them Finney had never owned and never heard of previously.”

However, the effects that were produced by Finney’s preaching on this occasion must be viewed critically. Did the return of these farm tools classically represent (Luke, 15: 11-24; 18: 9-14) repentance toward God? Or did it merely shame the Oberlin community into acting in a way that temporarily moved them to uphold their civic duty? Was this the result of ‘saving grace’ or ‘common grace’? Were the returned tools illustrative of ‘good works’ produced by inward grace and the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit? Reformed revivalists such as Edwards and Nettleton could not have provided an easy answer to each of these challenging questions. Their position on man as a ‘sinner by nature’ would have accepted both possibilities. However, in Finney’s mind, men were only ‘sinners by choice’ and so *sins* and *obedience’s* were the ‘free’, ‘voluntary’, and ‘willing’ response to appropriate means. Thus, in essence, when these tools were returned this represented a ‘moral choice’ to do right by the offenders and in his view this was tantamount to conversion.

- **He was committed to a modern view of Christ's death.** Finney's thinking on sin and conversion meant that he developed an unorthodox view of the death of Christ. He claimed that Christ's death had a general moral force as opposed to a specific saving purpose. This was in contrast to the reformed view that held that Christ's death had secured a 'penal satisfaction for sin' for the elect by means of a 'propitiatory sacrifice' of atonement.

The atoning, propitiatory death of Christ is presented within the New Testament scriptures. Romans, 3: 23-26 and I John, 2: 1&2 provide ample proof of the fact that the apostles were committed to this doctrine. Indeed, in Paul's Roman letter it is embodied in an argument for justification by faith through grace as opposed to righteousness through a 'works based' religion. Further, the essential purpose or meaning of the cross of Christ was a vital element in the return to evangelical doctrine that took place during the Reformation in Europe. Thus, the apostolic teaching regarding the purpose of the death Christ's became a part of that 'form of doctrine' that was exported by the Pilgrim Fathers and thereafter sustained by their spiritual sons. Later, Wesleyan Methodists took exception to the reformed emphasis on 'limited atonement' and followed the teaching of Jacobus Arminius and his 'remonstrants' in advocating the universality of the atoning, propitiatory sacrifice of Christ for sin. However, they still maintained that Christ's death was mediatorial and that by an act of substitution he therefore provided a satisfaction for the penalty of sin by becoming *the* sin bearer. Thus, prior to the 1830's, most traditional revivalists would have understood the death of Christ in terms of the *atonement*. However, Finney claimed that Christ died as an exemplar rather than as a sin bearer. Hardman (1990: 386) states, that he: '... rejected both the Classical and Satisfaction theories'. Finney regarded the death of Christ as being morally influential rather than savingly efficient and this had a significant bearing on the presentation of his evangelistic message. Perhaps the most effective criticism of his thinking came from the pen of Charles Hodge. Hodge, who served the faculty at Princeton, argued (Hardman, 1990: 237, 238) that Finney's revivalism was at fault at this point and claimed

that his emphasis failed to connect his audience with the mediatorial suffering of Christ.

“Men are told that they have hitherto chosen the world, all they have to do is choose God; that they have had it as their purpose to gain the things of this life, they must now change their purpose, and serve God... Christ and his atonement are kept out of view... The tendency of this defect, as far as it extends, is fatal to religion and the souls of men.”

Finney's view of Christ's death, therefore, was unconnected with the thinking of other revivalists, both Methodists and reformed, who were active throughout the Second Great Awakening. His views seem to have anticipated, and to have been more in line with, those of theological liberalism. Finney must have been one of the first to espouse the so-called '*moral influence theory*' that came into vogue in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This view was indicative of the trend of his thinking and his concept of evangelism.

- **He was committed to perfectionism and entire sanctification.** During the mid 1830's, Finney was introduced to a strain of *perfectionist* thinking that he would later adopt and incorporate into his thinking. Thus, he began to teach that, under the right influence or stimulus, it was entirely possible for men to achieve moral perfection. It could be argued that this was an inevitable corollary of his general philosophy and rational prejudice. For example, as a post-millennialist he would have entertained the view that the world would become progressively better as a result of the increased benevolence of men. Furthermore, if in his view personal and sanctified renewal was realised by 'human choices', rather than by 'divine grace', then there had to be the strong possibility of so 'choosing' to reach a state of moral perfection. Finally, the influence of the moral perfections of Christ on the cross must surely have provided a more than sufficient reason for men to choose to attain perfection.

Thus, by progression, Finney's views of perfection were the logical outcome of his basic philosophical rationale. Moreover, in his view, the scripture seemed to confirm the fact that this was a sustainable emphasis, and thus (Hardman, 1990: 333) he sought to support his argument:

“The command in the text, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect,” is given under the gospel ... If we examine the Bible, he declared, throughout “you will find that it is everywhere just as plainly taught that God wills the sanctification of Christians... And not only that, but the perfect sanctification of believers is the express object for which the Holy Spirit is promised to them.”

However, Finney's use of the scriptures as a justification for his perfectionism was, arguably, predicated on a failure to distinguish between the sanctification and the glorification of a believer. The apostolic teaching, urged *the church* to confess sin (1 John, 1: 9), resist sin (Hebrews 12 1-4), and to positively grow in sanctified grace (1 Peter, 1: 14-16) by a constant and daily subjugation of indwelling sin through the knowledge of God. This process, however, was a progressive one and the apostolic church also was encouraged to look forward (1 Peter, 1: 13) in anticipation to its perfection and the full realization of God's promise of their ultimate perfection and glorification. Thus Finney was prone, perhaps, to an over-realized eschatology, and his views of sanctification failed to appreciate the nature, power, or reign of sin. Thus, Professor B.B. Warfield (Hardman, 1990: 333, 334) later issued a critique of his perfectionist teaching:

“The whole point at issue concerns the process by which the believer is made perfect; or perhaps we would better *say*, whether it is by a process that he is made perfect... “If it is not a practicable duty to be perfectly holy in this world, then it will follow that the devil has so completely accomplished his design of corrupting mankind, that Jesus Christ is at fault, and

has no way to sanctify His people but by taking them out of the world.” “If perfect sanctification is not attainable in this world, it must be either from a want of motives in the Gospel, or a want of sufficient power in the Spirit of God.” It would be a poor reader indeed who did not perceive at once that such dilemmas could be applied equally to every evil with which man is afflicted—disease, death, the uncompleted salvation of the world... If freedom from death is not attainable in this world, then it must be due to a want of sufficient power in the Spirit of God... There have been people who reasoned thus: the point of interest now is, that it was not otherwise that Finney reasoned – and that accounts for many things besides his perfectionism. It is a simple matter of fact that the effects of redemption, in the individual and in the world at large, are realized, not all at once, but through a long process: and that their complete enjoyment lies “only at the end”.

7.7 Finney and his commitment to the work of revival

The view that revival was, or had been, the best means of producing church growth was commonplace in the 1820's. This decade, after all, followed an unparalleled outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon North America. For much, if not all his lifetime, Finney himself had been exposed to the powerful effect of this period of unusual prosperity in the general life and witness of the American churches. Thus, when he met with other pro-revivalists at the New Lebanon Conference there was a broad agreement that revivals were the best possible means of advancing the kingdom of God. Hardman (1990: 136) records that on this occasion, as committed revivalists, they commonly and unanimously agreed with the adoption of the following resolution:

“That revivals of true religion are the work of God's Spirit, by which, in a comparatively short space of time, many persons are convinced of sin, and brought to the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

From 1820-1860, Finney conducted a number of revival meetings or evangelistic styled campaigns. It could be argued that his first evangelistic campaigns reached their zenith (Hardman, 1990: 192-209) during the years 1830-31. However, from the late 1820's his unorthodox thinking and aggressive use of his '*new measures*' proved to be divisive. This was, perhaps, more of the case during 1827-1831, when the full implications of his thinking and practices were less well known and he was welcomed indiscriminately and uncritically into 'old school' pulpits. Such pulpits, of course, were familiar with revival but the modernity of Finney's thinking and revivalist techniques evidently caused much concern and, as the evidence shows, he served to fracture (Murray, 1990: 263, 264) the established unity of many of these churches:

“The issue of the new measures divided many congregations. Beman's large church at Troy was split. So was the Bowery Presbyterian Church in New York City, where 'Finneyism was the talismanic rallying-word' between the two parties... .. Finney was himself often responsible for the division of congregations, not only because of his general criticism of ministers, but because of the very nature of his teaching on revival.”

Finney's teaching on revival contrasted with the traditional view or pattern of Edward's and Nettleton. In line with the tenor of his thinking, 'revivals' could be appropriated by self-choice and human endeavour. In short, they were '*worked up*' and not '*sent down*.' The effects of Finney's forays into eastern cities and churches soon provoked a response from 'old school' revivalists. Dr. W. B. Sprague provided a defence for an 'old school' revivalism through a series of lectures to his church members that were later published by popular demand in 1832. Sprague's lectures are historically significant because they represent one of the first apologetic works for the reformed view of revival and because they were given initially to a congregation at Albany, New York State, who were at the geographical centre of Finney's early campaigns. It is notable that within the preface of his '*Lectures on Revivals*' Sprague (1978: xiii, xiv, xv) indicated the motivation and the primary purpose behind his publication of this apologia:

“The grand object ...has been to vindicate and advance the cause of *genuine* revivals of religion... In the hope that the Lectures may prove a seasonable offering to the American church, at an interesting and critical period, the author has concluded to send them forth through the press...If the volume should, by the blessing of God, be instrumental, even in a humble degree, of promoting such revivals as those for which Edwards, and Dwight, and Nettleton, and a host of others have counted it an honor to labor.”

In 1835, Finney responded in kind to Sprague’s publication through the publication of a similar set of lectures. Presented to members of a church in New York City the contents of these lectures were clearly at variance with the traditional views that had earlier been defended and expounded by Sprague. The lectures were later published by the religious press and became known as ‘*Revivals of Religion*’. Finney appealed to his experience in (1928: xiv, xv) as a justification for this counter punch:

“As it has pleased the Head of the Church to give me some experience in revivals of religion, I thought it possible, that, while I was doing the work of a Pastor in my own Church, I might, in this way, be of some little service to the Churches abroad... I have felt obliged to say some things that I fear will not, in all instances, be received as kindly as they were *intended*. But whatever may be the result of saying the truth as it respects *some*, I have great reason to believe that the great body of *praying* people will receive and be benefited by what I have said.”

Thus, from the mid 1830’s, the publications of two sets of lectures on ‘revivals’ were in circulation across North America. For the next twenty-five years the differences between Sprague and Finney’s understanding of revival would continue to divide and to separate members of the pro-revivalist movement. However, throughout this pre-civil war period, it is clear that Finney was not deflected from his prior commitment to revivalism and that he remained primarily an evangelist rather a social reformer.

Following the civil war he would witness the greatest acceptance success of his particular views.

7.8 Summary

Charles G. Finney was a celebrated evangelist and a major figure in the development of revivalism in North America. From the mid nineteenth century the evangelistic practice that he espoused became increasingly popular. Following the end of the American Civil War, his method would also become a blueprint for the evangelization of the urbanized population of the United States. In this sense, he was the founding father of that form of evangelism that was later adopted by other American evangelists such as D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday and Dr. Billy Graham.

Under this chapter heading, therefore, I have attempted to assess the philosophical basis on which Finney constructed his practices and also to consider the relative merits of his thinking and practice in comparison with apostolic teaching and a reformed theological tradition. Finney's contribution, I have maintained, was founded on his ideological and practical antipathy to *any* form of Calvinism. Thus, in contrast to the view that he was a moderate evangelical, I have aimed to show that his thinking and practice was governed by an entirely different tendency from that which belonged to other pro-revivalists in the First and Second Great Awakenings in America. Further, I have attempted to show that he actively supported new trends of thinking that were opposed to the old standards and that he adopted and utilized those evangelistic methods that were best suited to his own rational prejudice. In time, therefore, the methods supported by Edwards, Nettleton and Whitefield were displaced and this led, eventually, to a radically new concept of revival and revivalism in North America. However, I have also endeavoured to stress Finney's personal commitment to the pro-revivalist cause. Thus, while he has clearly divided the opinions of subsequent theologians and church historians, there can be no question that he made a significant impact on the development of American revivalism. He remained an ardent revivalist and in terms of a *revival theology* it could be argued that his lasting legacy has been to force the church to consider, and explore, the

relationship that exists between the correct use and appropriation of ordained *'means,'* and the achievement of their *'ends'*.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CHARLES. G. FINNEY AND W.B. SPRAGUE AND THE BEARING OF COVENANTAL PROMISE ON REVIVAL

8.1 General Remarks

By the late 1820's 'old school' and 'new school' thinking and practices divided the pro-revivalist movement. Revivalists, who had once been close friends and colleagues, therefore, began to rally in the defence and support of agencies that supported their particular line. From 1829-1837, the debate over opposing views of revivals intensified and this period was marked by the emergence of a variety of publications that had an important bearing on the history of American evangelicalism. With hindsight, it could be argued that there were two publications that best represented and expounded the inherent differences that existed between the revivalists of the 'old school' and 'new school' and their alternative views on the nature and promotion of revivals.

In 1832, Dr. W.B. Sprague, who held to 'old school' views, published his: *Lectures on Reviva*'. In 1815, Sprague had graduated from Yale. Following post-graduate studies at the Princeton Seminary he was then licenced to preach and, by the time of publication of his lectures, he was pastoring the Presbyterian congregation at Albany, New York State. His published work comprised nine lectures that were originally delivered to his church members and an appended compilation of twenty letters that had been solicited from sympathetic revivalists in order both to illustrate and support his traditional 'old school' views. Later re-published in Britain (Sprague, 1978: Front Cover Flyleaf), this work was commended by the following remarks:

"This reprint is reproduced from the personal copy of Charles Simeon, who wrote on the flyleaf: "A most valuable book. I recommend my Executor to keep it, as there are few, if any, others in this kingdom. I love the good sense of Dr. Sprague."

During 1834-35, Charles G. Finney also presented a series of popular lectures that were based on the subject of revival. These lectures were given to 'new school' sympathizers in New York City who, by this time, had formed themselves into a regular congregation that gathered in Chatham Street. Following their delivery, Finney received international fame and recognition through the publication and sale of his twenty-two lectures, which had first been recorded, edited and journalized by Joshua Leavitt on behalf of the '*New York Evangelist*.' Hardman (1990:279) records:

"With the series concluded in the spring, (1835) it was immediately rushed into book form. Twelve thousand copies were sold soon after, under the title *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, and it was translated into French and Welsh. One publisher in London printed eighty thousand copies."

Historically, both publications provide a vital insight into the thinking of pro-revivalists at this critical period. Furthermore, through Sprague the moderate 'old school' minister and in Finney the radical 'new school' evangelist, they clearly indicate the tensions that began to surface between these opposition parties. Fundamentally, this tension revolved around the appropriation of covenantal promises and their specific relationship with and bearing upon the promotion of revivals within the church. It could be argued, therefore, that the differences that emerged between the pro-revivalists were directly connected to their interpretation of scripture.

8.2 Sprague and Finney and a comparison of their views on revival

Sprague and Finney's lectures contain a certain number of similarities in connection to their understanding of revival. In fact, it could be argued that the unity of their thinking on some points provides a striking commentary on the level of common ground among revivalists of this period. Sprague and Finney, as contemporaries, were both committed to the following points:

- *Both of them were committed to post-millennialism.* The advance and success of the Second Great Awakening meant that both men entertained the prospects of a brighter future for the gospel at home and abroad. Their lectures, therefore, were marked by the conviction that this period of revival corresponded with a number of optimistic prophecies contained within the scriptures. Sprague (1978: 32) stated:

“If you read the prophetic parts of scripture attentively, you cannot, I think, but be struck with the evidence that, as the millennial day approaches, the operations of divine grace are to be increasingly rapid and powerful... and they not only justify the belief that these glorious scenes which we see passing really are of divine origin, as they claim to be, but that similar scenes still more glorious, still more wonderful, are to be expected, as the Messiah travels in the greatness of his strength towards a universal triumph.”

Finney (1928: 3) also exhibited a similar postmillennial confidence and this was supported by his lectures:

“As the millennium advances, it is probable that these periodical excitements will be unknown... the entire Church will be in a state of habitual and steady obedience to God. Children will be trained up in the way they should go, and there will be no such torrents of worldliness, and fashion, and covetousness, to bear away the piety of the Church, as soon as the excitement of a revival is withdrawn”.

- *Both of them were committed to the promotion of revivals.* Revival was regarded as *the* chief means by which the church would advance toward the fulfilment of her primary mission. Their combined lectures, therefore, were based on the joint conviction that revivals were both a scriptural and necessary means of securing the kingdom of God.

Sprague (1978: 29, 31, 35) thus stated:

“Now we claim for revivals... that there is nothing in the general spirit of the Bible that is unfavorable to them ... If you go back to the Jewish dispensation, you will find this remark strikingly verified in the reigns of David and Solomon, of Asa and Jehosaphat, of Hezekiah and Josiah... And passing from the records of inspiration, we find that revivals have existed, with a greater or less degree of power, especially in the later periods of the Christian church... without these signal effusions of the Holy Spirit, she has barely been sustained... the brightest periods of her history have been those, in which they have prevailed with the greatest power.”

Finney (1928: 3) was also convinced from scripture that periodic revivals were responsible for the advance of the church:

“Look back at the history of the Jews, and you will see that God used to maintain religion among them by special occasions, when there would be a great excitement, and people would turn to the Lord... The state of the world is still such, and probably will be until the millennium is fully come, that religion must be mainly promoted by means of revivals... It is altogether improbable that religion will ever make progress among *heathen* nations except through the influence of revivals.”

- *Both of them were committed to the application, or use, of 'scriptural means' in revivals.* Revival according to their joint definition was qualified and connected with the renewed appropriation of apostolic practice in evangelism and practical church growth. Their lectures placed a strong emphasis on preaching and prayer and they both emphasized the need for discernment or discrimination in dealing with seekers and finders. Thus, both Sprague and Finney were able to delineate the '*means*' of a true revival.

Sprague (1978: 7,8,18) thus stated:

“It is a revival of scriptural knowledge; of vital piety; of practical obedience... The first step usually is an *increase of zeal and devotedness on the part of God's people*... where there is an attention to religion excited by the plain and faithful preaching of God's truth in all its length and breadth, and by the use of those simple honest means which God's word either directly prescribes or fairly sanctions, we cannot reasonably doubt that here is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.”

Finney (1928: 5) entertained the view that revivals were directly connected to prescribed means:

“The means which God has enjoined for the production of a revival, doubtless have a natural tendency to produce a revival. Otherwise God would not have enjoined them. But means will not produce a revival, we all know, without the blessing of God. No more will grain, when it is sown, produce a crop without the blessing of God... A revival is as naturally a result of the right use of means as a crop is of the right use of its appropriate means.”

Thus, it is evident that Sprague and Finney were commonly agreed on certain points in their understanding of revival. Perhaps this is not surprising because, as contemporary revivalists, similar strains of thinking and practice would have affected the general views of both men. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that the unity in their thinking was the direct result of the fact that they *were both* opposed to *high Calvinism*. Sprague and his contributors represented a view of revival that belonged to the party of evangelical, or low Calvinists. Thus, whilst he would have been opposed to placing too much weight on human ability, he nevertheless accepted the biblical injunction to make the ‘free offer’ of the gospel to all mankind. For this reason there was possibly much in

Finney's lectures that might have resonated with Sprague and with those who possessed an evangelistic fervour based on low Calvinistic convictions.

However, within the common strands there were clearly points of diversity and tension in the views of Sprague and Finney. Perhaps the contrast between them is illustrated by the general tenor of their lectures that reveal telling differences in the content, emphasis and style of the two men. Sprague's lectures were more *descriptive*. In his nine lectures (his published material without the appended letters was little more than half the length of Finney's) he tended to focus on the effect produced, rather than the means employed in a work of revival. In terms of promoting revivals he was inclined to be vague and his only instructive lecture was characteristically entitled: *General means of producing and promoting revivals*. In print, these lectures had *sermonic* form. Furthermore, his lectures tended to be highly didactic and it could be claimed that they lacked appeal because of a failure to support his arguments by an apt use of personal testimonies and illustrations drawn from his experience. However, this failure was mitigated through the letters that were appended to the publication of his lectures and which provided ample testimonies to illustrate his theological position.

By comparison, Finney's lectures were highly *prescriptive*. His twenty-two lectures not only provided a scriptural case for revival, but also provided specific instructions on the means needed for its promotion. In contrast to Sprague, his lectures were packed full of practical 'how to' points, reflected in the published headings: *How to preach the Gospel; Measures to promote Revivals; Directions to Sinners; Instructions to Converts*. Thus, with qualification, it could be argued that Finney's lectures attempted to provide a formula for revival. In print, his lectures were less sermonic and appeared in the form of a polished literary style. They were lucid, well structured and in contrast with Sprague, Finney's use of illustrations and his employment of personal testimonies and colloquial language clearly helped to provide an easily digestible and readable presentation of his essential views. Furthermore, Finney's lectures were transcribed, edited and placed into circulation by a leading religious publisher in New York City.

This exposure meant that he had a clear advantage over Sprague in reaching a wider readership and of impressing himself on America and the outside world.

Materially, however, the issues of presentation and style could not disguise the fact that Sprague and Finney disagreed over the nature of revival and, the successes or otherwise of their publications had little if any bearing on the issue that drove them both into the lecture room. Their differences as revivalists centred upon the question of 'agency' and the question concerning the level, or reciprocal extent of human and divine cooperation in producing a revival. It was the strength of their views on this point that under-girded their approach to the promotion of revivals. For Sprague, revival was predicated on the reformed *ordo salutis*. His understanding of revival, therefore, was generally consistent with the orthodox view that regarded the effectual calling of an elect sinner - in terms of regeneration, conversion and sanctification- as attributable '*a priori*' to the heaven-sent operations of the Holy Spirit. In his lectures, therefore, Sprague was careful to maintain the theological position that the initiation and the results of revival were connected with divine blessing and power. Further, these lectures make it abundantly clear that Sprague presented God's agency in revival blessings as a *sovereign and unconditional agency*. The blessing itself might be helped or hindered by human co-operation but, in essence, it was given without conditions and it resulted from the free, elective and self-determined decision of a purposeful and sovereign God. Thus God was the prime mover in revivals (Sprague, 1978: 91,105) and such occurrences, were precipitated by the prior agency of his divine power:

“Hear the Spirit's own testimony on this subject... “A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. ... In every revival we are distinctly to recognize the *sovereignty of God*. As this is displayed in the influence by which a single soul is converted, it certainly is not less manifest in those copious showers by which hundreds are converted. He who causes it to rain on one city and not on another, directs the motions of those

clouds in the spiritual world from which descend the blessings of reviving and quickening grace.”

In contradistinction, Finney was antithetical to the reformed view that conversion was a divine operation, produced through the regenerative power and prior agency of God the Holy Spirit. His view on conversion also meant that he re-defined the causal and effectual ‘means’ of revival. Thus, fundamentally, Finney’s re-definition shifted the axis firmly towards human agency. His lectures presented a view of revival that was to challenge the free, prior and sovereign agency of God. He refused to accept that revival was dependent *a priori* on a divine intervention, or that it was in any way a miraculous outworking of divine beneficence in the church. Revival was nothing more or less than the result of human obedience to a set of prescribed conditions. Finney thus (1928: 4, 5) claimed:

“A revival is not a miracle according to another definition of the term “miracle” - something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the *right exercise* of the powers of nature. It is just that and nothing else...3. A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of constituted means-as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means.”

Finney’s definition of revival was the corollary of his philosophical rationale and he was clearly bound by a different or reduced view of the supernaturalism that formed the reformed *ordo salutis*. He could therefore offer the following remarks in his twelfth (1928: 220) lecture entitled, How to Preach the Gospel: *‘The Spirit of God, by the truth influences the sinner to change, and in this sense is the efficient Cause of the change. But the sinner actually changes, and is therefore himself, in the most proper sense, the author of the change.* This statement clearly reveals the fundamental disparity between Sprague and Finney and their contrasting views concerning the nature of conversion and the promotion of revival. It was this difference that became to the root cause of

division and contention amongst the members of the pro-revivalist movement in America during the 1830's.

8.3 Sprague and Finney and appeals to scripture for their view of revival

In presenting their case for revivals, Sprague and Finney both appealed to the scriptures for support. This, of course, revealed a further element of convergence within both sets of lectures. Both men argued the case for revivals from the basis of a commonly shared commitment to biblical authority. Sprague's nine lectures were based on the exposition and application of the following texts of the Bible.

- **One:** Isaiah, 45 verse 8. **Two:** Acts 2, verse 13. **Three:** 1 Corinthians, 9 verse 12. **Four:** Habakkuk, 3 verse 2. **Five:** Philippians, 1 verse 27. **Six:** Acts, 3 verse 19. **Seven:** 2 Corinthians, 13 verse 5. **Eight:** Romans 14, verse 16. **Nine:** Revelation, 5 verse 13.

Sprague's lectures, therefore, were weighted in favour of the exposition and application of key texts found in the New Testament. Seven of the nine lectures, were based upon a consideration of the Apostles teaching from Acts to Revelation. Only two texts are used or expounded upon from prophetic portions of the Old Testament. However, it could be argued that lectures one: *Nature of Revival* and four: *Divine Agency in Revivals* set them apart as being the most significant in his argument for and his understanding of revival. Finney's twenty-two lectures were based upon the exposition and application of the following texts of the Bible.

- **One:** Habakkuk, 3 verse 2. **Two:** Psalm, 85 verse 6. **Three:** Hosea, 10 verse 12. **Four:** James, 5 verse 16. **Five:** Mark, 11 verse 24. **Six:** Romans, 8 verses 26, 27. **Seven:** Ephesians, 5 verse 18. **Eight:** Matthew 18, verse 19. **Nine:** Isaiah, 43 verse 10. **Ten, Eleven and Twelve:** Proverbs, 11 verse 30. **Thirteen:** Exodus, 17 verses 11-13. **Fourteen:** Acts, 16 verses 20, 21. **Fifteen:** Nehemiah, 6 verse 3. **Sixteen:** Matthew, 18 verse 19. **Seventeen:** Job, 21 verse 34. **Eighteen:** Acts, 16 verse 30. **Nineteen and Twenty:** John, 21 verse 15. **Twenty-one:** Proverbs, 14 verse 14. **Twenty-two:** 2 Peter, 3 verse 18.

Proportionately, therefore, Finney's lectures reflected a better balance in the use that he made of the scriptures. In fact, as the basis of his arguments for revival he employed an equal use of eleven texts from the Old and New Testaments. However, his definition of revival was more clearly dependent upon his exposition, and application of the law and the prophets rather than Christ and the Apostles. Finney expounded on Habakkuk, 3: 2, Psalm, 85: 6 and Hosea, 10: 12, in his attempt to expound on the following fundamental points in turn: 1. *What a Revival of Religion is.* 2. *When a Revival is to be expected.* 3. *How to promote a Revival.*

Thus, in terms of providing their definitions of a revival, both Sprague and Finney were largely dependent on the Old Testament. In fact, it can be argued that in both cases their use of New Testament texts as an *argument for revivals* supplemented these definitions. This over reliance on the Old Testament for their definition of revivals inevitably raises some questions. Did Sprague and Finney correctly handle the scriptures on this subject? Did their interpretation of the law and the prophets bear the weight of a sound exegesis? Were they predisposed to see and to call for the promotion of revivals on the basis of scriptures, or conditional promises that belonged to temporary covenantal arrangements that preceded the advent of Christ? For example, can God's conditional promises given to Israel (2 Chronicles, 7: 14) following Solomon's prayer of dedication at the temple be legitimately applied as a basis for seeking a modern day *revival blessing*? It could be argued that this blessing belonged within the realm of a temporary promise given by God to *Israel*. Furthermore, this was a conditional promise that had more to do with the nation's preservation from war, famine or material impoverishment rather than the revival of its spiritual health and prosperity. Were Sprague and Finney correct in the general assumptions or interpretations that they placed on the covenanted promises that are found within the Old Testament scriptures? Or was their exegesis and application of these scripture texts an interpolation on their original meaning, purpose and intention as given by God in a pre-gospel old covenant context? These are crucial questions because both men defined their views of revival from selective use of Old Testament prophecy rather than from Christ and his Apostles.

8.3.1 Sprague and Finney and their respective understanding of Habakkuk, 3: 2.

Habakkuk, 3: 2 was the only text of scripture jointly expounded by Sprague and Finney in their lectures. Moreover, it was a crucial source because both men relied heavily on their exposition and application of this text for their definitions of revivals of religion. In its historical context, Habakkuk offered his prophecy to the people of Judah around the year 615 BC. The prophet settled his attentions on the plight of the righteous within a society that had become increasingly irreligious and immoral, and on a judicial system that was corrupt and self-serving. Thus, on behalf of the godly, he began to pray and intercede with heaven through two complaints (Habakkuk, 1: 2-4, 12-17) offered in connection with his role as a servant of the Lord. In reply, the Lord informs the prophet (Habakkuk, 1: 5-11) that a ruthless and vicious military power would descend on Judah. However, regardless of this temporary judgment, the godly were assured of the fact that this terrifying prospect would not impair the sovereign purpose, or redemptive promises of God (Habakkuk, 2: 2-3). Furthermore, Babylon, as the instrument chosen for Judah's chastening would later become the focus of a *just and terrible* retribution from the hand of the Lord. In the wake of these assurances, the prophet then offered a prayer, or song of worship (Habakkuk, 3: 1-19). Laetsch (1956: 342) comments:

“This prophetic psalm is cast in the form of a *Shigyonoth* (Gr. N.). It depicts the battle of conflicting emotions going on within himself while contending (ch. 2:1) with God. Indignation at the wickedness of Judah (1:2-4), horror at God's threatened punishment (1:5-12) doubts as to God's justice and wisdom (1:13-17), patient waiting (2:1), joy at salvation promised (2:2-20), fear at God's majesty (3:2a, 16) adoration of God's glory (3:3f), joy over salvation (3:8, 13, 18), deep disappointment at the delay of God's help (3:16c), jubilant confidence in the Lord, his Strength, and in God's final victory (3:19) - such were the deep and violent emotions rolling over the prophet like surging waves and billows, tossing him to and fro, until he finally found peace, contentment, joy in Jehovah.”

Habakkuk's prophecy, therefore, was grounded in the covenantal relationship that then operated between the Lord and the tribes of Israel. Thus, in the sixth century BC he was called upon to warn people of imminent judgment and to foretell the post-exilic mercies that would become the lot of the faithful in Judah. In this regard, Habakkuk's assurance or prophetic promise was based on the future *Messiah*. The historical context, therefore, must be a determinative factor in the correct exegesis, or interpretation of the word that translates into English as (Habakkuk, 3: 2): 'revive' or 'renew'. Habakkuk in chapter three supports the idea that he was expecting the revival, renewal or re-activation of powerful miraculous deeds in Israel. The focus was on the renewal of redemptive acts rather than pneumatical blessing, and he looked forward to the re-introduction of those providential works of power that formerly had taken place in Israel. However, when Sprague and Finney expounded on 'revive' or 'renew' from this text little, if any attempt, was made by either of them to examine the original use of this word. In fact, Finney's explanation (1928: 1) of the text completely failed to present any justifiable reason for his definition of revival, or indeed for the overall subject matter and practical applications contained within his first lecture:

"Looking at the judgments which were to speedily to come upon his nation, the soul of the prophet was wrought up to an agony, and he cried out in his distress: "O Lord, revive Thy work." As if he had said: " O Lord, grant that Thy judgments may not make Israel desolate. In the midst of these awful years let the judgments of God be made the means of reviving religion among us. In wrath remember mercy." *Religion is a work of man*. It is something for man to do."

Thus, in the light of Finney's use of the text, a vital question needs to be considered and answered. Did Habakkuk use the word 'revive' or 'renew' to convey the same sense or meaning as Finney? Or, did Finney manipulate the text and thereby manufacture a view of revival unsupported by this scripture? Sprague also failed to deal with the contextual or historical consideration of the words 'revive' or 'renew.' Thus, in the opening section of his fourth lecture, he made a similar assumption (Sprague, 1978: 90, 91) on the basic meaning of the text.

“Something however may be known on this subject from God’s word; ... The passage which I have read to you, taken from the prayer of Habakkuk, may be a fit introduction to this subject; for though the petition is made up of five words-“ O Lord, revive thy work”-it recognises the fact of God’s agency in a revival in two different ways:- it declares that the work is God’s; and that it is the direct expression of a desire that *he* would revive it.”

It should be noted, that Sprague qualified this assumption by providing the caveat: ‘*may be a fit introduction to this subject*’. However, like Finney, his fourth lecture appears to have overlooked the original meaning of Habakkuk’s petitions and he failed to establish a meaningful correlation between this prophecy and his definition of revival. It could be argued, therefore, that his assumption on the meaning of this text took precedence over the balanced exegesis, or application of Habakkuk 3: 2. Sprague and Finney’s handling of Habakkuk may not have been intentionally dishonest, but it does highlight the fact that scripture should be allowed, a priori, to speak to the work of the Spirit and not the other way round.

In order to present a more convincing argument in favour of revivals it might have been better, therefore, if both Sprague and Finney had extrapolated rather than assumed their *definitions of revival* from Habakkuk. Perhaps it could be argued, that their failure to do this was due to the error of allowing their *experience* of revivals to colour and prejudice their respective interpretations of scripture. Historically, however, such prejudices have generally been counter-productive because they have ultimately failed to convince or to satisfy the discrimination of those who will thoroughly examine the original meaning or purpose of scripture. Furthermore, if a definition cannot stand the trial of sound or solid exegesis, there may be a tendency to dismiss other valid and supportable points made in favour or defence of the basic thesis and the general argument. Thus a failure to exegete the text of scripture correctly has been a drawback for the acceptance and establishment of every branch of evangelical theology.

8.3.2 Sprague and Finney and their appeals to other parts of the law and the prophets

Sprague also argued for revival on the basis of Isaiah 45, verse 8. The historical context of this section of scripture is directly related to the emergence the Medo-Persian empire and the place that Cryus would fulfil within the unfolding purpose of redemption. Bible scholars are generally agreed that Isaiah 45: 8 offers a forward prophetic glance to the fuller, broader sweep of spiritual blessing contained within the covenant of redemption. The focus of the verse is Christological rather than pneumatological, although given the relationship between the Son and the Spirit within the covenant of redemption, it would be wrong to press this distinction. However, the reference cannot be taken, or assumed to represent a revival of religion. Originally it had a much broader connotation. Sprague was clearly aware of this connotation (1978: 1, 2) and in his handling of Isaiah 45: 8 he thus extrapolates from the text to argue for revival.

“In the verses immediately preceding our text, there is a manifest reference to the deliverance of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon; but in the text itself, there is a sudden transition to a subject of far higher import, even the blessings of Christ’s salvation; and this latter subject continues to engross the prophets mind to the close of the chapter... There was some partial fulfillment of this prediction in the revival of true piety which attended the return of the Jews from Babylon; though it is evidently considered as referring principally to the more extensive prevalence of religion under the gospel dispensation...In this latter sense, it may be applied to the wonderful effusions of the Holy Ghost which attended the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost; and to what in these latter days we are accustomed to denominate *revivals of religion*.”

For Sprague to extrapolate from the text in this manner was clearly a legitimate use of scripture. Thus the original context was acknowledged and the broader connotation was recognised. However, it is somewhat surprising that his use of the *law and the prophets* was only restricted to Habakkuk 3: 2 and Isaiah 45: 8, when many other Old Testament scriptures could have been used. Thus, in arguing his case for revivals from the writings

of the law and the prophets he overlooked '*conditional promises*' such as Hosea, 10: 12 and Malachi, 3: 10-12.

Finney's lectures made far more of the law and the prophets. However, it is clear that in a number of lectures based on the Old Testament, he simply used the text as a means of providing the link to generally related subjects. For example, he used Exodus chapter 17: 11-13 as the pretext for an exposition on the way, or the manner in which churches could best help their ministers. Further, in lectures (2, 9,10,11,12,15,17,21), no attempts are made to expound or apply the text by means of a thorough exegesis. The texts were used merely as the platform or the starting point to introduce his audiences to the main subject matter of his lectures. However, in contrast to Sprague, he did confront the vital issue of revivals and their connection to '*conditional promise*'. In lecture three, he made use of Hosea chapter 10: 12, to argue that such a blessing is to be received as the result of conditional obedience and repentance. It can be argued that his exposition of this text to support this thesis thus helped to provide a significant contribution to the theological understanding of revival. The context (Laetsch, 1956: 85) supports the view that Israel *was required to voluntarily* repent of her moral and spiritual backslidings and renew her covenantal obedience to the Lord:

"Fallow ground is woodland that is to be plowed for the first time. Such land, usually overgrown with weeds and brambles, must not be seeded after the first plowing, but must be worked and reworked until all or most of the weeds have been killed, else the faster growing weeds would choke the little seedlings. To obtain the best harvest, carefully selected seed must be sown, and the reaping must be done in proper manner. All three operations require strenuous, diligent, intelligent labor... The Lord himself explains the figurative language: It is time to seek the Lord: diligently, prayerfully, with all their heart to search for the Lord (cp. Deut 4:29) until He comes and rains righteousness upon them."

Finney's exposition of Hosea 10: 12 was generally consistent with its original meaning. In his application, he relied heavily on the agricultural analogy provided by the prophet to urge for a revival of religion. For example (1928: 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 47, 48), under a sub-heading in the lecture he answered a rhetorical question: *How is the fallow ground to be broken up?*

"If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts... Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are: whether you are walking with God every day, or with the devil, whether you are serving God or serving the devil most; whether you are under the dominion of the prince of darkness, or of the Lord Jesus Christ... turn to Sins of commission. *1 Worldly mindedness...* If you have loved property, and sought after it for its own sake, or to gratify lust or ambition, or a worldly spirit, or to lay it up for your families, you have sinned, and must repent. *2. Pride* Recollect all the instances you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride... *3. Envy.* Look at the cases in which you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any respect...**REMARKS** 1. It will do no good to preach to you while your hearts are in this hardened, and waste, and fallow state... 2. See why so much preaching is wasted, and worse than wasted. It is because the Church will not break up their fallow ground... 4. And now, finally, will *you* break up *your* fallow ground... If you do not set about this work immediately I shall take it for granted that you do not mean to be revived, and that you have forsaken your minister, and mean to let him go up to battle alone."

However, even if Finney's exposition of Hosea 10:12 was generally consistent with the essential meaning of this covenantal promise there was, arguably, an important question that he failed to address. Sprague and his contributors would also have accepted that a 'revived' church becomes sensitive to sins of omission or commission as a direct result of the Spirit's work within the people. For example, this appeared to have been the case in connection with the First Great Awakening and the outworking of that revival that

occurred under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards and his church at Northampton during 1735. Furthermore, other revivals seem to indicate that this principle is the mark of the reviving work of the Spirit. However, Finney assumed that the promise of Hosea 10:12 was realised *through* human consecration and that a 'reviving' work of the Spirit sprang from the prior obedience of believers. Thus it can be argued, that his view of revival was entirely dependent upon the human or legalistic application of the prescriptive elements contained within the covenantal promise. Further, in terms of his conditionalism, Finney tended to play down the positional standing that belongs to the believer by virtue of the new covenant relationship. Is the believer, objectively speaking, under the '*dominion of the prince of darkness?*' Is revival blessing conditional on the willingness of a Christian to repent if he or she has loved property, or sought after property for its own sake and or laid up provisions for the future?

Thus, in applying the words 'break up your fallow ground,' Finney tended to present a legalistic position when he suggested that the church must '*repent over specific sins*' as a precondition to revival. Unfortunately, this same general emphasis is also found in his exposition and application of other '*conditional promises*' that are revealed throughout the Old Testament scriptures. Nevertheless, he was correct to underscore the conditional nature of the promise that is contained in Hosea, 10: 12. The Lord required Israel to act, *and this action* is a vital component in the process of receiving showers of righteousness. Thus man is not reduced to the role of a being a disinterested, irrelevant, mechanical or passive spectator in revival. This position cannot be scripturally justified. In this regard, therefore, it can be claimed that Finney provided an important legacy to the subsequent theology of revival.

Whatever the merits, or otherwise, of their respective exposition or application of these scripture texts, it is clear that both Sprague and Finney *depended* on the Old Testament to support their definitions of revival. In this, most if not all subsequent exponents of a revival theology have followed their lead. However, if the definition of revival is based on this source then it must accurately expound the contextual and exegetical meaning of the text for it to be accepted and legitimised. Further, it can be argued that this criterion

becomes even more critical whenever the New Testament is merely used to supplement a definition of revival. The problem for revival theologies, as typified by the lectures of Sprague and Finney, is that these are not generally *defined* by references to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. In this sense, therefore, it could be claimed that the church is hampered or bound by a definition of revival that is largely determined by the works of the Spirit in the pre-gospel era.

8.3.3 Sprague and Finney and their references to the teaching of Christ and the apostles

Sprague and Finney both used specific New Testament scriptures in presenting the case for, or a definition of revival. However, Sprague made no references to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. His arguments, expounded in seven out of nine lectures, were all based on scriptures taken from the Acts of Apostles through to the Book of Revelation. Finney also made few references to the words of Christ. In his eleven lectures based on texts from the New Testament, only four were connected with statements taken from the gospels or related to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover of these four, two lectures apiece focused on an exposition and application of the same text (*Matthew, 18: 19; John, 21: 15*). However, his use of the gospel narrative had little, if any bearing on his definition of revival.

Furthermore, it is surprising that whilst Sprague and Finney both lectured on texts from the Acts of the Apostles neither of them argued their *definitions* of revival by reference to Pentecost. However, Sprague used Acts 2:13 as the basis of his arguments in defence of revival and within this lecture (1978; 25-27) he pre-supposed the historic connection between Pentecost and subsequent revival(s). Sadly, no supporting argument was made to establish such a connection, or to answer the viewpoint that the *Pentecostal blessing* was a unique, initiatory and unrepeatable event in the history of the church. Sprague's assumption of a connection, therefore, left many exegetical questions un-addressed and unanswered. Both men tended to use the early history of the church as a basis for their thinking on best evangelistic practice. It was Finney's application of Acts 16: 30 that contained his rationale for an aspect of his evangelistic practice that proved to be highly contentious in the early 1830's. In short, Finney used this text to justify his thinking

and defend his practice of making direct evangelistic appeals to his audience and of inviting people to respond 'immediately' to the claim of the gospel. To this end, Finney adapted the use of *enquiry meetings*, which were commonly used in the eastern revival tradition, and remodelled them to suit his own emphasis and purpose.

Enquiry meetings had been a regular feature of pro-revivalist churches up to the 1820's. In revivals, extra meetings were often convened for counselling and instruction and the awakened were thus helped or encouraged to make a profession and confession of their faith in Christ. These '*protracted meetings*' were usually held in addition to the normal worship of the churches and with the permission of the minister and the church officers. Thus, prior to Finney's own conversion, an enquirer's system was already in place and had been successfully utilized. From 1812 for example, Asahel Nettleton had employed such meetings amongst revived churches. Such a mechanism was deliberately designed to protect churches from the danger of receiving people into full membership of the church on a spurious profession of faith. In such auxiliary meetings enquirers could be talked with and addressed privately, and any misunderstandings regarding the nature of faith or the call to discipleship could be addressed at an individual level. In the letters attached to Sprague's lectures the use of these 'protracted meetings' was supported by a number of 'old school' activists. However, as revivalists, 'old school' sympathizers were convinced that the religious excitement generated by a revival could lead to false hopes and did not always issue in a saving faith. Thus, any encouragements given to people to be converted required immediate care (Sprague, 1978: 51,52) and guidance at the initial stage:

"In the summer of 1821, there was an evident increase of solemnity in the church and congregation, and some individuals were known to be anxious for their souls... At the suggestion of Mr. Nettleton, I now instituted what are called *inquiring meetings*. More than a hundred persons attended the first. These meetings, as I found them to be convenient, were continued through this revival... While the church have been engaged in prayer, a sufficient number of the brethren have been with the pastor to converse, in a low voice, with every individual

in the inquiring room, giving opportunity for each one to make know the state of his feelings. This has been followed by instruction addressed to them all, and adapted to their cases, and by prayer... They have not been directed to taking any steps *preparatory* to their accepting Christ, but being acquainted with the nature and terms of the gospel, repentance toward God and faith in Him...have been enjoined upon them, as their *immediate duty* and *only safe course*. No language can describe the deep feeling, which has been manifested at some of these meetings.”

It is clear, therefore, that the ‘old school’ use of ‘protracted meetings’ was indicative of their commitment to evangelism. Furthermore, an immediacy in terms of calling people to faith and repentance (Sprague, 1978: 19,52) was evidently understood and practiced among these traditional revivalists. Many, if not all the reformed revivalists in America who were influential during the Second Great Awakening would have been sympathetic with the theology that began the foreign missionary movements. For example, the work of William Carey in India was largely the result of theological arguments provided by those who were frustrated with the hyper-Calvinism that had become entrenched among the Particular Baptists in England. Thus, in the late eighteenth century, Andrew Fuller’s work entitled, *‘The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation’*, was an apologia for evangelistic enterprise and forward mission. Fuller argued that saving faith should be preached and presented as a duty to all men, without discrimination or any need for discerning a prior work of the Spirit. From an appeal to scriptures such as Psalm 2, Isaiah 55 and Matthew 28, he presented the case for missions when he argued that there were sufficient biblical grounds to support the contention that all of mankind was accountable for sin and *‘duty bound’* (Fuller, 1961: 23) to believe the gospel:

“It is here taken for granted that whatever God commands, exhorts or invites us to comply with, is the duty of those to whom such language is addressed. If, therefore, saving faith be not the duty of the unconverted, we may expect never to find any addresses of this nature directed to them in the Holy Scriptures. We may expect that God will

as soon require them to become angels as Christians, if the one be no more their duty than the other.”

Finney’s use of the ‘enquiry meeting’ was also predicated on the basis that sinners were accountable for their sins and, moreover, were ‘*duty bound*’ to repent and believe in the gospel. Thus, along with the other revivalists of the period he was equally committed to presenting his audiences (1928; 426-431) with direct and immediate calls towards faith and repentance. In this sense, therefore, there were common aims and purposes between Finney and the traditionalists. It might have been expected, perhaps, that a common aim would have encouraged him to adopt and continue to utilize the ‘old school’ practice of using private or semi-private meetings for the purpose of close evangelistic counselling. However, under Finney’s ‘new measures,’ this established trend was modified in favour of another *modus operandi*. Finney’s practice contrasted sharply and unfavourably with the more careful and cautious approach toward the un-evangelised that had been upheld and supported by the ‘old school.’ Practically, his new evangelistic paradigm re-defined ‘evangelistic immediacy,’ which led, in turn, to the replacement of the more cautionary approach to people who were *anxious*. He effectively challenged the need for private or semi-public enquiry as had been practiced by the ‘old-school’ revivalists, by advocating a far more direct and simplified method. In fact, his methods were a consequence of his advocacy of ‘sudden conversions.’ Thus, Finney’s ‘*anxious seat*’ became a focal place in general public meetings where people would offer their decisive commitments to the claims of the gospel. His method, of course, was fully consistent with the philosophical conviction that conversion was merely a human response to the correct external stimuli. Thus (Finney, 1928: 305-307), men and women were to be urged to a point of personal decision that would then be confirmed and proven through their immediate response to a step of practical obedience.

“Preach to him, and, at the moment, he thinks he is willing to do anything; he thinks he is determined to serve the Lord; but bring him to the test; call on him to do one thing, to take one step, that shall identify him with the people of God...In modern times, even those who have been violently opposed to the anxious seat, have been

obliged to adopt some substitute, or they could not get along in promoting a revival. Some have adopted the expedient of inviting the people who were anxious for their souls, to stay, for conversation, after the rest of the congregation have retired. But what is the difference! ... The object of all these is the same, and the principle is the same—to bring people out from the refuge of false shame... Now, what objection is there against taking a particular seat, or rising up, or going to the Lecture room? They all mean the same thing: and they are not novelties in principle at all. The thing has always been done in substance. In Joshua's day they called on the people to decide what they would do, and they spoke right out in the meeting ... The Old School, or Old Measure party, have persevered in their opposition, eagerly seizing hold of any real or apparent indiscretions in the friends of the work."

Finney's '*anxious seat*' was an innovation that struck at the heart of revivalist practices and conventional wisdom. Despite his protests to the contrary, his evangelistic methods were clearly a departure from the norm and they became a cause of divisions within the pro-revivalist camp during the 1820's. There is no indication before this decade that the 'old school' revivalist '*enquiry meetings*' were ever used to bring the awakened person to an immediate public test of faith in Christ. The measure was innovative. Further, it is questionable as to whether or not this had scriptural warrant. For example, Joshua's call for Israel to decide what to do was not, in context, evangelistic at all. It was, in fact, the challenge to Israel, as God's people, to maintain their covenantal obedience to the Lord. Moreover, the purpose of the 'old school' enquiry meeting was never aimed at bringing a person out publicly *from the refuge of a false shame*. The aim of the enquiry meetings was to stave off any misunderstandings and to counsel, instruct and guide the awakened person toward an educated, doctrinally grounded hope and a sincere profession of faith. It was felt, that under the excitement of a revival, such precautions were both necessary and wise. Thus, while the 'old school' and the 'new school' were both committed to the immediacy of the gospel challenge and to the requirement of bringing people directly to faith and repentance, their approach to the un-evangelised differed significantly in their

evangelistic practices. This difference was highlighted (Sprague, 1978: 38) in the words of the 'old school' thinker, Rev. Samuel D. Miller:

"I am aware that the advocates of the system of "anxious seats," urge, with some plausibility, that, in consideration of the natural tendency of the impenitent to stifle convictions, and to tamper with the spirit of procrastination, it is desirable that they should be prevailed upon, as soon as possible, to "commit themselves" on this great subject. That a decisive step in relation to this subject is *desirable*, and that it ought to be taken without *delay*, is certain. But, at the same time, that it ought to be taken without rashness, with knowledge, with due consideration, and with sacred care not to mistake a transient emotion, for a deep impression, or a settled purpose, is equally certain."

In contrast to the traditionalists, however, Finney tended not to discriminate at the point of decision and thus his use of the '*enquiry room*' or the '*anxious seat*' began to assume a new dimension in evangelistic practice. Indeed, it can be argued that his adaptation of these methods of dealing with '*awakened sinners*' marked the point in American church history at which *revivalism* really began to emerge (Davis, 1851: 355, 356) from under the shell of a reformed view of revival. From this time onward, evangelical pragmatism usurped doctrinal fidelity, and the popular trends in revivalism became more concerned with evangelistic programmes. This turn of events thus represented a massive departure from the understanding of 'revivals,' which had been commonplace in the eastern states in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Men's decisions replaced God's operations and a revival became commonly identified with mass evangelistic meetings designed to secure the salvation of man by the agency of men. However, such pragmatism is clearly absent and unsupported by the evangelistic practice found in the historical record of the early church contained in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter and Philip, for example, waited or discriminated before presenting their immediate or free offers of the gospel in public and in private (Acts, 2: 38; 8: 37).

8.4 Sprague and Finney and views on intercessory prayer and revival

Both Sprague and Finney gave four lectures apiece from New Testament epistles. Once again, several of the texts were simply used as the means of introducing broadly related subjects. However in four lectures - two from each man- there was a critical examination of the place of *prayer* and *unity* in the promotion of revivals. They were both seemingly committed to the view that the initiation and effectiveness of a revival largely depended on intercessory prayer.

Finney provided specific instruction on this subject in his lectures based on James 5: 17 and Romans, 8: 26-27. Sprague examined the connection between prayer and revival in his lecture from Philippians, 1: 27. However, apart from their shared commitment to the place of intercession, there was a vital difference in the particular emphasis of both men. The divisions of their thinking as revivalists on this subject centred on the questions of the value of intercessory prayer. Is there a particular kind of intercession that provides a key to revival blessing? Is God bound to answer prayer for revival when it is presented in the correctly prescribed manner? Finney was committed to the view that there was a state or condition of prayer that secured revival blessing. Thus, in the opening part of his lecture on James 5: 17, entitled: *Prevailing Prayer*, he provided the statement of his view on intercessory prayer (Finney, 1928: 49, 50):

“When Christians offer effectual prayer, their state of feeling renders it proper for God to answer them. He was never unwilling to bestow the blessing-on the condition that they felt aright, and offered the right kind of prayer. Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival... Prevailing, or effectual prayer, is that prayer which attains the blessing that it seeks. It is that prayer which effectually moves God. The very idea of *effectual* prayer is that it effects its object.”

The major characteristics of Finney's effectual, prevailing prayer were fully articulated in a series of three lectures. In short, such prayer was:

- ***Agonized or burdened intercession.*** Such a state or intensity of desire was thus regarded as being indicative of effectual praying. Finney (1928: 58-62) referred to prayer as a benevolent exercise of spiritual fervour that demonstrated itself in profound depths and agonies of intercession.
- ***Faithful and Spirit-filled intercession.*** He repeatedly referred to the 'prayer of faith' as the effectual basis upon which (Finney, 1928: 74-92) the church could move the 'hand of the Lord.' Further, he was convinced (Finney, 1928: 93-114) that, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, the intercessor could anticipate answered prayer.
- ***Persevering, goal-orientated intercession.*** He referred to such intercession as a sure means of gaining the promised blessings of God. Further, he taught that the correct use of means would always accomplish its objectives. His understanding of persevering prayer (Finney, 1928: 64) thus became the precursor for a radical standpoint

Finney's understanding of effectual, intercessory prayer thus provided the key by which to promote a revival. However, as justification for his views, he was required to apply some extraordinary arguments. For example, in defence of the position that a 'prayer of faith' based upon the promises of God will always be positively answered or confirmed, he struggled with the difficulties posed by (Finney, 1928: 83, 84, 85) biblical references to unanswered prayer:

"Perhaps a difficulty may be felt about the prayers of Jesus Christ. People may ask: "Did not He pray in the garden for the cup to be removed, and was His prayer answered?" I answer that this is no difficulty at all, for the prayer was answered. The cup He prayed to be delivered from was removed. This is what the apostle refers to when he says: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up

prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death, was heard in that he feared...But there is another case that is often brought up, that of the apostle Paul praying against the "thorn in the flesh." ... But admitting that Paul's prayer was not answered by the granting of the particular thing for which he prayed, in order to make out this case as an exception to the prayer of faith, they are obliged to assume the very thing to be proved; and that is, the apostle *prayed in faith*. There is no reason to suppose that Paul would always pray in faith, any more than any other Christian does. The very manner in which God answered him shows that it was not in faith."

It could be argued, that Finney's exegesis is poor on both these counts because he failed to appreciate the crucial element of obedience or submission within the example of both intercessors. Thus, while Jesus prayed and interceded in agony he was also cognizant of the fact that his prayers were subject to the sovereign will and purposes of God: '*not my will, but yours be done*'. Paul prayed three times, and no more, because he was told that his sufferings would be used to achieve an unqualified purpose through the will of God. Furthermore, it could be argued, that there is no indication in either of these prayers that intercession was ever answered or denied on the basis of a prescribed state of feeling or a lack of faith. Finney's (1928: 95, 98, 99) exposition and application of Romans 8: 26- 27 also demonstrated poor exegesis:

"The Spirit leads Christians to desire and pray for things of which nothing is specifically said in the Word of God. Take the case of an individual. That God is willing to save is a general truth. So it is a general truth that He is willing to answer prayer. But how shall I know the will of God respecting that individual-whether I can pray in faith according to the will of God for the conversion and salvation of that individual or not? Here the agency of the Spirit comes in to lead the minds of God's people to pray for those individuals, and at those times, when God is prepared to bless them. We know not what to pray for, the Holy Spirit leads the mind to dwell on some object, to

consider its situation, to realize its value, and to feel for it, and pray, and “travail in birth,” till the person is converted.”

Is it possible to argue, as Finney did, that the intercession referred to in this text applied to praying for the unconverted? In context, Paul was clearly referring to the intercession of the Spirit on the behalf of believer’s sufferings! By contrast, Sprague made no special claims for the place of prayer in the promotion of a revival. However, he held that there was often a revitalization or renewal of urgent, intercessory prayer within a revived and Spirit-filled church. Thus, in revival conditions, the church felt compelled and enthused to use the means of prayer. In this sense, therefore, Sprague (1978: 136, 137, 138) realized there was a direct link between intercessory prayer and the promotion and maintenance of revivals.

“It is probable that, during every true revival, the most fervent prayer and effectual prayers that are offered, go up from the closet; and are never heard by any other ear than that which hears in secret. But there should be much of social, as well as private prayer, connected with a revival... God’s people are often to meet, for the express purpose of supplicating the influences of his Spirit... And these prayers, instead of being offered in the spirit of formality, should be the deep and earnest longings of the soul; should go up from hearts bathed with the reviving influences of the Holy Ghost... Therefore, Brethren, pray without ceasing.”

However, while Sprague considered prayer to be an effectual ‘means of grace’ he never argued for a *special prayer* of intercession through which men might unlock the door to revival blessing. Thus, in contrast to Finney, Sprague’s teaching on this theme was more general and less prescriptive. It is evident, therefore, that the difference in their thinking over intercessory prayer marked another vital point of departure between the views that were held by ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ revivalists. For Sprague, revival revitalized intercessory prayer, while for Finney special faith-filled intercessory prayer was *the via media* by which revival blessings were bound to fall. This debate, of course, anticipated the *means* of the next great revival of 1857-58, aptly named the *‘prayer*

revival, ' which would demonstrate the connection between the prayerful intercession of the church and the 'outpouring of the Spirit.'

8.5 Sprague and Finney and their views on the importance of unity in the church

The unity of the church (Psalm 133; John, 17: 20-23; Acts, 2: 42-47) is specifically tied to covenantal blessings. Jesus clearly taught (John, 14: 23-26; 15: 9-12) his followers to practise brotherly love. Moreover, this emphasis was endorsed by the apostles' teaching (1 Corinthians, 13) and led Paul to challenge or encourage the apostolic churches in his calls (I Corinthians, 1: 10; Ephesians, 4: 3; Philippians, 1: 27) to united life and action. The historical record of American revivals seems to indicate that awakenings led to an extraordinary degree of united brotherly love within those churches, and among people who were affected by a 'movement of the Holy Spirit.' For example, Jonathan Edwards (Edwards, 1958: 14) wrote of Northampton, in 1735:

"This work of God, as it was carried on... made a glorious alteration in the town; so that in the spring and summer following, *anno* 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God: it was never so full of *love*, nor of *joy*, and yet so full of distress, as it was then...the assembly in general were, from time to time, *in tears* while the word was preached; *some* weeping with sorrow and distress, *others* with joy and love, *others* with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours."

It can be argued, therefore, from scripture and from the record of church history that the unity of the church is a vital factor in 'revivals of religion.' This correlation raises some important questions: Does God bless unity? Can God bless without unity? What is the unity that God deigns to bless? Can revivals be frustrated if or when unity is fractured, spoiled or denied? In their lectures, however, Sprague and Finney both failed to present a comprehensive examination of the connection between unity and covenantal blessing. This was a curious omission. For example, Psalm 133 underlines the point that the Lord *commands* his blessing on unity. Because Sprague and Finney were so clearly reliant on the Old Testament for their definition of revival it is somewhat surprising that they both

overlooked this covenantal connection. Furthermore, this connection between unity and blessing was also highlighted in the early church. Twice, in the early part of the Acts of Apostles there is an indication that the unity of the post-Pentecostal church was directly connected to blessing and growth. It is found in Acts 2: 44&47 where the togetherness of the believers resulted in the Lord adding to his church. Further, following the careful approach to maintaining the unity of the church through their sensitive handling of food distribution to the Greek widows (Acts 6:1-7), the Lord once again blessed the Apostles and the Jerusalem church with an increased number of disciples. This illustrates the fact that *unity* lay at the heart of blessing under both the old and the new covenant dispensations. Moreover, according to Christ's high priestly prayer (John, 17: 20-23) church unity was essential to world evangelisation. However, whilst Sprague and Finney both missed the positive connection of unity with covenantal promise, both were agreed that revivals could be frustrated, or hindered by a failure to maintain brotherly love. For example, Sprague (1978: 79,82,83) made the following observations on this matter:

“But the want of brotherly love operates to prevent a revival of religion ... In accordance with this sentiment, it has often been found in actual experience, that the Spirit of God has fled before the spirit of strife; and a revival of religion which promised a glorious result, has been suddenly arrested by some unimportant circumstance, which the imperfections of good men have magnified, till they have made it an occasion of controversy. While they are yet scarcely aware of it, their thoughts which had been engrossed by the salvation of their fellow men and the interests of Christ's kingdom, are intensely fastened on another object; and they wake up, when it is too late, to the appalling fact, that the work of grace among them has declined, and that sinners around are sinking back into the deep slumber of spiritual death.”

Finney (1928: 321) was also committed to the same viewpoint:

“A revival may be expected to cease, *when Christians lose the spirit of brotherly love*. Jesus Christ will not continue with people in a revival any longer than they continue in the exercise of brotherly love. When Christians are in the spirit of a revival, they feel this love, and then you will hear them call each other “Brother” and “Sister,” very affectionately. But when they begin to get cold, they lose this warmth and glow of affection... In some Churches they never call each other so; but where there is a revival Christians naturally do it. I never saw a revival, and probably there never was one, in which they did not do it. But as soon as this begins to cease, the Spirit of God is grieved, and departs from among them.”

From a reformed perspective, these views have massive implications and they present a number of theological questions. For example: Can the church alter the counsel of God or frustrate the overriding purpose of his irresistible grace? Can the church grieve away revival blessing through a spirit of contention or a lack of brotherly love? What level of unity or brotherly love is required to sustain a revival blessing? Further, at which point, does the Lord actually depart in revival and where does his departure leave the church? However, Sprague and Finney failed to provide any satisfactory answers to these crucial questions. Thus, positively and negatively, the ‘*old school*’ and ‘*new school*’ revivalists of the 1830’s left no precise arguments concerning the relationship that exists between unity and covenantal blessing.

8.6 Sprague and Finney and their legacy to revival theology in the church

Sprague and Finney’s works reflected the localised tensions that became evident among revivalists during the 1830’s. However, their common commitment to and argument for revivals has informed the thinking of a succession of other evangelical *pneumatologists* in the subsequent history of the church. For example, during the last fifty years there has been a resurgence of interest in revival among those who espouse a reformed theological position and who agree with Sprague’s definition. In Great Britain this interest was first re-kindled by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, whose commitment to the

importance of revivals was a keynote (1984: 249-280) in his evangelical leadership. It can be argued, however, that in presenting his case for revival Lloyd-Jones was largely dependent upon his view of the 'baptism of the Spirit.' Thus, he tended to view the day of Pentecost (Acts, 2), as being a 'revival', and the mother of all subsequent revivals. However, his position raises some serious questions (Prothero, 2003: 61-77) not least of which is connected with the unique significance of the Day of Pentecost. This said Lloyd-Jones' contribution was a stepping-stone towards the re-establishment of a *reformed* revival theology. This move has clearly been reflected in the published works of other British writers including: Iain Murray (1971), Erroll Hulse (1991) and Brian Edwards (2001). From this list, Edwards is to be particularly commended for the attempt to present a sound definition of revival and a critical exegesis of Old Testament texts, and their bearing on whether or not it is possible to pray for revival. In addition, American writers such as Richard Owen Roberts (1991) and John Piper (2001) have both begun to reaffirm the reformed view and repackage the *Edwardsean* emphasis in a popular form. From a marginalized position, postmillennialism has once again begun to find its expression in America. So much so that Larry Witham of the Washington Times ran an article on the need for exercising discrimination (1997: 8) in the: '*Coming World Revival*'. Thus, the eschatological hope of Sprague and Finney still lives on within American evangelicalism, and only time will tell if such hopes will be realized in terms of another great awakening.

However, in all but his postmillennial view, American evangelicalism has largely followed Finney. In the latter part of the twentieth century, his specific emphases have continued to find their expression in evangelical literature. For example, Leonard Ravenhill (1959) and E.M. Bounds (1984: 116-124) have both accepted the position that revivals are conditional or contingent upon the prior obedience of the church. Bounds, in particular, has connected revival blessing with persevering intercession and repeatedly urges his readers to consider the value and potency that issues from exercising the 'prayer of faith'. British charismatic and restorationist thinkers (Gumbel, 1997: 169-186; Virgo, 1995: 97-110) have also placed an emphasis on the connection between prayer and revivals. However, it is significant that these *pneumatologists* have edged away from Finney's conditionalism and are more in tune with the view that revival is *a priori* a sovereign work of God. In this, they tend toward the thinking of Sprague rather than Finney and they uphold the

view that intercessory prayer is not a precondition to, but a mark of the 'outpouring of the Spirit.' Thus, within modern evangelicalism there is still a divergence over the relative positions held and expounded in the twin sets of lectures produced by Sprague and Finney in the 1830's. Moreover, revival theology still tends to swing between these two poles and has not really progressed further forward. Many of the arguments advanced in favour of revivals find a basis of support within these lectures. However, both Finney and Sprague left a significant number of gaps in their respective thinking on revival. Thus, it can be argued that the church is still waiting for a definitive or fully coherent theology of revival that can be sustained and upheld by good exegesis and a solid application of the Old and New Testament scriptures. Such a definitive work will need to successfully harmonize the covenantal promises given in the old covenant epoch with the greater level of blessing enjoyed in the post-Pentecostal church. However, such a correlation is possible. For example, it is significant that unity is allied to blessing under both covenants, and yet this connection has not been fully explored by the generality of revival theologians in the modern era. Such a work might serve to add much needed clarity to the lectures of Finney and Sprague and open the way for a greater appreciation of the true nature and the best preparation for revivals.

8.7 Summary

By contrasting the works of W.B. Sprague and C.G. Finney, I have tried to illustrate the commonality and diversity of their thinking concerning the nature and the promotion of revivals of religion. I have endeavoured to show that, as contemporaries, these two men shared common strands of thinking and practice. Thus, whilst historians and theological commentators have tended to sharpen the contrast between them, I have argued that at a number of points their views converged and overlapped. However, I have also sought to highlight the fact that there was a profound difference in their respective understanding of the nature of revivals. Under this eighth chapter heading, therefore, I have attempted to examine critically the relative strengths of the lectures on revival that were published by Sprague and Finney during the 1830's. This has been undertaken by considering the merits of their exegetical approach to key texts in the scriptures and by analysing their thought on issues such as, '*the agency of the Holy Spirit*', '*gospel presentation*', and the place given to '*intercessory prayer*'. By analysis, I have tried to show that Sprague and Finney both seemed to take exegetical license in presenting their views of, or making

their claims for, the nature and promotion of revivals. Both men, I have maintained, appear to have used the scripture texts loosely and simplistically. Thus, I have suggested that they may have provided a far more significant contribution to revival theology had they made a more exact use of scripture to argue their cases. However, this criticism can be mitigated by the fact that it is too easily made in hindsight. In their historical context, after all, the focus of their lectures was based on 'old school' and 'new school' divisions of thinking and practice that arose within the Northeastern states of America throughout the 1820's. Sprague and Finney, therefore, thus dealt with parochial issues in their lectures and cannot be criticised too strongly for failing to provide a more detailed or comprehensive treatment of their subject. However, it could be argued that the future history of revival and revivalism turned on their lectures. From this point onward the Edwardsian concept of revival would gradually make way for a new brand of revivalism. Finney became the father of a new tradition, and in the course of time certain elements of his thinking and practice would be assimilated by, and become a dominant force in, the future direction of American evangelicalism.

CHAPTER NINE: 1835-1860: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF REVIVAL AND REVIVALISM

9.1 General Remarks

The '*new divinity*' taught by N.W. Taylor and the '*new measures*' that were established by Charles G. Finney produced a dramatic shift in the unfolding evolution of American revivalism. In fact, by the close of the nineteenth century the distinctions that had once been debated over by 'old school' and 'new school' protagonists were largely forgotten and replaced by a homogenized view of revival. Historically, American evangelicalism eventually chose the thinking and practice of the modernizers. However, there seems to be some uncertainty among historians regarding the speed with which these innovations were accepted. Murray (1994: 277,278) thus states:

“Before the 1820s the altar call, or its equivalent, was little known in most churches, yet William McLoughlin could write, ‘after 1835 it was an indispensable fixture of modern revivals.’ The same author says: ‘Finney’s revivalism broke “The Tradition of the Elders” and ... by mid-century it was in fact the national religion in the United States.’” In these words McLoughlin, along with other modern authors, exaggerates the speed with which the old was replaced by the new...If McLoughlin was faulty in his dating he is not, however, wrong in his main assertion... Certainly, before the end of the nineteenth century this form of evangelism and its attendant ‘revivals’ was so established across the United States that few could remember anything different.”

It is debatable, therefore, whether the ‘new school’ revivalists did effectively manage to sweep everything before them as early as is generally supposed, or if the more orthodox established denominational churches so readily made room for the introduction of these new trends. In reality, it would seem that ‘old school’ revivalists were far more resilient and that between 1835-1860 most of the issues raised by the new thinking and practices

continued to be seriously contested in the religious press and on the floor of the church courts. Murray (1994: 273,274) thus comments:

“The uproar in the Presbyterian Church at this time could not continue. Archibald Alexander wrote to Plumer on 13 September 1837 of the crisis he believed was near: I see dark clouds collecting. The new revival measures connected with the New Theology, are gaining strength and popularity every day. The stream is deepening and widening, and will shortly pour forth such a torrent as will reach over the whole surface of the land. Our church cannot proceed much further under her present organization... it is necessary for our very existence that we should separate. In the following year the Presbyterian Church formally split into two, each side being known by the names with which they had become identified in the controversy, Old and New School. Prominent New School members at the General Assembly which saw the disruption of 1838 were Nathan Beman, Lyman Beecher, and N.W. Taylor. Speaking of that disruption in later years, Beecher is reported to have said, “The Oneida revivals did it.”

In addition to the ecclesiastical divisions, ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ revivalists were also confronted by a *‘social gospel’* within those decades that immediately preceded the American Civil War. This new agenda in the church and the state tended to move away from a gospel emphasis and toward establishing a *‘benevolent empire’* through social or and political action. Thus, social welfare rather than evangelism became the major focus of attention and activity amongst American churches throughout the middle years of the nineteenth century. Sweet (1965: 159) has thus remarked:

“That period in American history from about 1830 to 1860 has been most aptly termed “The Sentimental Years” It was a period in which organized benevolence flourished in a hitherto unheard-of fashion...Societies were formed to advance the cause of temperance; to promote Sunday Schools; to save sailors at the ports and along the canals; to fight the use of tobacco; to improve the diet; to advance the

cause of peace; to reform prisons; to stop prostitution; to colonize Negroes in Africa; to support education. There was scarcely an object of benevolence for the advancement of which some institution had not been formed.”

However, another powerful awakening would regain an evangelistic focus and arrest the decline of American revivalism. It can be claimed, that it was the great *‘Prayer Meeting Revival’* of 1857-58 that reinvigorated the ailing tradition and re-established revivalistic thrust within the American churches. The years of decline for revivalism that took place between 1840 and 1857 are instructive. Further, there is historical and theological value in considering the connection of ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ thinking and practice to the ‘benevolent empire’, and also of assessing the relationship that existed between both ‘schools’ and the next awakening of 1857.

9.2 The development and progress of ‘new school’ thinking and practice between 1835-1860

From 1835-1860 Charles G. Finney was largely responsible for the furtherance of ‘new school’ thought and practice. Indeed, it can be argued that during the twenty-five years prior to the American Civil War his personal influence was integral to the development of the new revivalism. In 1831-32 Finney became acquainted with leading supporters of the ‘benevolent empire.’ These included businessmen such as Arthur and Lewis Tappan, who were active in the development and work of the *New York Free Church Movement* and other causes. Hardman (1990: 239, 240, 175) records:

“By the late 1820’s the silk-importing firm of Arthur Tappan was very successful... Arthur’s great generosity to benevolent causes, colleges, seminaries, and innumerable societies, was already well established by 1830... With their Puritan background, the Tappan brothers were convinced that well-to-do Christians were absolutely obligated to give of their wealth to the kingdom of God. This conviction led them into ever-widening areas of causes, and into contact with the burgeoning “Benevolent Empire” of societies for the

amelioration of societal ills, which desperately needed the financial backing of men such as the Tappans. The brothers were beginning to bring together a group called the "Association of Gentlemen," men generally from rural Connecticut and strict Congregationalists, in the banking and mercantile trades, to support these worthy causes."

In 1832, the Tappans invited Finney to become the regular preacher of the Second Free Church of New York. The *Free Church Movement* was originally linked with the city's Presbyterian churches. However, they soon began to operate on 'new school' principles, and practices that leaned toward a far more autonomous and democratic form of church government or organization. Furthermore, a more liberal social agenda came to the fore within the New York Free Church Movement. Practically, this was evidenced through a determination by the Free Church to treat all men equally and to provide the benefits of their communion without prejudice and discrimination. In the 1830's, this was a radical and popular innovation that clearly had an appeal to a growing and transient population in New York City. Hardman (1990: 260, 261) records:

"By 1833, the free church movement was thriving. To abandon the old custom of supporting a church through pew rents, and to provide free seats for all, especially inviting the poor not to be relegated to the back but to have equal prominence with those of better economic station, was a major break with the past...These free churches vexed the Old School Presbyteries because, in addition to being new measures congregations, they claimed to accept Presbyterian principles but they acted in ways that were more akin to Congregational practices."

Thus, during the 1830's, Finney and his supporters were at the cutting edge of a popular religious movement. It could be argued that this movement was largely responsible for the demise of the 'old school' tradition. The Free Church Movement gave rise to trends that spread out of New York City to other parts of the nation and had a major impact on a wider constituency. It was Finney's connection with this

innovative movement, which paved the way to his later role as Professor of Theology at Oberlin College. Oberlin was located in the western frontier state of Ohio and, shortly after its inauguration, began to receive patronage from Yankee businessmen who supported the *'benevolent empire'*. Inevitably, financial backing from this source determined the principles upon which the college operated. Oberlin College, therefore, became an academy based on the thinking and practices that first motivated the philanthropic efforts of the business community in New York City during the early 1830's. Hardman (1990: 299, 304) has stated the extent of the practical support that Finney and other faculty members at Oberlin received from the charity of others:

“Arthur Tappan subscribed \$10,000, and his brother Lewis, Isaac Dimond, William Green, and some other businessmen promised to pay the sum of \$600 annually for each of eight professors. To guarantee Oberlin's stability, Arthur Tappan pledged much of his income, \$100,000 per year, until the financial base of the college was secure. Finney was pleased with this arrangement... and made the further stipulation that he be allowed to return to New York City for several months each winter for preaching. This arrangement... meant that Finney would continue to influence New York and the Benevolent Empire, would not be permanently relegated to the West... By the middle of May (1835) Finney had made this decision, and was settling in Oberlin. On June 30 he officially notified the trustees of his acceptance of the position offered him.”

Finney, therefore, was enabled to sustain a significant influence upon the course of 'new school' revivalism by virtue of his place in the New York Free Church Movement and his work at Oberlin. The impact of his revivalism upon Oberlin was substantial and his commitment was later rewarded in 1851 when he was first selected to serve there as the College President. However, in his early years at Oberlin, Finney often clashed with his patrons, faculty members and students over the primary direction and purpose of the college and he was clearly concerned about its leaning toward social protest rather than evangelism. Oberlin, of course, was originally a 'benevolent' institution that began as a

direct result of the need to relocate students who had become activists in the abolitionist movement led by Theodore Weld (Douglas J.D: 1974, 1033). Weld had been converted through Finney's *new measures* and his means of promoting the abolitionist cause were based on the same techniques. Weld's abolitionism was patronized by the Tappans and when he met with strong opposition at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati, then both he and his rebel supporters were re-located at Oberlin. However, as founding faculty members, Finney and Weld disagreed upon the primary emphasis of the college and tensions soon emerged at Oberlin. The division between them was significant in that it highlighted the fact that Finney remained foremost a revivalist rather than a political agitator or a social reformer. His support for the 'benevolent empire' was always subservient to promoting the cause of evangelism. The result of conflicting priorities in its leadership meant that Oberlin became the focal point of an ongoing struggle between 'new school revivalism' and a 'social radicalism'. For a number of years Finney and Weld took issue with each other and with the student group. Hardman (1990: 316, 320, 321) has thus commented:

"For Finney... all evils that afflict human society-wrongs done to women, slavery, drunkenness, war, and all the rest – were but natural consequences of *sin*, and that if faithful pastors attacked this central evil by the cure of conversion, in time all subordinate evils would begin to diminish. ... Using his most persuasive rhetoric he wrote to Weld on July 21(1836): Br. Weld is not true, at least do you not fear it is, that we are in our present course going fast into a civil war? ... The causes now operating are in my view as certain to lead to this result as a cause is to produce its effect, unless the publick mind can be engrossed with the subject of salvation and make abolition an appendage... (A student wrote:) Bro. Finney ...said that his great inducement to come to Oberlin was to educate the young men from Lane Seminary (our class)- that the revival part of the church were looking anxiously for us to enter upon the work of Evangelists... that the only hope of the country, the church, the oppressor and the slave was in *wide spread revivals*."

Finney eventually won this battle and for the remainder of his lifetime the college remained primarily focused upon evangelism. Thus, from 1840-1860 Oberlin continued to uphold those fundamental emphases which under-girded the western phase of the Second Great Awakening. Finney's later publications, such as his *Systematic Theology* (1846), reveal the extent of an ongoing commitment to an older evangelicalism and the basis on which he maintained the direction of Oberlin. The Benevolent Empire, whilst it may have been crucial to Finney's financial support, never managed to turn his head in terms of his essential evangelical convictions. Thus, as a revivalist, he remained committed to the view that salvation by faith led to good works. Benevolence, therefore, was the fruit rather than the root of faith and it was this emphasis in his thinking that was the basis of his disagreements with the idealism of other philanthropists. Oberlin, therefore, was the rallying point of an evangelicalism that promoted activity rather than passivity, through the *obedience of faith* (Romans, 1: 4). The revival historian Sweet (1965: 160) has thus recognized Finney's governing principle:

"It has been stated that wherever Charles G. Finney went he always left behind scores of young men "emancipated from sin and Calvinism and overflowing with benevolence for unsaved mankind." The gospel he preached encouraged men to "work as well as believe," and as a result there was always a "mighty influence toward reform."

However, Finney's connection to the 'benevolent empire' later became more peripheral, due to the fact that his particular evangelical emphasis suffered a general decline during the mid nineteenth century. Furthermore, his thinking and practice was subjected to real examination throughout the 1840's. This decade became marked by a diminution of the blessings that had accompanied the Second Great Awakening. Revivalists during this period thus began to experience a decrease in their evangelistic effectiveness and a consequent downturn in their post-millennial confidences. This meant, effectively, that they started to take stock of their respective ministries and evangelistic methodologies, and to revise the opinions that they had once so boldly proclaimed. Like others, Finney was forced to reckon with his mistaken hopes and to

reflect upon the turning of the tide away from an era that had been a *high water mark* in the history of American revivals. Murray (1994: 286), thus records:

Finney spoke similarly of the passing of revival in his *Letters on Revival* of 1845; there was a 'great falling off and decline in revivals'; 'I have observed, and multitudes of others also I find have observed, that for the last ten years revivals of religion have gradually been becoming more and more superficial.' So Finney's promise of continuous revival was, by his own admission, unfulfilled.

Finney, therefore, along with other revivalists, began to re-assess his performance as an evangelist in the 1820-30's. The test that was most easily applied was that of looking at the constancy, or consistency of revival converts. Based on this criterion, it appeared to some 'old school' observers, and to Finney himself, that a large number of his converts (Murray, 1994: 288, 289) had failed the test of endurance:

"In course of time, Finney himself admitted this. Joseph Ives Foot, a Presbyterian minister, wrote in 1838: 'During ten years, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, were annually reported to be converted on all hands; but now it is admitted, that his (Finney's) real converts are comparatively few. It is declared even by himself, that "the great body of them are a disgrace to religion"...A similar statement was made directly by Finney later. After he came to believe in 'entire sanctification' or 'Christian perfection.' Finney claimed that the reason for his frequent disappointments in former evangelism was due to the absence of this belief from his ministry: 'I was often instrumental in bringing Christians under great conviction, and into a state of temporary repentance and faith, but falling short of urging them up to a point where they would become so acquainted with Christ as to abide in him, they would of course soon relapse again into their former state.'"

Consequently, it can be argued that the 1840-50's marked a hiatus in the evolution of American revivalism. 'New school' thinking and practice, although wealthy patrons maintained it, failed to arrest the declining fortunes of evangelical revivalism that occurred during the mid-way point of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, while Finney was later rewarded for his evangelical perseverance, these decades for him were a time of sober reflection and of personal analysis and self-criticism. Thus, whilst Finney and Oberlin became the foundation for principles and practices that later took root within the evangelical culture of North America, there was little if anything to suggest that this was a likely outcome during the downturn for revivalism in the 1840-50's. In addition, it is a curious fact that the 'benevolent empire,' which supported Oberlin, was not the prime mover of the next general awakening. In 1858, the downturn was eventually halted through a revival that began within a Presbyterian Church in New York City, and that owed its origin more to the principles and practices of an 'old school' revivalism.

9.3 The development and progress of 'old school' thinking and practice between 1835-1860

The fuller absorption of 'new school' trends into the American evangelical mainstream following the Civil War has produced a tendency among twentieth century historians to downplay or underestimate the influence of 'old school' revivalists between 1835-1860. This tendency seems to have resulted from an incorrect assumption that the older order was rapidly displaced and that the innovative practices of the 1830's were soon widely established. However, it has been claimed that the general acceptance of 'new school' thinking and practice came much later and that Finney's memoirs were responsible for a revision of these decades. Murray (1994:297) thus states:

"In the 1860's Finney knew that it was not from theological lectures that the verdict of history would be drawn. The popular mind was far more likely to be impressed by easily read narratives and especially by narratives that were pre-eminently records of success. So nothing was allowed in the *Memoirs* that would weaken the impression... in

1866-8 everything that did not serve to strengthen his doctrinal crusade was put aside.”

In reality, however, American evangelicalism during the 1840-50's was still dominated by the force of competing trends. The historical evidence provides substantial proof that the 'old school' revivalists were not easily overcome and that they remained purposeful in defending and promoting their views. During this time, supporters of the 'old school' continued to supply their theological emphasis through the curriculum at several eastern academies. For example, Bennet Tyler and Asahel Nettleton were allied in this cause by their efforts to maintain an evangelical Calvinism in the newly established Connecticut Theological Institute. This college became the bastion of an older evangelical tradition and continued to function in this capacity until the outbreak of the American Civil War. Moreover, following Nettleton's death in 1843 his *Memoirs* served to remind easterners of his ministry from 1812 to 1820 and to recapture the basis on which he had conducted his revivals. Thornbury (1977: 226) records:

“It was hailed throughout America by evangelical leaders as a welcome addition to the store of Christian biographies. In October, 1844, the *Biblical Repository*, said, “We have seized this book just issued from the press, with great interest, and perused it with uncommon satisfaction. We are sure that it will be read by thousands who have been savingly profited by Dr. Nettleton's labours, and by thousands who have never heard the report of his labours, and his success as a minister of the gospel.”

Together with the Connecticut Theological Institute, Brown University, which had been founded by Baptists on Rhode Island during the Second Great Awakening, also upheld 'old school' principles. Francis Wayland, who became President of this school between 1826-1855, was a traditional revivalist. In the late 1840's and 50's, this college became the place of further awakenings amongst the student body.

Murray (1994: 321) records:

Wayland was never primarily an educationalist. His greatest concern was for the preparation and training of men for the ministry... His convictions on revival, which were formed in his early years, remained with him all his life. He rejoiced to see an awakening at Brown in the winter term of 1847, 'when religion took precedence of all else within the walls of the university,' and, more widely, eleven years later in the whole area.

In addition to these colleges, there were evidently denominational ministers who stayed loyal to their 'old school' principles. Many of these men had been converted before the rise of the 'new divinity' or 'new measures,' and remained committed to an earlier form of revivalism. The traditional revivalists who had contributed to Sprague's 'Lectures on Revival' were representative of this class. Between 1835-1860, these men became more respected and influential in the denominational courts. Furthermore, their emphasis was also passed on to their sons, who formed a new generation of ministers. This meant that 'old school' ideas lingered and remained active in American evangelicalism for several decades following the introduction of 'new school' thinking and practice. However, the 'old school' revivalists struggled to uphold their convictions throughout the 1840-50's. The trend during these years moved away from their principles and produced a period of estrangement. Thus, while they supported their position and resisted those forces that were beginning to drive the agenda in the church, the 'old school' became marginalized and overtaken by modern trends. Perhaps the difficulties which confronted 'old school' revivalism is best illustrated by their fortunes in New York City. It was here throughout the 1840-50's that the well-respected Presbyterian minister Gardiner Spring maintained his commitment to an 'old school' revivalism. In the early 1850's, James W. Alexander who became the minister of Duane Street Church joined Gardiner Spring in the defence and support of this emphasis. By this time, however, the trend that had been established by the New York City Free Church Movement had generally eclipsed the older thinking and a traditional revivalism was in serious decline. Indeed, the likelihood of a revival

along the older-lines seemed unpromising and remote. Murray (1994: 338) has captured the sense of despondency:

“The people had seen little evidence of the older evangelicalism for some years. In a city whose population was to reach 800,000 by 1858 only Gardiner Spring’s church remained a dominant influence among the Presbyterians... Alexander was often left longing ‘for a generation of the old sort of preachers’. ‘The savour of old-schoolism is not good here. Many have not seen old-schoolism allied to any zeal, and have all their early associations connected with new measures. Such a character as McCheyne would be to them as out of character as a Centaur, Sphynx, or a Griffin’. In despondent moments he feared it would never be otherwise.”

Thus, a theology and practice, which could trace a line back to its puritan ancestry through two great awakenings, was put into the shade by modernizing tendencies in the gateway city of North America. Furthermore, New York’s repudiation of ‘old school’ revivalism was indicative of its declining fortunes in the eastern states. However valiantly the cause was advanced, supported or maintained, the withering blasts of Unitarianism and the emergence of the ‘benevolent empire’ tended to overwhelm a traditional orthodoxy. By the mid 1850’s James W. Alexander’s pessimism was also being expressed by other ‘old school’ supporters. For example, Francis Wayland began to bemoan the absence of an earnestness and zeal that had once accompanied the ‘old school’ revivalist preachers during the Second Great Awakening. The President at Brown University was critical in his analysis (Murray, 1994: 321, 322, 323) of the relative quality of those students who later enrolled to train for the Baptist ministry:

“After forty-five years as a teacher and preacher Wayland published his *Notes on the Principles and Practices of the Baptist Churches* in 1857... Wayland believed that in the 1850’s men of this spirit were no longer common in applying for the gospel ministry: Formerly we were obliged to repress the earnestness with which men were pressing

into the ministry. Now we are unable, with every inducement that can be presented, to urge men into it.”

The prospects for ‘old school’ revivalism were at a low point throughout the 1840’s and up to the mid 1850’s. In 1857-58 however, its supporters witnessed a dramatic reversal in their favour through an awakening that is generally considered to have been started or to have emanated from New York City. Historians and social commentators are divided in their opinions of this awakening and of its lasting significance on the development of the religious culture of the United States. Thus, for example, William G. McLoughlin’s assessment (1978: 141, 142) clearly reveals a tendency to downplay or to minimize the effects of this revival:

“The Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857-58 is best explained as the acceptance of mass revivalism by urban businessmen seeking God’s help in time of trouble... Not that these businessmen were insincere, but their prayers were essentially a ritual plea for God’s assistance during a temporary business crisis.”

However, it could be argued that McLoughlin’s casual dismissal of this revival on such an unsubstantiated claim confounds the historical record; and that his social commentary unfairly devalued the awakening of 1857. Other historians have argued that this revival was much more than a ‘*ritual plea for God’s assistance*’ and have been willing to argue that the awakening provided another stepping-stone toward the political and social good of the American nation. Thus, for example, Sweet (1965: 160, 161) viewed the 1857-58 revival as presenting an impetus to or providing the means for a further extension of the benevolent empire:

“For out of that revival came the introduction of the Y.M.C.A into American cities... It gave impetus to the creation of the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, and to numerous Freedmen’s Societies which were formed in the midst of the War. It is a significant fact that all benevolent enterprises flourished during the Civil War, and the period saw charities on a larger scale than ever before.”

It could be argued, however, that the views of McLoughlin and Sweet have managed to obscure the genius of the 1857 revival. While it is correct to state that this awakening began to grip the nation at a point of financial collapse, and that it led to renewed philanthropic efforts, nevertheless, its origin, development and effect was extraordinary and appeared to be analogous to former Great Awakenings. Between 1857 and 1858, 'old school' revivalists became convinced that they were witnessing an awakening that was comparable in size and quality to those (Murray, 1994: 331, 348) that they experienced forty or fifty years earlier:

"Men old enough to remember the beginning of the century had no hesitation in recognizing the same phenomenon that they had seen in their youth. Heman Humphrey, for example, called it 'this most remarkable revival'. In its extent the new work appeared to exceed all that had gone before. A writer in *The Presbyterian Magazine* for June 1858, under the heading 'Thoughts Concerning the Present Extraordinary revival of Religion', spoke of it as extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Northern Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. 'It is not confined to a single section of the country, nor to a single Christian denomination; but with some exceptions, it extends to all'. Looking back on the same event, the biographers of Francis Wayland wrote of it as a time of 'universal revival' and the biographer of John L. Girardeau recorded, 'About this period revivals occurred over practically the whole country... In 1858 all the classic marks of a true spiritual awakening were present-hunger for the Word of God, for prayer and for serious Christian literature; a sense of wonder and profound seriousness; the same work evident in many places at once; joyful praise and readiness to witness; a new energy in practical Christian service; the recovery of family worship and family religion; and an observable raising of the whole moral tone of society... the total number of converts was set at estimates as different as 300,000 and one million."

Furthermore, the historical data reveals, that the New York revival of 1857-58 was soon established as an international and trans-continental movement of the Spirit. The British Isles (Spurgeon, 1859: 9, 10) and Sweden (Hulse, 1991: 58) were affected by the spread of the awakening.

This, in turn, led to a revival in the Reformed Church of South Africa (Hulse, 1991: 72, 73) shortly afterwards:

“The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was well informed concerning the 1859 revival in the USA, Britain and other parts of Europe. There was a sense of grief and disappointment that South Africa had been bypassed. Special prayer meetings were convened for humble repentance and intercession for revival. During those prayer meetings the Holy Spirit came down in a phenomenal way like a rushing mighty wind... God’s people were revived, the unconverted were awakened and expansive missionary outreach ensued.”

The New York revival of 1857-58, therefore, can justifiably stand in the tradition of the great American Awakenings. This awakening appeared to come from nowhere and rose from the midst of the depressed fortunes of ‘old school’ ministers, who lived to witness its effect and the full breadth of its impact upon the nation, and more generally, within the wider world. However, whilst its origin was sudden and surprising, it was not obscured. This awakening was well documented and its detail has provided subsequent historians and theologians with crucial data for the development of a clearer understanding of the nature of revival.

9.4 An overview and assessment of the 1857-58 Revival

It could be argued that the commitment to American revivalism was at its lowest point in the years before 1857-58. Finney, as a representative of the ‘new school’, was disheartened by the superficiality of this period. In addition, James W. Alexander and a large number of ‘old school’ sympathizers were generally pessimistic or uncertain as to whether their fortunes would be favourably reversed. By 1856, therefore, both ‘schools’

faced a crisis and the anticipation of having to continue to operate at decreased levels of effectiveness and popular support. Thus, any assessment of the 1857-58 revival must take cognizance of the fact that this awakening occurred following a period of time when evangelicalism was generally in decline. In this sense, of course, it followed a similar pattern to that set by the First and Second Great Awakenings, which had also been preceded by periods of depressed and unfavourable conditions. This comparison is significant because it would seem to suggest that the great, sweeping American revivals required little if any positive preparation. However, it is clear from the historical record that the 1857-58 revival was preceded by contrition, and repentance that led to a vital and renewed interest in the practice of intercessory prayer.

9.4.1 The origin of the 1857-58 Revival

In October 1857 the New York stock market crashed and this plunged the nation into an economic depression. During the same month, there was a marked increase in city-wide midday prayer meetings that were first started in a church that was located near to the financial district of Manhattan. Thus, it has been assumed (McLoughlin, 1978: 141) that there was a prima facie correlation between the market and the growth of revival prayer meetings among the people of New York City. However, while there can be little doubt that this crash coincided with, and had a bearing on, the revival it could be argued that it is dubious to claim that it precipitated the awakening. Chronologically, for example, the midday prayer meetings had begun in September and had rapidly grown before the date of the stock market crash. Furthermore, the crash coincided with the extraordinary success of a revival that took place in Canada. Hardman (1990: 430), has recorded that by October reports of the Canadian awakening were in the process of being circulated across North America:

“This massive awakening, much briefer than the Second Great Awakening, began inconspicuously in Hamilton, Ontario, in October 1857. Soon religious journals picked up the news and reported that three to four hundred conversions had occurred in a few days. Expectations of a great moving of God became general.”

Thus, in terms of its origination, it is not easy to pinpoint the precise location or starting point of the awakening in 1857. In all probability this revival followed a similar pattern to that of previous 'movements of the Spirit' and its effects were known simultaneously across a large geographical area. New York City, however, clearly played a pivotal role in the preparation and promotion of the revival. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that eighteen months prior to the awakening there were palpable signs of a renewed spiritual hunger within the city. In the spring of 1856, for example, James W. Alexander became aware of encouraging signs (Murray, 1991: 341) within his congregation and noted that when, *'those willing to be guided about seeking salvation'* were invited to gather at his home, over forty people responded. Because of poor health, Alexander took a six-month vacation from May to October 1857. When he arrived back in New York he found that the conditions there had altered dramatically. The financial crisis had depressed the city but the spiritual interest that he had witnessed prior to his (Murray, 1991: 341, 342) trip abroad had increased:

"Ten thousand factory workers in the city stood idle and on October 14 a crisis of panic occurred which 'prostrated the whole monetary system of the country, virtually in one hour'. 'Like a yawning earthquake', wrote Heman Humphrey, 'it shook down the palaces of the rich, no less than the humble dwellings of the poor, and swallowed up their substance. Men went to bed dreaming all night of their vast hoarded treasures, and woke up in the morning hopeless bankrupts.' ... The day after his return from Europe Alexander wrote... 'there is a marked reviving of spiritual interest during the six months of our absence.'"

Thus, the favourable turn toward religion appears to have begun well over a year before the autumn of 1857. This would suggest that while the financial crisis served to accelerate revival in New York City, it was not a precipitate cause of the renewed call to prayer and evangelistic endeavour. Furthermore, this observation would appear to be confirmed by the documented accounts surrounding the origin of the noonday revivalist styled-prayer meetings held within the city. Jeremiah Lamphier was chiefly responsible

for the emergence of the prayer meetings, which started in the Old North Dutch Church on Fulton Street. Prime (1991: 7, 8) reported that Lamphier had been connected to both 'schools' of evangelicalism in New York City:

"Mr Jeremiah Calvin Lamphier was born in Coxackie, New York. He became a resident of this city about twenty years ago, engaged in mercantile pursuits, united with the Tabernacle Church on profession of his faith in 1842, and was for eight or nine years a member of Rev Dr James W. Alexander's church. He joined the North Dutch Church in 1857, and in July 1st of the same year entered upon his work as the missionary of that church, under the direction of its consistory... So began this man his labors, in the most neglected portion of the city of New York, the lower wards. And now for the first idea of a noonday prayer meeting. He says: 'Going my rounds in the performance of my duty one day, as I was walking along the streets, the idea was suggested to my mind that an hour of prayer, from twelve to one o'clock would be beneficial to *business men*, who usually in great numbers take that hour for rest and refreshment...' Arrangements were made, and at twelve o'clock noon, on the 23d day of September 1857, the door of the third storey lecture room was thrown open... Thus, the noonday businessmen's prayer meeting was inaugurated!"

Lamphier's chequered spiritual history might be taken as being indicative of the general mood of analysis, introspection or re-evaluation that surfaced in mid eighteenth century evangelicalism. From his conversion at the Broadway Tabernacle, which was a flagship of the New York *Free Church Movement*, he was drawn to the membership of a church that maintained 'old school' principles. Prime (1991) did not elaborate more fully upon the reasons for this change in Lamphier's direction. However, this change does seem to justify the claim (Long, 1998: 12) that someone who was sympathetic to the traditional form of revivalism led the New York City phase of the awakening. Furthermore, whilst the 1857-58 revival had a wide scope it is generally acknowledged (Stampp, 1990: 237) that the prayer meetings that were formulated by Lamphier had a profound impact upon the extended development and growth of this awakening as it progressed from the north

to south and from east to west. In part, therefore, this awakening can be attributed to the fact that the midday prayer meeting format followed a pattern that was easily replicated and adapted for use across the nation. From the outset these meetings were designed to be focused and purposeful (Prime, 1990: 8) and their arrangements dictated a pattern of quick, sharp and well directed intercessory prayer:

“The idea was to have singing, prayer, exhortation, relation of spiritual experience, as the case might be; that none should be required to stay the whole hour; that all should come and go as their engagements should allow or require, or their inclinations dictate... The old, long, cold, formal routine was to be broken up. Everything was to be arranged for the short stay of those who came. All the exercises were to be brief, pointed and to the purpose, touching the case in hand... They could come in and stay five minutes, or the whole hour, as they pleased. Staying five minutes, they might have an opportunity to take part, for no one was to occupy more than five minutes in remarks, or prayer.”

However, Lamphier was practically on his own as the doors opened for the first midday prayer meeting and there was little to suggest that this would become the primary focus, or means, through which an awakening would speedily advance throughout the city and across the eastern seaboard. Further, the evidence appears to indicate, that he did little if anything to advertise or promote this meeting. By the latter part of 1857, however, there was a progressive increase in the numbers of people who gathered together for prayer at Fulton Street. The success of this initiative is attested by the fact that the midday prayer meeting format was taken up by other churches and agencies and began to thrive across New York City. Murray (1991: 342, 343) records:

“The way in which that interest developed no one could have predicted for it followed no known precedent, at least not on the scale that was soon seen. Lamphier had quietly begun a noon-time prayer meeting in the lecture room of the North Reformed Dutch Church in Lower Manhattan on 23 September, 1857. The first week only six

attended. The next week the number reached twenty and the following, forty. During October the meetings previously held weekly, became daily. By the time the new year began a second room had to be used simultaneously to accommodate the numbers and in February a third. By then a number of similar meetings had begun elsewhere in the city and so marked was the turning to prayer that the *Daily Tribune* of 10 February, 1858, reported, 'Soon the striking of the five bells at 12 o'clock will generally be known as the "Hour of Prayer."' In mid-March Burton's theatre, capable of holding 3,000, was crowded for a prayer meeting and by April scores of buildings- including printers' shops, fire stations, and police stations- were open for the same purpose, necessitating a weekly bulletin with information on the locations of these simultaneous gatherings. In their form they all followed the same simple pattern and catholic breadth of concern which Lamphier had long witnessed at the Nineteenth Street Church."

The 1857-58 awakening, therefore, re-affirmed the puritan concept of revival as being a 'heaven sent' blessing of God. It supported the tradition that had formerly been adhered to by the 'old school' revivalists. Thus, in principle, if not entirely in practice, it marked a return to a view that was opposed to the pragmatic notion that revivals could be 'worked up' or 'kept up' by human effort. Burdened prayer, rather than an organized programme of evangelistic crusades, became the common denominator of this revival. Furthermore, in stark contrast to the acrimonious divisions that had swept through the revivalist cause during the 1830's, the call to prayer resulted in an uncommon degree of blessing among all denominations. The statistics (Long, 1998: 144-150) clearly indicate that there was a percentage increase of between 2-16% in the numerical growth of all the denominations across America during 1858. In each denominational account there is a definite rise and fall in the figures on either side of this year. Thus, far from affecting a localized area or a specific denominational interest, the benefits of this awakening were felt over a broad geographical and ecclesiastical compass. This was highlighted in September 1858 when the delegates and representatives from all the

established denominations joined together to express their praise and thanksgiving at a series of special meetings that took place at Fulton Street (Prime, 1991: 235-249), to commemorate the start of Lamphier's noonday prayer meetings.

9.4.2 The emphasis of the 1857-58 Revival

It could be argued, that through an emphasis on the benevolent or cultural ramifications of this awakening, modern historians have thus obscured or understated the evangelistic thrust of the 1857-58 revival. For example, McLoughlin and Sweet both appear to have bypassed or minimized this central focus. However, the historical record clearly reveals that evangelical conversion was at the very centre of the renewed and revitalized call to intercessory prayer. The main emphasis of the Fulton Street prayer meeting was plainly illustrated in the reports of Samuel Prime, a Princeton graduate and former Presbyterian minister, who became editor of the New York Observer. Prime's eyewitness account of the prayer meeting revival became the subject of a book entitled 'The Power of Prayer' (Prime, 1991: xii), which was popularly received and widely circulated in America and throughout the world. First published in 1859, 'The Power of Prayer' provided a unique insight into the general practice and the particular emphases of the Fulton Street prayer meetings. Prime (1991: 40,41,45,46,47,48) thus reported:

We will now give a brief outline of one meeting, not an unusual one, but such as hundreds of our meetings have been... There are three lecture-rooms at the rear of the North Dutch Church, as it is called, one above another, making first, second and third storeys... We take our seat in the middle lecture room fifteen minutes before twelve noon... Five minutes before twelve, the leader for the day passes in, and takes his seat in the desk... Then he reads the seventeenth chapter of John. A word of comment while he stands up with paper in his hand. There is a little sea of upturned, solemn faces. A deep stillness pervades the assembly... 'I will read four or five of these requests, and will call on someone to follow immediately in prayer, remembering these cases. He reads: 'A gospel minister sends a very urgent request for four brothers to be remembered in prayer, that they might be converted... 'From Philadelphia, for a brother and sister

who are *trying* to be earnest seekers after the grace of God.'...When a person presents a request for prayer, and that prayer is answered, he felt it to be a duty to communicate the fact for the encouragement of the meeting...A gentleman said he had a teller of one of our city banks, who felt greatly concerned for the salvation of his three sisters unconverted. He presented a request at one of our Fulton street prayer meetings... 'And now I am here to say that those three sisters are rejoicing in the pardoning love of Jesus...This is but a sketch of one of the many meetings in Fulton street and other places in this city.

Thus, the main focus of the prayer meeting was evangelistic, and this mirrored the emphasis of an older revivalism. Moreover in 1857-58, prayer preceded method and there was less preoccupation with the use of 'measures'. Perhaps the depressed fortunes of revivalists during 1840s-50's were partly responsible for this development. The confidence in evangelistic campaigns and techniques had faltered through these years, and it became obvious that many such methods had done little to advance the cause of effective revivalism. Furthermore, it became apparent that the controversies that developed in the late 1820's had damaged the revivalist cause and had largely diminished the level of popular support for an older evangelicalism. It could be argued that such solemn impressions played a vital part in maintaining the correct focus of the 1857-58 revival. Greater care was taken to eschew any action or method that threatened to bring the awakening into disrepute. The 'people's revival' therefore, tended to operate against the undue influence of excitements or enthusiasm and was generally free from the competing force of prominent preachers and evangelists. Furthermore, it commonly tended to encourage unity among the churches, rather than division or separation. Thus, it helped to remedy the negative impression of revivalism that had pertained since the early 1830's. Samuel Prime (1991: 30, 31) was convinced that this was one of the chief reasons for its continued effectiveness:

The character of the work was as remarkable as its inception and extent. It had its peculiarities in feature as well as in power. It lacked almost everything that made up the leading features of the revivals of '30 and '32... There was no unrestrained excitement, no exuberant

and intemperate zeal. There was nothing which required an effort to 'keep it up', under the common idea that excitement was essential to the revival and part and parcel of the same. ... There is no offence to good taste; nothing reprehensible in the view of just propriety in this revival. This adds to its elements of power.

In theological terms, therefore, the 1857-58 awakening affirmed 'old school' principles and elevated revival as a *work* of God. Revivalism, as defined by the 'new school,' was eclipsed at this point in American church history. It would seem that the success of this awakening could be attributed to the extraordinary dénouement of power that attended the use of common or regular 'scriptural means'. Promotion of evangelicalism by means of organized evangelism, or excitable revivalism, was entirely absent. Thus, with very little organization, the awakening of 1858 was advanced with a minimum amount of effort or planning, and soon transplanted itself in different locations and across an ever-widening geographical area. In this sense, of course, it was reminiscent of the general outworking of those historical 'movements of the Spirit' that had occurred in America during the previous great awakenings. Murray (1991: 349, 350) states:

'As the *New York Christian Advocate* commented on the 'divine visitation to the whole land', it had 'arisen amid the ordinary means of grace.' And the visitation had come mysteriously and simultaneously in so many places at once. From Charleston to Boston, Christians were united in a common testimony: 'Awed by the manifest presence of God which we have felt to be around us, conscious that it has arisen from no measure of ours, nay, more that it has come in spite of our coldness, of our inaction, and of our indifference.'

Historically, therefore, it can be claimed that the 1857-58 revival constituted the last great 'movement of the Spirit' in North America. This awakening re-emphasized those aspects of a 'revival tradition' that had been established during the 1740's. Furthermore, it could be argued that this awakening, more than others of its type, highlighted several 'key means' that seem to be elemental, or foundational to revival as

a 'heaven sent' work of God. These 'scriptural means' that were briefly dealt with in the revival lectures of Finney and Sprague were brought into clearer focus throughout the general awakening that occurred in the late eighteen-fifties. First, the 1857-58 awakening began, and developed, as the direct result of a renewed commitment to intercessory prayer. The Fulton Street prayer meetings played a crucial role in the development of this particular trend. Thus, this revival demonstrated the direct relationship between prayer and the 'movement of the Spirit'. Further, the historical record shows that from the beginning this call to prayer began quietly and almost imperceptibly. Moreover, prayer seemed to operate without a requirement to generate that level of excitement or enthusiasm that had typified the 'new school' model of intercessory prayer. In short, these meetings were indicative of an 'old school' model of intercession that operated upon the principle (Isaiah 64: 1, 2) of pleading for a divine intervention through covenantal prayer. The 1857-58 awakening was predicated upon a biblical or covenantal view of revivals and represented this emphasis. Those who gathered to pray applied themselves to 'seeking God's face' (2 Chronicles 7: 14, Psalm 80: 3, 7, 14-19, Hosea 5: 15), and this formed the basis of their intercession. The noonday prayer meetings thus served a motive that was peculiar to 'old school' revivalism. However, following the American Civil War, this emphasis was lost as a result of the challenge of theological liberalism, and a resurgent interest in favour of the evangelistic methods of 'new school' evangelicalism. Lloyd-Jones (1987: 4, 5) has thus argued that the 1858 revival represented something of a watershed in the history of American and western evangelicalism:

'We come now to the striking fact that there seems to have been a great change in people's outlook on this whole matter after about 1860, or 1870. There seems to have been a kind of dividing line at that historical juncture. Before that, we find that people thought in terms of revival, and we hear of frequent revivals in the history of the church; but after that, revivals become rather exceptional phenomena. By now, I believe, we have reached an age in which the vast majority of church members have almost ceased to think in terms of revival at all. Up until 1860 it was the instinctive thing to think in terms of

revival. If there had been a period of spiritual drought, if things were not going well in the church, the first thing they thought of was this- 'Should we not have a time of confession and humiliation and prayer to God to visit us again.' They did it almost instinctively.'

Second, the 1857-58 awakening resulted from gatherings of people who were united in a common evangelical purpose. The revival was transplanted rapidly and exported the seeds of a harmonious 'movement of the Spirit.' Practically, this revival produced a broad-based 'unity' that was expressed at popular level in the shared sympathy and co-operation of people drawn from diverse denominational bodies. Eyewitness accounts revealed the extent to which this 'unity' was experienced and a reluctance to do anything that might frustrate or hinder the continuation of an extraordinary work of the Spirit. These facts illustrate that 'unity' was established, and became a vital component in the success of the awakening. Furthermore, it can be claimed that the 1857-58 revival demonstrated the effects of a 'unity' that is presented, commended, defined and illustrated within the Holy Scriptures.

'How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together
in unity!..
For *there* the LORD bestows his
blessing,
even life forever more.' (Psalm 133: 1&3 NIV.)

In essence, of course, the blessing referred to in this psalm is predicated upon a 'unity' amongst the *covenant* people of God. Similarly, Jesus' priestly prayer (John 17: 6-25) was 'new covenantal', in that he prayed for his disciples to be sanctified by the truth in order to demonstrate a unity that would confound the world. Paul's encouragements to unity (Ephesians 4: 1-6, Philippians 2: 1-12) were delivered to new covenant believers. Furthermore, those blessings that are recorded in the Acts of Apostles (Acts 2: 42-47, 4: 34, 35) resulted from the 'unity' that was expressed amongst new covenant believers in the apostolic church. Thus, it could be claimed, that the 1857-58 revival reaffirmed this

commitment to a biblical unity through the call to prayer and that this 'unity' was based upon commonly held evangelical aspirations. In essence, this 'unity' did not result from an external organized force, or from the mere conventions of external religious practice, but as an expression of covenantal faith and action. Thus, when the people met together for prayer the resultant 'unity' was consistent with a 'biblical spirituality' that is clearly identified and expounded in the scriptures.

9.5 Summary

From 1835-1855 most revivalists witnessed a sharp decline in the power of that type of evangelicalism that was common in the eastern states and on the western frontier during the Second Great Awakening. Therefore, under this chapter heading I have attempted to underline the declining fortunes of the various schools of revivalism, which occurred in the crucial period of the mid nineteenth century.

This decline, I have argued, seems to have run alongside the growth of the '*benevolent empire*'; and the massive efforts to secure the common good through social welfare programmes meant that both 'old school' and 'new school' revivalists had to struggle to uphold their primary emphasis on evangelism. Furthermore, I have maintained, that the postmillennial confidence that was maintained by many of the revivalists of the First and Second Great Awakenings, was misdirected in a manner that seriously undermined the cause of revivalism. This was particularly the case with some 'new school' activists who began *a priori* to advocate a humanitarian or political agenda. However, other men within the 'new school,' most notably Charles G. Finney, retained their commitment to the prior claim of evangelism, and their form of revivalism was preserved in the crucial years that preceded the American Civil War.

In addition, I have attempted to show that 'old school' revivalism retained a significant influence during the mid nineteenth century. Thus, I have argued against the notion that this 'school' was effectively defeated and overwhelmed by the theological and practical trends that emerged in the revivalism of the 1830's. Further, I have tried to substantiate the argument that the 'old school' emphasis was responsible for, or had a direct bearing

upon, another awakening that later began in New York City. Finally, in connection with the 1857-58 revival, I have attempted to examine and assess the cause and effect of this awakening. In particular, I have examined the relationship between the 'means' that led to, or accompanied, the 'blessing.' In this overview, I have endeavoured to highlight the covenantal nature and value of 'intercessory prayer' with the 'unity of the Spirit' and to indicate their place or importance within the history and theology of revival. Thus, with qualification, I have concluded that revivals are '*means based*' and that certain biblical conditions, if not preconditions, were fulfilled through the development and outworking of this particular 'movement of the Spirit.' Revivals thus combine divine agency (Psalm 80: 3, 7, 19) and human responsibility (Psalm 80: 18) within the context of a covenantal relationship.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

10.1 General Remarks

The period between 1730-1860 witnessed significant developments within thinking and practice of revivalists in North America. During America's Great Awakenings this thinking was largely governed by an acceptance of a 'puritan evangelicalism,' which maintained that conversion resulted from regeneration by the prior agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus, revivals were regarded as the consequence of a divine prerogative through the means of periodic and unconditional 'movements of the Spirit.' However, during the 1820's, this understanding shifted toward the view that 'revivals could be promoted by the right use of 'means.' During this decade, an American evangelical tradition was founded that has continued to impact on the thinking and practice of the church throughout the twentieth century and down to the present day. This form of revivalism has become synonymous with an evangelistic pragmatism and a more 'humanistic' understanding of conversion.

In general terms, this thesis has attempted to assess and consider the historical backdrop to these developments. Furthermore, it has attempted to address the theological tensions that existed between the different revivalist traditions. In particular, it has examined the question as to whether a revival is 'means promoted' or 'means related.' Following this examination, it has concluded that revival is the result of a divine prerogative that starts to operate in the fellowship of believers through a revitalized and renewed commitment to '*covenanted means*'. This thesis has concluded that scripture and church history both indicate that revival is the outcome of 'covenant grace', but that renewed call to prayer and unity is predicated on the active 'covenantal relationship' that exists between Christ and members of his church on earth. Further, revivals generally re-establish the primary 'evangelistic focus' of the church and lead onto a resurgent interest in the characteristic features, or patterns, of apostolic fellowship. Such 'movements of the Spirit', therefore, are consistent with the desire to attend upon the apostle's doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

10.2 A brief synopsis of the dissertation

This thesis has been based around developments in revivalism during a crucial period in the history of North America. It has attempted to show that the thinking and practice of leading revivalists changed during 1730-1860. This thesis has been supported by means of correlating the history of this period with a consideration of the published material of those revivalists who lived during this specific time frame.

- **The historical background** to the thesis is especially highlighted in chapters: two, four, six and nine.

Further, the specific focus of this thesis has been to evaluate the theological relationship that exists between *'divine agency and human means'* in connection with extraordinary movements of the Spirit. In particular this aim has centred upon those conflicting views of revival that emerged in debates that occurred in the 1820-30's and were supported by different schools of evangelical thinking.

- **The theological background** to the thesis is especially highlighted in chapters: three, five, seven and eight.

Finally, this thesis has aimed to show that the account of the 1857-58 revival provides a historical illustration of the connection between divine agency and human means during a 'movement of the Spirit.' Thus, it has indicated that scripture and church history both confirm that revivals result from 'covenant grace', through 'covenant conditions', that are based on covenantal relationship.

- **The main conclusion** to the thesis is especially highlighted in chapter nine.

Thus, this thesis has attempted to weave historical data with theological comment in an attempt to show that revivals are *'means'* related and that reformed theology, therefore, can and should assert the covenantal connection.

10.3 A challenge for further research and theological precision.

This thesis has queried some of the exegetical and theological assumptions that formed the basis of an apologia for revival. Further, it has challenged the manner in which both reformed and neo evangelical leaders in early to mid nineteenth America defined their contrasting views of revival and revivalism. However, this thesis has acknowledged that the American nation, along with other nations, has known extraordinary outpourings of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in identifiable and remarkable periods of church growth. The historical data, therefore, clearly endorses the fact that revivals are a new covenant phenomenon.

It could be argued, however, that the reformed concept of revival has been buried under the weight of popular evangelical trends within the last one hundred and fifty years and has thus been overwhelmed. This is particularly the case within the western hemisphere where the last outstanding 'movement of the Spirit' occurred throughout parts of Wales in the years between 1904-1906. Since then, there has not been a national revival of any great scale in America or Europe. Furthermore, if the concept or expectation of revival has been maintained in the west it has generally been through those who have espoused Pentecostalism or neo-Pentecostalism. Revivals have thus been inseparably linked with a 'second blessing theology' or an 'over-realised eschatology' that has tended to offend reformed cessationists and a-millennialists. Moreover, those of the reformed persuasion who are committed to a revival theology can tend to argue for their case on the basis of the records of church history rather than scripture. It could be argued, therefore, that the time has come to revisit the thinking of the nineteenth century revivalists and to provide a less obscure and more coherent, cross-covenantal and exegetically satisfying theology of revival and revivalism in the post-modernist world. To date, such a monumental work does not appear to exist, and thus the church is still rehashing the time-old arguments in favour of revival that became prominent in America and the world, through the lectures offered by Sprague and Finney in the early to mid 1830's. Perhaps the work of some of the modern reformed authors referred to in the bibliography of this thesis will provide a stepping-stone in the direction of a more precise view of revival.

10.4 A concluding statement

10.4.1 The continued impact of new school revivalism

Following the Civil War, 'new school' thinking and practice became the dominant force in American evangelicalism. The reason for this appears to be connected with changing social patterns and with the emergence of a new group of evangelists who maintained a modified form of western revivalism. Sweet (1965: 167,168,169) records:

"The astonishing growth of American cities from 1880 to the end of the century was one of the marvels of the age. This growth was due to the attractive power of manufacturing centers, drawing population from the small towns and rural communities, and to an even greater degree from the overcrowded countries of Europe... Thus again a religious crisis was created through mass immigration, comparable to that of the early part of last century as a result of the western movement of population. Again great numbers of people were cutting themselves loose from their old homes, their churches, their schools, and their old neighbors to find new homes in the rapidly developing American cities... It was the city which gave rise to the professional revivalist. There had been a few men, such as Asahel Nettleton, in the early part of the nineteenth century who devoted all their time to revivalism, but the vocational evangelist came into existence with the rise of the city. The greatest of all the professional revivalists was undoubtedly Dwight L. Moody. His evangelistic career began immediately following the Civil War, and ended with his death in the very midst of a great meeting in Kansas City in 1899. All his meetings were city campaigns conducted in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Boston, St Louis, San Francisco."

Moody's evangelistic endeavours thus included many features of 'new school' thinking and practice. The preaching was simplified and he urged immediate conversion through his employment of the '*anxious seat*'. Through Moody's success, campaign evangelism became the chief method of advancing the kingdom among the growing

urbanized class and his practice became commonly accepted in the major cities of America and Britain. The emphasis thus shifted toward an organised and specialized form of evangelism that was increasingly based on a high level of financial support through well-publicized and well-managed campaign meetings. Sweet (1965: 170,171) thus states:

“In the latter years of this type of city evangelism, there was great emphasis placed on highly organized machinery set up by business agents, who demanded that great sums of money be subscribed before the meetings could begin. “Billy” Sunday carried the “Big time” evangelism to an extreme equaled by none of his contemporaries. He utilized almost to perfection the techniques of big business in organizing his campaigns and very large sums of money were subscribed to carry them forward... He always rated large headlines in the newspapers and in other ways attracted the attention of the public generally. This technique, however, by the middle of the nineteen-twenties had begun to pall on the public and during the last years of his life his influence and popularity had greatly declined.”

In the 1950's Billy Graham re-established this model of campaign evangelism through his evangelistic crusades. Graham's evangelistic focus, presentation and methods could have traced their origin to Moody to Finney. The Graham Organization was essentially committed to reassert a 'fundamentalist agenda' in an 'ecumenical climate' by methods that had become commonplace in America following the 1830's. However, it has been argued (Murray, 2000: 79-149) that Graham's willingness to accommodate his agenda to his support base meant that his crusades were generally ineffective and evangelically compromised. Whether or not this is true, the Graham crusades clearly operated against an historical and theological background far removed from that which pertained during the mid to late nineteenth century. This said, it could now be argued that the Graham crusades were the last attempt to re-unite the modern world with an evangelicalism and form of revivalism rooted in the Great Awakenings. From the 1970's, there has been a decline in the fortunes of crusade evangelism, which may be the result of the

disinclination of a post-modern culture. In Britain, for example, the highly organized or professional forms of evangelism have been replaced, in the past fifteen years, by small group courses designed for the purpose of evangelistic outreach. This shift is indicative of the fact the popular culture in the west has led the church to re-mould its evangelism. Similarly, some traditional crusade evangelists have also been challenged to re-examine their methodology in an effort to engage the post-modern generation in terms that they can understand. For example, in order to accommodate and embrace the popular culture the evangelist Luis Palau has turned (palau.org/lpea/about/luisbio.php) from the basis of his former evangelistic practices:

“Unlike many of his contemporaries, Luis Palau embraced the new millennium (and contemporary life as we know it today), long before it arrived. His festival evangelism ministry, traveling to numerous cities and countries each year, has all the best elements of today’s most popular music festivals (everything from hot contemporary music acts and exotic food stands to a full-blown, stand-alone extreme sports skate park)...The festival are always free and never collect a financial offering from the massive crowds. The Palau team is able to do this by overseeing a highly professional and strategically organized operation that spends up to two years building financial and spiritual support from hundreds of churches businesses and individuals within the geographic area and beyond. “I spend more time raising money than I used to,” he admits, “but its worth it. The impact on a city can be enormous.”... “We began to realize that the choirs with their uniforms, the clergy on the platform, the old hymns weren’t the way to go,” Luis says. “ Trust me, that format is not going to attract today’s secular audience, and we want them to encounter God... Palau at the suggestion of his sons, moved to the current method of evangelism in 1999. “Now we wouldn’t ever go back to the old method ... It’s not for this generation. The festivals are for today.”

Moreover, during the past thirty years, crusade styled evangelism has been re-packaged by neo-Pentecostals. The evangelists Reinhard Bonnke and Maurice Cerullo are both indicative of a change of direction. Through their influence the 'platform' has tended to move from the traditional centre of preaching and overtly evangelistic campaigning to a much greater emphasis on the use of 'healing or, prophetic ministries.' This remodelled form of crusade evangelism has been variously received in different parts of the world. In general terms, it appears to have been greeted unfavourably within Europe and North America while it seems to be gaining success and is doing better in parts of Africa, Asia and South America. However, in terms of a general format, it is clear that the means (fijifire2003@connect.com.fj) employed by Charles G. Finney and D.L. Moody are still in vogue among the neo-Pentecostals:

"Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke is best known for his major crusades throughout the continent of Africa ... He began holding tent meetings that accommodated 800 people. As attendance steadily increased, larger tents had to be purchased. Finally in 1984 he commissioned the construction of the world's largest mobile structure – a tent capable of sitting 34,000 people. And still, attendance at the service soon exceeded the capacity of this tent... Between November 2002 and March 2003 (in a total of seven crusades), there were an incredible 7.2 million completed decision cards. With 5 meetings per crusade, that averaged some 205,000 salvations per meeting!"

Thus, in a modified or re-modelled form, western revivalist trends that came to the fore during the Second Great Awakening are still applied on a broader geographical basis in contemporary evangelicalism. Palau, Bonnke and Cerullo are still applying a technique and a rationale that first belonged to new school thinking and practice and have adapted this for continued use in reaching the post-modern mind and furthering the international agenda of neo-pentecostalism. Thus, from a modern perspective, it could be argued that versatility was one of the great strengths of the 'new school' thinking and practice, and that it contained a flexible *modus operandi* that has been able to survive and to thrive

within today's global village. However, it might also be claimed that its adaptability has often been offset by a tendency to water down biblical truth in order to accommodate its support base, or to be controlled by an unhealthy pragmatism. If the 'revival' of religion is connected with a theologically defined, covenantal relationship then clearly it must be questionable as to whether or not modern 'crusade evangelism' can or will ever become the 'means' of a fresh 'reviving' work of God. Perhaps, the perceived deficiencies and weakness of this mode of evangelism, together with the post-modern antipathy to organized religion, will become a turning point in favour of 'revivals'.

10.4.2 The continued impact of old school revivalism

Following the Civil War, 'old school' thinking and practice was generally overtaken and replaced in American evangelicalism. Its decline was undoubtedly linked to the gradual development and acceptance of liberal theology and an emergence of evangelists whose practices were supported by the growing urban classes.

The old school understanding of revival was governed by a common commitment to the *authority* of scripture as it was upheld or expounded within the reformed confessions of faith. Before the 1860's, mainline denominational churches across Britain and America would have differed only in their interpretations of relatively minor issues of polity and practice. Thus, they would have been united (Free Church of Scotland: 21,22) together around the Westminster Confession:

"V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God ... VI. The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary

for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

However, by the late nineteenth century a commitment to the authority of scripture was seriously undermined. During this period, the advance of Darwinian evolution and form criticism became twin opponents of the belief in the inspired biblical text as maintained by ‘old school’ evangelicals. Thus, faith and the call to discipleship that had previously been based on a commonly accepted ‘authority’ were replaced by a growing scepticism and a call for a new basis of unity. The full speed and extent to which the historic claim for the inspiration of scripture was overtaken in the west is illustrated by the lamentable battle between C.H. Spurgeon and fellow members of the Baptist Union in the so-called (Murray, 1966) ‘*downgrade controversy*’. These late nineteenth century trends clearly impacted upon the ‘old school’ understanding of revivals, which was predicated upon a clear commitment to the authority of scripture. From 1890-1950, therefore, this view of revival fell into obscurity only to be restated once more through the renewed interest in biblical theology within the last fifty years.

It can also be argued that the ‘old school’ understanding of revival was obscured by the development of ‘campaign evangelism.’ This particular innovation represented a major shift in western evangelicalism toward the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, whereas the American church had witnessed church growth through periodic ‘movements of the Spirit’, D.L. Moody and his successors effectively flattened this emphasis through their professional type of urban evangelism. In time, therefore, the older view of revival was gradually displaced by the success of crusade evangelism. The extent or measure of this displacement is illustrated by the curious fact that during the twentieth century the word ‘revivals’ has commonly been used or applied in connection with organized evangelism in the United States.

Edwards, (2001: 13) thus comments:

“Too often the word ‘revival’ refers either to a series of evangelistic meetings, or to a mission for the deepening of the spiritual life of the church members. This is often how it is used in North America... James Orr, the historian of revival, used to illustrate this by the example of two churches in the same town in America each boasting a poster that advertised revival meetings. One claimed, ‘Revival here every Monday night’, whilst the other assured passers-by, ‘Revival here every night except Monday’.”

Thus, in terms of its biblical or historical use, the word ‘revival’ has been devalued and minimized. Further, historical accounts of the Great Awakenings appear to indicate that ‘movements of the Spirit’ were not confined to, or in any way contingent upon, a use of evangelistic campaigns and organized meetings. Thus, while ‘crusade evangelism’ may have its uses and might possibly fulfill a purpose within a ‘revived’ context it is clearly a misnomer to refer to organized or planned meetings as ‘revivals.’ In the latter part of the twentieth century, therefore, there has been (Edwards, 2001: Gumbel, 1997) a studious attempt by reformed and charismatic authors to re-assert a more scriptural definition of revivals. Perhaps, in time, these efforts will bear fruit and thus a more biblical definition will be re-incorporated into western evangelicalism in a way that will result in renewed urgent desires to apply for, and receive, revival blessings.

Furthermore, in favour of the ‘old school’ view, there is sound biblical and historical support to uphold the viewpoint that favourable circumstances operating within general society, or in the church, are not an essential or necessary pre-requisite for revivals of religion. Thus, it can be argued that the seeming rejection of ‘old school’ thinking and practices at the conclusion of the nineteenth century has not lessened the prospect for further renewed ‘*movements of the Spirit*’ within the post-modern western world. In fact, since 1858, the historical records indicate that there have still been some revivals in the west that have conformed to a biblical pattern.

- **Welsh Revival 1904-1906** This ‘movement of the Spirit,’ which commenced in late 1904, reached the rural heartlands of North and West Wales, as well as coal mining communities within industrial South Wales. Newspaper reporters from the Western Mail captured the progression of this revival for posterity. This newspaper recorded the precise numbers of those who had professed conversion in all of the towns and villages affected by this extraordinary ‘outpouring of the Spirit’. In January 1905, one edition of the Western Mail contained a table, which confirmed the registration of seventy thousand converts, and descriptions of this revival (welshrevival.org/) indicate that this blessing was evidenced by many of the same features that had occurred in 1857-58. This was the last *major* revival on the British mainland.
- **East Anglia Revival 1921** This ‘movement of the Spirit’ began to impact upon the eastern counties of England and later spread up into Northern Scotland. In a recent publication (Griffin, 1992), the origin of this revival has been traced to a renewed interest in intercessory prayer amongst churches in the fishing town of Lowestoft. Griffin, (1992: 14) states:

“The outstanding feature in the life of the Baptist Church prior to the revival was the weekly prayer meeting. This was held in the schoolroom on Monday evenings with an attendance of up to ninety people seeking God for a great manifestation of His power...The people prayed faithfully in this way for two years. One member, who had prayed most fervently, died just before the revival began. Prayer reached a crescendo early in 1921.”

Towards the end of March 1921, this revival started as people crowded into the churches of this provincial port. Douglas Brown of the east end of London was the key evangelist during this awakening. It appears that his preaching, and the results that followed, came from a whole-hearted commitment to communicate the basic tenets of biblical, apostolic doctrine.

Griffin, (1992: 26,27) records:

“During the week in Lowestoft, upon a moderate statement, about eighty persons entered the enquiry rooms at the Baptist Church from Tuesday to Friday, and among them some very striking cases of conversion... The outstanding feature of this spiritual movement was the preaching of the Gospel... Although the evening meetings were formal, with Douglas Brown preaching in an academic gown, he spoke simply on the basic truths of the Christian faith from Scripture, with the Cross central to every message...’My father took me to the meetings; I was twelve at the time,’ a lady recounted, ‘but, I can hear Douglas Brown now: ‘The woman left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come see a man which told me all things that I ever did; is not this the Christ?’”(John 4:28-29)... I also heard him preach on Jesus going up to the cross,’ she continued. ‘He kept pointing, you could see it all, it was so touching.’”

Thus, the East Anglia revival of 1921 was characterized by a use of covenantal means. The twin emphasis upon intercession and evangelism revealed the same basic pattern found in the great awakenings and maintained by the advocates of ‘old school’ thinking and practice. However, it is significant that this particular revival did not lead, as it had previously done in 1740, 1859 and 1904, to a more extensive and general ‘movement of the Spirit.’

- **Hebrides Revival 1949** Revival, in terms of an ‘old school’ tradition, appeared lastly in the Scottish Hebrides. There, the same pattern began to emerge on the Isles of Lewis and Harris. Woolsey (1974: 113) records:

“There was a growing carelessness toward spiritual matters among the younger generation... The Christians longed to see a renewed manifestation of God’s power. This was evident in the earnestness of the weekly prayer-meetings and in the conversation of God’s people when they met together... Gradually in many praying hearts concern

deepened into a conviction that God's time to favour them with a further outpouring of His Spirit had come. Prayer was intensified and faith encouraged. Expectation grew that something would happen."

Once again this vital commitment to intercession was subsequently followed by the arrival of an evangelist who maintained a reformed view regarding inspired, authoritative scripture and re-asserted apostolic doctrine. Duncan Campbell was committed to the same basic stance that had been maintained by the 'old school' revivalists: (Woolsey, 1974: 152) 'Preach the word! Sing the Word! Live the word!' he declared, 'Anything outside of this has no sanction in heaven!' Griffin, (1992: 96.) records:

"The revival in the Scottish Hebrides in 1949 appears to have been the most Biblical ... When the revival came it was marked by an awesome sense of God's presence, followed by a deep spirit of repentance... The Rev. Duncan Campbell, a former Free Church minister ... preached with convicting, reviving and converting power, and parish ministers were revived with their congregations. In some places the community was deeply affected."

However, as with Lowestoft, this 'movement of the Spirit' was far less extensive than other recorded revivals. It might be argued, that the Hebridean islands were too geographically remote for the transference of blessing to other places, which meant that the impact of this revival was not widespread. The historical account, however, appears to confirm that this revival was in line with the classic 'old school' tradition and that it had all the hallmarks of previous revivals which have taken place within Britain and America.

Thus, whilst 'old school' thinking and practices have been marginalized, it has not been entirely overwhelmed in the twentieth century. Those historic 'movements of the Spirit' that occurred in North America between 1730-1860 have found counterparts within the modern era; and revivals based on the same covenantal pattern have continued, albeit less prominently, in various evangelical constituencies. Furthermore, there is no

biblical, or historical reason to assume 'old school' revivals will not emerge once again in a post-modern western world. Revival, as has been argued in this thesis, does not require favourable conditions or evangelical pragmatism so much as the faithful and penitent cry of emboldened intercessors. On this basis, it can be anticipated that the first mark or sign of the next great awakening, will be preceded by the same focus, spirit and passion found in the intercessory prayer of Isaiah (Isaiah 63:15&16, 64:1&2 NIV).

Look down from heaven and
see
from your lofty throne, holy
and glorious.

Where are your zeal and your
might?

Your tenderness and
compassion are withheld
from us.

But you are our Father,
though Abraham does not
know us
or Israel acknowledge us;
you, O LORD, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is
your name.

Oh that you would rend
the heavens and come
down,

that the mountains would
tremble before you.

As when fire sets twigs ablaze
and causes water to boil,
come down to make your
name known to your
enemies
and cause the nations to
quake before you!

FINIS

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