

Considerations On Revival in American History

America has seen tremendous outpourings of God's blessings through the course of her history. These gracious demonstrations of Jehovah's power brought about much good nationally, within denominationalism, and among Christ's Baptist churches. An examination of American revival provides a necessary backdrop for sound understanding of both her church and national history, and correct views of God's past workings and the resultant demonic counteractions provide background for sound evaluation of modern trends within the church, the kingdom of God, and Christendom, that, current affairs soundly evaluated, the soldier of Jesus Christ may war his good warfare with proper historical understanding, and so serve his Master more effectively.

Revival among Protestant denominations is akin to that seen in Israel in the Old Testament, while revival in sound Baptist churches bears strong affinity to that observed in the book of Acts. In Israel, under the dispensation of the Law, membership within God's nation came through birth and was ratified through (among the males) circumcision. Conversion was not a stated prerequisite to the offering of sacrifices (Num 15:13), and the Levitical and priestly offices were hereditary, so that the holiest of God's forgiven saints who did not possess the proper physical heritage could not usurp the office, while, unfortunately, and contrary to God's purpose that all Israelites would receive forgiveness and a new heart through faith in the Messiah of the Abrahamic covenant, outwardly represented to the nation in circumcision (Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jer 4:4), lost men frequently held prominent stations within the theocracy (Jud 17:7ff., 1 Sam 2:12, etc.), even in Moses' day (Num 16:1ff.). When the monarchy was established, God as judgment gave Israel an unconverted man, Saul, to rule the nation, and many of the later kings were also without forgiveness through Christ. The Israel of God, the elect Jews who had spiritual descent from Abraham as well as physical descent, formed only a portion of the nation (Rom 9:6)— a portion which was often, sadly, very small (Rom 11:1-10); in the northern

kingdom in Elijah's day, it appeared to consist of only seven thousand (1 Ki 19:18). Revival in Israel brought about a restoration of Biblical ordinances of worship (Ez 9:8-9), deliverance from physical bondage (Ps 80), and the forgiveness of sins (2 Ch 7:14) of members of the covenant nation, both the sins of those formerly without propitiation through the Messiah and those of backslidden saints (Ps 84, Is 57:15). Evangelization of Gentiles was unquestionably commanded Israel (Pr 11:30), and revival in the nation brought about their ingathering (Ps 67, Dt 28:10, 1 Ki 8:41, Ez 6:21, etc.)— however, there was also a constant need for evangelization of those within the covenant community because conversion was not a prerequisite to membership, and the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles was greatly hindered when this failed to occur.

A major reason for the similarities between Old Testament revival and that within Protestant denominations¹ is their common application, although in different measures in accordance with their divergent ecclesiological practices, of Israelitish practices to their organizations; this contrasts with the Biblical and Baptist practice of maintaining church doctrine entirely from the volume which actually speaks of and establishes the polity for Christ's *ecclesia*, the New Testament. The general adoption of infant sprinkling for church membership allows the unconverted to enter the Protestant "covenant community" in a manner similar to that

¹ Conclusions in this paragraph are necessarily generalizations, for the Protestant bodies differ in very important ways among themselves. Furthermore, revival is only possible within denominational groups of which at least portions preach the true gospel. Revival in bodies which have retained the works salvation of the Popery from which they protested would require a fundamental alteration in doctrine. This explains, for example, the widespread absence of revival in American Lutheranism, for Luther believed in baptismal regeneration, as an examination of his catechisms or the relevant sections of his commentaries on Romans and Galatians demonstrates, and Melancthon and others associated with him passed on this demonic doctrine to the great majority of Lutherans today. Modern day non-modernistic American Lutheranism, such as that within portions of the Missouri Synod, cannot see revival without a repudiation of their creed, the founder of their denomination, and the conversion to Christ of some of their members. The Westminster Confession, the authority for the faith and practice of conservative Presbyterianism, in contrast, is easily interpreted to teach salvation by faith alone, despite confusion about baptism and the Lord's supper, so that a Presbyterian can remain true to his fundamental creed and be regenerate. This makes it possible for God to move in the denomination in a way of blessing, instead of that of judgment only, as within a Luther-style Lutheranism. Revival among creedally anti-gospel Protestants is about as possible as Christian revival within the confines of Muslim or Hindu sects. Revival among modern day mainline modernists who reject inerrancy is also obviously impossible.

formerly found in Israel, and often those embraced in the bosom of denominational churches in this manner are then permitted to proceed to high places in the ecclesiological hierarchy without the new birth, so that Protestant ministers, in a fashion comparable to the hereditary priests and Levites, consist of, at best, a mixture of the sons of God and of Belial. This has often been the situation ever since the time of denominational inception—one can hardly suppose that widespread conversion of Catholic State-church ministers and church members to Protestant State-church ministers and members in the political turmoil of the Reformation resulted in an equally widespread experience of the new birth—that certain creeds, such as those of the Council of Trent, are absolutely incompatible with regeneration does not signify that the adoption of a more Biblical creed and ecclesiastical ritual bears with it a change in heart wrought by the Holy Ghost. The kings, nobles, and parliamentary bodies that exerted their influence upon State churches were not themselves converted by adopting Protestantism; empty professions of religion abounded and corresponded with the often kudzu-like spread of tares within theocratic Israel. Saints within Protestantism constitute the minority, as the Israel of God did within Jewry, and Protestant revival increases the percentage within the denominational membership that has been renewed by God, gives the saints greater positions of authority, increases the portion of the spiritual leadership that truly knows the Savior and preaches the gospel, and often brings the group closer to the stark demarcation between the saints and the ungodly taught by the New Testament and practiced by historic Baptist churches; practices such as the restriction of the Lord's supper to those professing experimental conversion, the restriction of the pulpit to those born from above, and the proliferation of low-churchism, grow in popularity,² while infant baptism becomes less practiced and lower views of alleged sacramental grace prevail.³

² See, for example, the situation among revived Presbyterians described on pgs. 105-106 in *Revival and Revivalism*, Iain H. Murray, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994.

³ See Appendix I: Revival and the Decline of Infant Baptism

Similarly, a closer approximation to obedience to the ordained worship system within the Torah took hold during times of revival in Israel (cf. 2 Ki 23:21ff., 2 Ch 30:1ff., etc.). An expanded body of Protestant saints can effectively participate in the evangelization of those not raised within their sanctuaries— although, as within Israel, the tendency to spiritual declension sets in quickly from the efforts of those ministers and members who remained without Christ within the community, and the constant Achilles’ heel of Protestantism would remain— the rise of a new generation which, although in good denominational standing through catechetical classes and water applied to their foreheads shortly after emergence from the womb, remained without the new birth.

Revival in faithful Baptist churches, the spiritual progeny of first century assemblies, and the divinely preserved and authorized vessels for the propagation of the gospel in this day, works in a sharply different manner from that of both Protestantism and OT Israel, in harmony with the dispensational model in the the book of Acts. Since they derive their church polity from the Testament that actually speaks of the *ekklesia* of Christ, they follow the NT pattern and require conversion before immersion, a picture of a prior gracious working and the Biblically ordained means of entrance into the “covenant community” of the church. While it is not entirely possible to keep false professors out (Ac 20:29-30, Jude 4), they are to be removed, when revealed, through church discipline (1 Cor 5:13), along with all others who do not maintain an upright Christian testimony. The absence of hereditary religious office makes it much harder for the unconverted to gain religious power over God’s people, and, since each assembly is autonomous, the fall of one into error does not bring down all the rest. Furthermore, while it is certain that in times of spiritual declension God’s saints have eased the access of the lost into the church (cf. Rev 2:14-15), God’s promises of perpetuity (Eph 3:21, Mt 28:20, etc.) have always preserved in various locations faithful spiritual Temples of converted individuals. Baptist churches have also

always been free to follow the Word of Jehovah Sabaoth apart from the entanglement of State religious dominance and the associated adulterating influence on doctrine the decrees of unregenerate governmental officials bring. Revived denominationalism strives towards the positions the faithful Baptist church perpetually maintains—God’s hand in the former brings the saints greater ecclesiological authority, while congregational polity in the church of God gives the Royal Priesthood all authority; revived Protestantism sees an increase in the percentage of renewed ministers, while in the church all the leadership lies within the host of the elect (and, indeed, the Savior holds the under-Shepherds He has commissioned in His right hand, Rev 1:20); a work of the Lord among those protesting Rome may lead to a more visible roadblock between the sons of Abraham and of Cain through reformed practices such as restricted communion, while Baptist churches maintain a chasm between those born only of the flesh and the regenerate through both their ordinances. Since the Lord walks with His candlesticks (Rev 1:11ff.), His Spirit dwells in them (1 Cor 3:16), and they are His chosen institution for service in this dispensation, Baptist churches are able to prosecute the reason for the existence of all creation, the worship of God (Rev 4:11), more effectively than the most highly reformed society outside of Christ’s *ekklesia*. Revival in Scriptural Baptist churches, unshackled from Protestant hindrances and able to follow the NT pattern successfully (which denominational organizations founded centuries after Christ are unable to do, for they are not envisioned in Scripture), results in edification and power from the Spirit within congregations (Ac 9:31b-d), and consequent multiplication of new churches (Ac 9:31e) as a result of aggressive evangelism of the outside world (Ac 2, 3, 4, etc.) in accordance with the Great Commission (Mt 28:17-20, Mr 16:15-16, Lu 24:47, etc.).⁴ The revival sermons recorded in Acts are overwhelmingly not those which result in

⁴ It is true, nevertheless, that when Baptist churches compromise and form their own denominational structures, such as the Southern Baptist Convention or the Baptist World Alliance, revival grows more comparable to the Protestant pattern. A powerful work of God within Conventionalism would require the conversion of many lost church members, the regeneration or purging of infidelity among ministers, seminary professors, board officers,

the conversion of lost church members, but the records of the evangelistic preaching of blood-washed Baptists on streets, in synagogues, in marketplaces, door to door, and in all other God-honoring ways; saints “went every where preaching the word” (Ac 8:4), so that cities, not just those within church buildings, were filled with their doctrine (Ac 5:28). Modern historians of revival, in addition to their common confusion of genuine workings of God with Satanic substitutions of empty emotionalism or other aberrations, generally do not have the theological or spiritual undergirding which would lead them to recognize the Protestant-Baptist distinction—indeed, many today miss even the distinction between the blessings of God upon orthodoxy and the revivalism of such apostasy as that which fills the charismatic movement. Despite even this shallowness of vision, it is commonly acknowledged that in recent history America has suffered a drought of wide-spread revival of the kind that turned the Mediterranean world upside down in the first century (Ac 17:6) and transformed the United States in the Great Awakenings. A sweeping change in doctrinal and methodological order, which has permeated the evangelical and fundamental world, Protestant and Baptist alike, largely accounts for this modern emptiness.

Today’s Christianity does not preach the gospel the way its spiritual ancestors did; frighteningly often, the content is altered along with the methodology, so that many evangelicals and fundamentalists are preaching something else (Gal 1:8-9).⁵ It is likely that this alteration

etc., the repudiation of compromises in polity (most promising, of course, would be separation from unBiblical hierarchicalism itself) such as open communion, acceptance of alien immersion, and ecumenical associations with non-Baptists, the rejection of the strange fire of worldly music, corrupted Bible versions, and so on.

⁵ A modern example within the churches of Christ is the current controversy over repentance. Prominent institutions within fundamental Baptist circles officially oppose the Scriptural doctrine of repentance. For example, the Sword of the Lord organization (P. O. Box 1099, Murfreesboro, TN 37133, <http://swordofthelord.com>) publishes two pamphlets by former president Curtis Hutson entitled “Repentance” (PA7187) and “Lordship Salvation” (PA5184) which argue against preaching repentance as a change of mind that involves a willingness to surrender to Christ’s Lordship and which always results in a changed life, and so contradict the position of the founder of the organization, John R. Rice. In evangelicalism, Dallas Theological Seminary, which had 1,646 students in the Fall of 2000 (see 2001-2002 catalog, Dallas Theological Seminary/ 3909 Swiss Ave/ Dallas, TX 75204), is very weak on repentance (as on many other issues). “There has been a definite ‘Dallas Connection’ in the lordship debate. Dr. Charles C. Ryrie and Zane C. Hodges, both former members of the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary, have been and still are leading opponents of the lordship view... Besides these two former Dallas professors, the theological journal of Dallas Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, has appeared to have taken a non-lordship position in the

accounts, in large part, for the ascendance of theological liberalism early in this century—many church leaders, while able to enter church and denominational doors through rituals such as praying a sinner’s prayer, mental assent to the facts of the gospel in confirmation, or reformation of life, all apart from divinely wrought faith in Christ and spiritual regeneration, followed the contemporary *zeitgeist* to abandon inerrancy and other bedrock doctrines, while many who still held to those beliefs but shared the devil as their spiritual father within Christendom⁶ (assisted by the compromise of true believers) allowed open infidelity to conquer the mainline denominations through the course of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. The growth of immorality within fundamentalist churches and institutions, and the neo-orthodox “inerrancy” of much of modern evangelicalism,⁷ can be traced to this abandonment of the gospel for subtle but

past.” (p. 89, *Lordship Salvation: Some Crucial Questions and Answers*, Robert Lescelius, Asheville, NC: Revival Literature, 1992). Accuracy requires the declaration of distinction between Hodges’ view, which is consistent antinomianism, and that of Ryrie, who takes a more moderate, although still unscriptural, position. The faculty of Dallas Seminary, do not hold uniform positions on this issue.

⁶ In 1976, Noel W. Hollyfield, Jr., in his Master of Divinity thesis at the SBC school Southern Seminary, noted that among entering diploma students, 100% knew God existed without any doubt, and 96% believed miracles happened just like the Bible stated, Jesus was born of a virgin, and walked on water. Of final year MDiv. students, only 65% knew God existed beyond any doubt, 40% believed miracles happened just like the Bible stated, 33% believed the Lord was virgin born, and 44% believed He walked on water. Of Master of Theology and Doctorate students, only 37% believed miracles happened as the Bible stated, 32% accepted the virgin birth, and 22% believed Christ walked on water (for more on this thesis and apostasy in the SBC, please read “The Ecclesiological Disaster in the Southern Baptist Convention,” Thomas D. Ross, 3250 S. Cedar Crest Blvd, Emmaus, PA 18049). The worst part of these figures is not the fact that professors were apostate— this overwhelming descent by students into infidelity means, leaving room for saints who saw no reason to stay and dropped out, that a tremendous number of theologically orthodox Southern Baptists who were “called to preach” and entered seminary were unconverted and consequently able to abandon the faith once delivered to the saints. It would be foolishness to assume that all who survived the school theologically orthodox were converted themselves. If this was the situation among evangelical Baptists twenty-five years ago, it was surely worse among evangelical Protestants— and there is reason to think the percentage of unregenerate orthodox has continued to grow higher.

⁷ One example of this is the adoption of source, form, redaction, and other forms of historical criticism by the overwhelming majority of evangelicals. So-called “evangelical” scholars believe that the magi of Matthew two are fictional characters, the Lord only spoke a few of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 contain historical error, Christ’s preaching in the synoptics was not actually His preaching but the invention of the gospel writers, that the gospels do not contain Christ’s actual words, and other heresy (see pg. 15, *The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship*, Robert L. Thomas & F. David Farnell, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel pub., 1998 for the specific information mentioned above. The entire book reveals the apostasy of much of evangelical leadership in relation to the inspiration of the New Testament.) The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Walter Elwell, ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), which contains entries from approximately two hundred leading evangelicals, defends inerrancy in its article on it, yet in its article “Church, The,” the section entitled “origin” (pg. 231), states that there are “historical problems” with Matt 16:18, 18:17 because of the assumption of Markan priority and literary dependence, and declares that “Matthew 16:18-19

soul-damning substitutes. Those with Biblical theological views⁸ on sovereignty and free will, along with modern Calvinists and Arminians, suffer from this alteration of the gospel, although their deviations vary in accordance with their soteriological presuppositions.

Classical Arminian Methodism, the kind seen in the States into the time of the second Great Awakening, held (as did evangelical Arminian Anglicanism), “in common with other orthodox Christians, to the hereditary depravity of the human heart, the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, the necessity of repentance and faith; that which they pressed upon their hearers with the greatest earnestness was, the necessity of the new birth, and the privilege of their having a knowledge, by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, of the forgiveness of sins, through faith in the blood of Christ; and as a necessary consequence of this, and as naturally flowing from it, provided they persevered, holiness of heart and life.”⁹ There is no reason to doubt that numbers were genuinely convicted of sin and converted to Christ by means of classical Wesleyan preaching of Biblical truths. Commenting on John 3:3, Wesley stated:

[U]nless thou be born again... thou canst not see, that is, experience and enjoy,

may well be the Syrian church’s declaration of independence from the synagogue and may derive from that early community which identified itself with Peter. The question thus arises: Did Jesus intend to establish the church? Here one’s conclusions will be affected by the degree to which one assigns various statements of Jesus [in the Gospels] to Jesus himself or to the postresurrection church... [c]ritical study of the Gospels reveals that Jesus probably did not give teachings for the purpose of establishing and ordering the church...” Ironically, Robert L. Thomas was himself a contributor to this dictionary; evangelicals who still hold the majority of fundamental Scriptural doctrines do not generally separate from those that do not.

⁸ The dividing lines of the doctrines represented by the Calvinistic acronym TULIP provide a good place to briefly state the Biblical position and contrast it with Arminianism and Calvinism. The Bible teaches Total Depravity (Rom 3:10-12): Arminianism tended to Pelagianize on this doctrine, while Calvinists altered it to Total Inability. The Bible does not teach Unconditional Election to salvation, like Calvinism, but election to salvation based upon foreknowledge (1 Pe 1:2). Arminianism holds a variety of views on election and sometimes denies individual election entirely. The Bible teaches unlimited atonement (1 Jn 2:2), as does Arminianism, in contrast to the middle point of the Calvinistic blossom, Limited Atonement. However, Arminianism has been afflicted by the governmental theory of Christ’s cross-work, while Calvinism correctly defends penal substitution (Gal 3:10-13). The Bible teaches that grace may be resisted (Ac 7:51), as does Arminianism, while Calvinists hold to Irresistible Grace. However, synergism has hounded Arminian views of grace. Finally, the Bible teaches eternal security (Jn 10:27-30), which Arminianism denies, and Calvinists sometimes alter with their view of the Perseverance of the Saints.

⁹ Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 3rd ed., (New York, 1839), vol. 1, pg. 364, cited in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, pg. 69-70.

either the inward or the glorious kingdom of God. In this solemn discourse our Lord shows, that no external profession, no ceremonial ordinances or privileges of birth, could entitle any to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom: that an entire change of heart as well as of life was necessary for that purpose: that this could only be wrought in man by the almighty power of God: that every man born into the world was by nature in a state of sin, condemnation, and misery: that the free mercy of God had given his Son to deliver them from it, and to raise them to a blessed immortality: that all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, might share in these benefits, procured by his being lifted up on the cross, and to be received by faith in him: but that if they rejected him, their eternal, aggravated condemnation, would be the certain consequence... If our Lord by being born again means only reformation of life, instead of making any new discovery, he has only thrown a great deal of obscurity on what was before plain and obvious.¹⁰

One can come to Christ through preaching such as this and trust Him alone for salvation without understanding that “whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:28), grasping the High Priestly ministry of Christ (cf. Heb 7:25, Jn 17:24), or comprehension of other precious truths which guarantee the eternal security of the believer. Nevertheless, the teaching that one must persevere in good works or justification is lost is inconsistent with Christ's promises that “he that believeth on Me hath [present tense] everlasting [not probational] life” (John 6:47); the notion that salvation can be lost through failure to work is inconsistent with true gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone.¹¹ Furthermore, the curse of infant baptism also doubtless

¹⁰ Online Bible for Mac 2.5.3, Wesley's commentary on John 3:3.

¹¹ Consider, for example, a quote from a tract entitled “Does True Grace Teaching Allow The Sexually Immoral In Heaven?” published by Evangelical Outreach (P.O. Box 265, Washington, PA 15301-0265, USA), an anti-eternal security organization that professes to teach salvation by faith alone:

“The true plan of salvation is repentance towards God and faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 20:21). We prove our repentance by our deeds (Acts 26:20). The Lord Jesus taught the road to life is "hard" and only a "few" will find it (Mt. 7:13,14, NKJV). Many get saved, but afterwards fall away (Lk. 8:13; Jn. 6:66; 1 Tim. 1:19; etc.). In other words, after initial salvation we must endure to the "end" to enter the kingdom of God and escape the lake of fire (Mt. 10:22; Heb. 3:14; Rev. 2:10,11). Eternal life comes to the repentant the moment such believe on Jesus for salvation (Jn. 3:16; 6:47; 1 Jn. 5:12,13), but there is another important aspect of eternal life that many are totally unaware of in our day because of the false teaching of eternal security. According to true grace teaching, eternal life is also a HOPE (Titus 3:7), yet to be REAPED (Gal. 6:8,9) in the AGE TO COME (Mk. 10:30) for only the ones who PERSIST IN DOING GOOD (Rom. 2:7) and DO NOT GROW WEARY AND GIVE UP (Gal. 6:9).”

confused many evangelical Arminians about the means of salvation to their eternal destruction,¹² as does a denial of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.¹³ Individuals who, as a result of Arminian preaching, do not trust Christ alone but rely partially upon themselves and consequently never enter the narrow gate which leads to life have always troubled anti-eternal security circles. Furthermore, Weslyans traditionally leaned towards the confounding of emotionalism and conversion.¹⁴ Such practices were somewhat mitigated by the practice of placing those that made salvation decisions on "probation" for a period as evidence that a genuine new birth had taken place. Wesley's style of Arminianism had a number of strengths, including fervent preaching, prayer, and evangelism, but it suffered from important theological weaknesses which had long term negative consequences. Modern American Arminian churches

That this Arminianism leads one to rely on his deeds for entry into heaven, rather than on the crucified Christ alone, and so perverts the gospel, is apparent.

¹² Wesley commented on Ac 22:16 that "Baptism administered to real penitents, is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily in the primitive Church bestow this on any, unless through this means." On Romans 6:3, he stated that "in baptism we, through faith, are ingrafted into Christ..." In relation to the new birth on John 3:5, he identified being "born of water," which the text states is essential to see the kingdom of God, with baptism: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit- Except he experience that great inward change by the Spirit, and be baptized (wherever baptism can be had) as the outward sign and means of it [he cannot enter into the kingdom of God]" (all quotes from Wesley's commentary, accessed in the Online Bible for Mac software, version 2.5.3.) Although "Wesley frankly avows that baptism and the new birth are not one and the same thing," yet he declared "it is certain our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition" (pg. 125, 128, *The Theology of John Wesley*, William R. Cannon, New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946; the second quote comes directly from a sermon of Wesley.) Charles Wesley also wrote against the Baptists: "Partisans of a narrow sect/ Your cruelty confess/ Nor still inhumanly reject/ Whom Jesus would embrace./ Your little ones preclude them not/ From the baptismal flood brought/ But let them now to Christ be saved/ And join the Church of God." (*Charles Wesley's Journal*, 18 October 1756, 2:128, cited on pg. 254, "The Evangelical Revival and the Baptists," W. Morgan Patterson, in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B. R. White*, ed. William H. Brackney, Paul S. Fiddes, & John H. Y. Briggs, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1999).

¹³ In the words of Wesley, "Does 'the righteousness of God' ever mean 'the merits of Christ'? I believe not once in all the Scripture. It often means, and particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, 'God's method of justifying sinners.'" (pg. 12, Wesley, 'Letter to Hervey,' in Hervey's Works, vol iv. Cited pg. 497, *The Doctrine of Justification*, James Buchanan. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1997 (reprint of 1867 ed.)). "Many Wesleyan Methodists, following the example of their founder, have strenuously defended the doctrine of a free remission of sin through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and have as keenly opposed that of His imputed righteousness" (pg. 500, *The Doctrine of Justification*, Buchanan). Wesley's denial of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is an extremely dangerous error.

¹⁴ See, for example, the discussion of diversities in denominational practices in camp meetings around 1800 in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, pg. 182ff.

have generally lost the Biblical fervency of Wesley, while the leaven of works salvation from their denial of eternal security, the replacement of conversion with human actions like response to an altar call or emotional experience (a problem further aggravated in the overwhelmingly Arminian Pentecostal and charismatic movements), mental assent to the facts of the gospel, prayer to ask Jesus into one's heart,¹⁵ worldliness, heretical views of the atonement, and other deviations from sound doctrine and practice, have greatly reduced the percentage of modern Arminians within professing Christianity that are converted from that of the days of Wesley.

The old-fashioned Calvinism dominant in early American evangelical churches had a different set of doctrinal and practical afflictions. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints led many to wonder if they were persevering well enough to evidence unconditional election, and they feared to firmly state that they knew they were saved (cf. 1 Jn 5:13). The Calvinistic notion that regeneration is the cause of faith,¹⁶ rather than Scriptural teaching that faith is the logical prerequisite to regeneration, caused great harm. Many verses state “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”—none state “thou shalt be saved, and thou shalt therefore believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” This doctrinal confusion¹⁷ led many to fear to look immediately to Jesus for salvation, to fix their eye upon themselves instead to see if they felt enough conviction of sin, had enough sorrow for it, understood the terrors of Hell well enough, and so on, in the hope that they might find reasons within themselves to believe in Christ.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ The pamphlet “Seven Reasons NOT to ask Jesus into your heart!” and subtitled “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved! Acts 16:31), by Dennis M. Rokser of Duluth Bible Church (201 W. St. Andrews Street, Duluth, MN 55803) exegetically demolishes this common practice. Salvation is by faith in Christ, not prayer to ask Jesus into one's heart.

¹⁶ Stated, for example, by the Calvinist Iain Murray on pg. 21 of his *Revival and Revivalism*.

¹⁷ This view is probably historically rooted in the heresy of baptismal regeneration. Sprinkled babies were said to be regenerated, but they obviously did not yet believe. The sacrament of baptism, which supposedly conveyed this regeneration, was a “means of grace” which was to produce later faith.

¹⁸ William Reid, in his pamphlet *The Blood of Jesus*, protests this error:

“The only question, then, which falls to be considered is, What am I to say to an awakened and anxious sinner? Am I to say simply, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), as said the apostle of the Gentiles to the trembling jailor of Philippi? or am I, as the first thing I do, to exhort him to pray for the Holy Spirit to convince him more

widely distributed¹⁹ pamphlet by Joseph Alleine, *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*, illustrates this error. While it has excellent sections on the need of conversion and its results, title headings²⁰ on the section “Directions to the Unconverted” include “Labor to get a sight and sense of your sins,” “Strive to affect your heart with a sense of your misery,” “Conscientiously attend on the Word to convert you,” “Constantly and diligently use serious, fervent prayer,” “Forsake evil company; forbear occasions of sin,” and “Set apart a day to humble your soul in secret.” These directions stand in stark contrast to inspired promises such as “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5) and “him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn 6:37). It is certain that no man will savingly believe in Jesus unless the Holy Spirit convicts and draws him (cf. Rom 3:11, Jn 6:44), but this is because nobody sees the need for a Savior until he sees he is lost; any conviction of sin that leads one to come to Christ in repentant faith is enough, and one who is willing to come should not worry if he has anything in himself to give him warrant to come (for there never is, Rom 3:10), but simply believe that “whosoever will” may take the water of life freely.²¹ Furthermore, the idea that regeneration is the cause of saving faith has led many Calvinists to the view that one can be converted and not know when it happened,²² a false doctrine which tends strongly towards the replacement of conversion with mere morality and

deeply of his sin, enlighten his darkened understanding, renew his perverse will, and enable him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul? ... The latter leads to justification by sanctification, the pernicious doctrine of a [post-Apostolic] era, by embracing which a man can never reach any satisfactory assurance that his sins are pardoned...” (pg. 56-57).

¹⁹ It has been reprinted over 350 times (see pg. 42, *A Call to the Unconverted*, Joseph Alleine, edited by T. E. Watson and also Jay P. Green, Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 1989).

²⁰ These title headings come from the 1989 edition of Alleine’s work, edited by J. P. Green, Sr. of Sovereign Grace publishers, Inc. in Lafayette, IN. They accurately represent the contents of their sections.

²¹ A (greatly) weakened form of this sort of preparationism, as preached by Alleine, appears in the pamphlet “Coming to Faith in Christ” by John Benton, current minister of a Calvinistic Baptist church in England, and published by the Banner of Truth trust (P. O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA, 17013). While he does state that one must simply trust Christ to be saved, he also directs awakened sinners to “Ask the Lord Jesus to help you repent and believe” (p. 15).

²² See, i. e., pg. 214, *Revival and Revivalism*, Murray.

religiousness, the supposed product of a “regeneration” which hopefully occurred at some point and of which the morality is viewed as fruit. In contrast with Arminian emotionalistic tendencies, Calvinism tends to replace conversion with doctrinal orthodoxy, as well as quench the fervent love of lost souls essential to Scriptural evangelism and revival. American churches that traditionally have embraced Reformed soteriological views have in modern days largely fell to modernism through unconverted but baptized and catechized individuals or shriveled away as a result of opposition to evangelistic efforts.²³ Those Calvinistic assemblies that still preach salvation by grace and hold to Scriptural views of inspiration and other fundamental doctrines typically have managed to leave at least sections of the TULIP in their theology textbooks while dealing with sinners.

A strong reaction against Calvinistic deadness and the unscriptural TULIP prepared the way for the doctrinal apostasy, and harmful heteropraxy, of the epoch-altering American revivalist and false teacher, Charles G. Finney (1792-1875).²⁴ Finney held a Pelagian view of sin. He states that “moral depravity,” the only kind which is sin,²⁵ “cannot consist... in a sinful

²³ It would be unfair to assert that all Calvinists are opposed to evangelistic endeavor or the offer of the gospel to all men. Such as do practice these things, however, are not consistent with their doctrine. How can one urge an unconverted man to trust Christ’s death to pay for his sins, when Limited Atonement, coupled with the Scriptural truth that few are saved (Mt 7:14), means that the Christ of the TULIP, in all probability, did not die for him and so did not pay for his sin, does not want him to come for salvation, and has determined from eternity past to unconditionally make him a vessel of wrath and punish him in Hell? How can one be consistent with Calvinism, and love the lost, while preaching that God loves only the elect?

²⁴ Apart from this turn to Pelagianism and Arminianism, many Congregationalist and other Calvinistic churches came under the influence of heretical theology at Yale University, which, through men such as Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858), slipped away from both Calvinism and orthodox Christianity to pursue a governmental view of the atonement and original sin as moral or dispositional rather than imputational. However, the Congregationalist abandonment of the necessity of the new birth as a prerequisite to communion under Solomon Stoddard, which was not reestablished in the Great Awakening despite Jonathan Edwards’ attempts toward that end (see his *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church*, in, for example, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (2 vol.), Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000 (reprint of 1834 ed.), pgs. 431-484 (also 485-531)), led to many Congregationalist churches that were filled with unconverted members and unconverted preachers very early in American history, so supplying material for Satan to use in the Unitarian schism which destroyed many theologically orthodox Congregational churches filled with members dead in their sins; scores who did not turn to Unitarianism did not flee to Christ in repentant faith either, and were able to continue the spread of apostasy in their denomination after the Unitarians left.

²⁵ Finney also speaks of “physical depravity,” but does not by this mean the sinfulness of man’s nature itself,

constitution... [or] an attribute of human nature... [m]oral depravity is not then to be accounted for by ascribing it to a nature or constitution sinful in itself. To talk of a sinful nature, or sinful constitution, in the sense of physical sinfulness, is to ascribe sinfulness to the Creator, who is the author of nature.”²⁶ He rejected the doctrine of original sin (Rom 5:12, 19), arguing against it employing a five-point hermeneutic which employed, along with four reasonable principles of literal interpretation, the principle that “Language is to be so interpreted, if it can be, as not to conflict with sound philosophy, matters of fact, the nature of things, or immutable justice.”²⁷ Apparently Scripture does not govern philosophy, matters of fact, reality, or justice; these, discovered independently of the Word of the living God, sit in judgment upon it. Consequently, in commenting on Psalm 51:5, he states that “it would seem, if this text is to be understood literally, that the Psalmist intended to affirm the sinful state of his mother, at the time of his conception, and during gestation... [but to say this is to reject God’s definition of sin and] also affirms sheer nonsense. The substance of an unborn child sinful! It is impossible!”²⁸ In his comment on God’s declaration that men are “by nature children of wrath,” (Eph 2:3), he affirms that “it cannot, consistently with natural justice, be understood to mean, that we are exposed to the wrath of God on account of our nature. It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma...”²⁹ He cavails, “What ground is there for the assertion that Adam’s nature became in itself sinful by the fall? This is a groundless, not to say ridiculous, assumption, and an absurdity... This doctrine is... an abomination alike to God and the human intellect...”³⁰ Finney’s rebellion against God’s doctrine of original sin falls in line with the expected view of the natural man, who, bursting with

but physical ailments, like indigestion, a weak immune system, etc.

²⁶ Charles Finney, *Finney’s Systematic Theology*, 1878 ed., Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1994, pg. 249, 250. His entire lecture, entitled “Moral Depravity,” extends from pgs. 243-266.

²⁷ pg. 254, *ibid.*

²⁸ pg. 255, *ibid.*

²⁹ pg. 257, *ibid.*

³⁰ pg. 261, 263, *ibid.*

the vain bloviating folly that gushes from his depraved heart (Jer 17:9), thinks the truths of God's Word foolish (1 Cor 2:14).

God, through Paul, declares that the gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1 Cor 15:3-4). However, Finney did not believe that Christ died for the sins of the world as a substitutionary sacrifice. He rejected the fact that the man's sin was imputed to Christ, who suffered and died in his place, that he might be forensically declared righteous by God on the ground of His Son's propitiation (Is 53:6, Mr 15:28, 2 Cor 5:21, Rom 3:23-28, Gal 3:10-13). Instead of penal substitution, Finney held to the heretical governmental theory of the atonement, that "Christ did not bear our punishment but suffered as a penal example whereby the law was honored while sinners were pardoned... Because God did not want sinners to die, He relaxed that rule and accepted the death of Christ instead. He could have simply forgiven mankind had He wanted to, but that would not have had any value for society. The death of Christ was a public example of the depth of sin and the lengths to which God would go to uphold the moral order of the universe."³¹ To Finney, the Savior's death only satisfied "public justice" and showed that God thought sin was serious; it was not the sole ground of the sinner's confidence before God, the payment that fully satisfied His wrath, that he could be justified freely by Christ. He states that "the atonement... was not a commercial transaction... [not] the payment of a debt... [but] was intended as a satisfaction of public justice... [He] la[id] down His life for the support of the divine government..."³² Furthermore, "if the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless..."³³ Men are

³¹ pg. 102, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984. Analysis of the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement, in contrast with heretical views such as the governmental theory, is found on pgs. 312-330, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Henry C. Thiessen, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949.

³² *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 1878 ed., pg. 219, 222.

³³ *ibid.*, pg. 221. Eleven other reasons for the atonement are also given. That men might be receive Christ's

to look at Christ's death, learn that it means that God thinks sin is bad, and so reform themselves to become acceptable to Him. Finney perversely reasons, "If He obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine qua non* of our salvation?"³⁴ The demonic doctrine of works salvation is a corollary of Finney's governmental view of the atonement.

Finney's heresies on sin and the atonement were linked to a perversion of the Biblical doctrine of justification.³⁵ He rejected eternal security by stating that "we shall see that perseverance in obedience to the end of life is also a condition of justification... present, full, and entire consecration of heart and life to God and His service, is an unalterable condition of present pardon of past sin, and of present acceptance with God. [] [T]he penitent soul remains justified no longer than this full-hearted consecration continues."³⁶ Finney clearly states that the Scriptural view of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness is another gospel from that which he preached:

Those who hold that justification by imputed righteousness is a forensic proceeding, take a view of final or ultimate justification, according with their view of the transaction. With them, faith receives an imputed righteousness, and a judicial justification. The first act of faith, according to them, introduces the sinner into this relation, and obtains for him a perpetual justification. They maintain that after this first act of faith it is impossible for the sinner to come into

righteousness by imputation, having had their sins paid for by their Substitute, is not one of them.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 218.

³⁵ He explicitly connects his view of sin and of justification on page 377 of his *Systematic Theology* (1878 ed.). "The relations of the old school view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, a return to personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to the law, cannot with them be a condition of justification..." although it is to Finney, since he taught salvation by works. Consequently, those "old school" people who hold to justification as expounded in the Bible and salvation by the work of Christ the Substitute rather than by the works of sinful man must have forgiveness "brought about by imputed righteousness... Constitutional depravity or sinfulness being once assumed, physical regeneration, physical sanctification, physical divine influence, imputed righteousness and justification, while personally in the commission of sin, follow of course." Finney, as a result of his rejection of the Scriptural doctrine of depravity, rejects the Scriptural gospel of grace as well.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 367, 369.

condemnation; that, being once justified, he is always thereafter justified, whatever he may do; indeed that he is never justified by grace, as to sins that are past, upon condition that he ceases to sin; that Christ's righteousness is the ground, and that his own present obedience is not even a condition of his justification, so that, in fact, his own present or future obedience to the law of God is, in no case, and in no sense, a *sine qua non* of his justification, present or ultimate.

Now this is certainly another gospel from the one I am inculcating. It is not a difference merely upon some speculative or theoretic point. It is a point fundamental to the gospel and to salvation, if any one can be. Let us therefore see which of these is the true gospel. I object to this view of justification...³⁷

To this, God through the apostle Paul declares, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:9). Paul's gospel was that since Adam's fall "there is none righteous... there is none that seeketh after God," so men must be "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," simply through "faith in His blood," not their own personal obedience (Rom 3:10-28). Charles Finney stands, according to his own declaration, as one who preached another gospel than that of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, received simply by faith: he was therefore no man of God used in revival, but a wolf, a false teacher, and accursed, anathema maranatha.

Naturally, Finney joined a false doctrine of regeneration to his other apostasies. His

³⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 369. He goes on to state that the true gospel of Christ is "antinomianism" (pg. 369), that it is "not at the option of any being" (pg. 370) to justify the way God has said He does, that it is "of course inconsistent with forgiveness or pardon," (pg. 370), it is inconsistent with asking for pardon (pg. 370), is "at war with the whole Bible" (pg. 370), and is "contradicted by the consciousness of the saints," (pg. 371), who supposedly all feel condemned when they sin. He states (pg. 371-372) that the doctrine of justification as found in the Westminster Confession of faith is antinomian, and declares (in a context also rejecting Limited Atonement) that "the doctrine of a literal imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity... [and] of the literal imputation of Christ's righteousness or obedience to the elect, and the consequent perpetual justification of all that are converted from the first exercise of faith, whatever their subsequent life may be— I say I regard these dogmas as fabulous, and better befitting a romance than a system of theology." Let the born-again child of God take Finney at his word, and regard his gospel as another from that which he has received, for God's saint will never blasphemously regard the hope, confidence, everlasting joy, and firm ground of his salvation, Jesus' blood and righteousness, as a fabulous shadow, or a ethereal myth fit only for a cheap romance novel.

Pelagian view of sin led him to declare that “the sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use these powers and attributes as he ought.”³⁸ Finney defines regeneration as a change of preference, not as a work of God which makes a man a new creature (2 Cor 5:17); it is simply to choose to serve God, not Satan. He admits God requires a change of heart, but this “cannot consist in any [change in] constitutional taste, relish, or appetite...”³⁹ Finney contrasts his ideas with the orthodox: “Those who hold to physical or constitutional moral depravity must hold, of course, to constitutional regeneration; and, of course, consistency compels them to maintain that there is but one agent in regeneration, and that is the Holy Spirit... the work is, according to them, an act of creative power [where] the very nature is changed[.]”⁴⁰ He rejects the views of those who understand “the carnal mind to be not a voluntary state, not a minding of the flesh, but the very nature and constitution of the mind[.]”⁴¹ Consequently, his goal in preaching was simply to get men to reform themselves, choose to do good, and follow God. No new creation wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit was required. The practical methods he introduced, the man-made revivalism he substituted for revival, were simply the heteropraxy that flowed from his heterodoxy.

Despite Finney’s unorthodoxy, his doctrines, and even more so the practices he introduced, had far-reaching affects in his day, when they contributed to the termination of the Second Great Awakening— and his legacy continues to influence fundamentalism and evangelicalism today. Apart from the study of his books themselves, Finney played a major role in altering evangelistic methodology from theocentricity to anthropocentricity,⁴² where salvation is

³⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 271-272.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 272. He sets forth his private interpretation of regeneration on pages 269-277.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 275.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

⁴² The methods through which anthropocentric evangelism entered Baptist ranks is delineated on pgs. 301-328 of *Revival and Revivalism*, Murray. While generally good, Murray’s affection for Calvinism colors his

simply equated with a decision of the will which lies essentially entirely within the power of the human will, apart from the workings of the Holy Spirit. A striking example of this heteropraxy that resulted from his heretical soteriology appears in the popularization of what has come to be known as the “invitation system,” which he essentially developed and which has been greatly abused from the time of its conception.

The honest student of Scripture must admit that the churches of the first century, as recorded in the book of Acts, are simply not stated to have called people to the front of church buildings at the end of meetings; indeed, the whole matter of having church buildings is post-apostolic. The practice of terming the front of the church building the “altar” or speaking of an “altar call” is an unscriptural phenomenon Baptists seem to have adopted historically from Protestants that did indeed have altars in their churches because of perversions of the Lord’s supper they retained when they left Rome. However, counseling those who are inquiring after salvation immediately after preaching does have precedent in the Bible (Ac 2:37-39, 13:43, 17:4, 34, etc.), as does personal soulwinning of a wondrously varied kind (Ac 5:42, 8:26-40, 13:7-12, 16:13-14, 31-32, 20:20-21, etc.). Giving counsel to those who are convicted of sin immediately after preaching can be defended from Scripture, as can public confession of sin in certain instances, and having an “invitation” which relates to these or similar Biblical matters after preaching cannot be Biblically condemned— indeed, such practices do have practical benefits when done correctly, although a dogmatism about their necessity seems to stem from culture and tradition than Biblical mandate. However, the employment of fleshly pressure to manipulate people to do what the Spirit and the preached Word does not move them to is a great evil. Finney’s development of an “anxious seat” invitation model, and the abandonment of careful counseling of the convicted unconverted for a simple outward decision, along with the idea that

coming forward in church meetings has a virtue in itself or is the public confession which Scripture speaks of the true believer employing (Mt 10:32, Rom 10:9-10, etc.),⁴³ has caused great harm.

Before the days of Finney,⁴⁴ godly soul-winners, especially preachers, were accustomed to counsel those under conviction of sin at various times and in diverse manners. Finney and those he influenced popularized the equation of a physical response with conversion, something that had been afflicting the Methodists, especially, for some time:

The encouragement of physical responses to preaching (such as falling on the floor)... and, above all, inviting individuals to ‘submit to God’ and to prove it by a ‘humbling’ action such as standing up, kneeling down, or coming forward to ‘the anxious seat’ — all came straight from the procedures that some Methodists had been popularizing for a quarter of a century [that is, c. 1800]. ‘The anxious seat’ was only the altar call and the mourner’s bench under another name... from the outset of [Finney’s] ministry he sought to make would-be converts visibly distinct... In his first days as a missionary in Jefferson County in the summer of 1824 he told a congregation: [quoting Finney speaking in his unedited memoirs] “Now I must know you minds, and I want that you who have made up your minds to become Christians, and will give your pledge to make your peace with God immediate, should rise up; but that, on the contrary, those of you who are

⁴³ The Biblical public testimony of salvation is not coming forward in a church meeting but baptism (Rom 6:1ff.), which unites one to the body of Christ, the local, visible church (Ac 2:41, 47, 1 Cor 12:13, 27). Scripture assumes that true believers will follow Christ in baptism, and it leaves no record of saved people who (when able, cf. Lu 23:42-43) refused to follow the Lord in baptism and identification with the church. This is the significance of verses such as Mark 16:16a, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” While, of course, someone is saved by repentant faith alone before baptism, the soul-winner has no sound Biblical basis for assuming that people who make decisions but are not baptized and do not persevere in obedience through identification with the church and holy living are saved. If God stated that “we are made partakers of Christ [i. e., are justified or saved], if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end [that is, those truly saved will endure]” (Heb 3:14), it is wrong to give assurance of salvation to one who bears no fruit because he has prayed a prayer or made some sort of outward decision. There simply is no way an onlooker can know for sure that an outward decision has brought with it a new heart in regeneration; only those who live like Christians should be assumed to be Christians (1 Jn 2:28-3:10). The Bible tallies no statistics of those “saved” but unbaptized and persistently disobedient; on the day of Pentecost the three thousand were saved, baptized, and added to the church (Ac 2:41), and subsequently “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Ac 2:47).

⁴⁴ A brief history of the modern invitation system appears in “The history of the invitation system,” pgs. 89-103 of *The Great Invitation*, Erroll Hulse, Welwyn, Hertfordshire: Evangelical Press, 1996.

resolved that you will not become Christians, and wish me so to understand, and wish Christ so to understand, should sit still.” After making this plain, so that I knew that they understood it, I then said: “You who are now willing to pledge to me and to Christ, that you will immediately make your peace with God, please rise up.”⁴⁵

One who correctly believes that salvation is a supernatural work from God to man will see that such an equation of outward decision with regeneration is bound to lead to multitudes of false professions that hinder true conversion and revival; these means were natural for Finney, however, since he essentially equated salvation with a simple decision of the natural man to follow God. Unfortunately for the cause of Christ, and despite the efforts of men used in genuine revival in Finney’s day such as Asahel Nettleton, later revivalists (and simple pastors of churches) who held to far better theology than Finney, and were saved and godly men, retained much of his Pelagian methodology, since they thought him a man of God instead of a false teacher, and his methods seemed to produce “success” through the large numbers of those “saved.”

In modern times the invitation system is misused by the great majority of evangelicalism. For example, Billy Graham, although his procedure shifted over time, and his compromise grew progressively greater to the point where now those who, like Catholics, are officially opposed to the gospel, serve as counselors, even back in the late 1960’s Graham led the masses of people who came to the front in meetings in a communal “sinner’s prayer” before providing them with personal counsel.⁴⁶ Louis Palau similarly leads those in the audience who want to be saved to

⁴⁵ p. 242, *Revival and Revivalism*, Murray.

⁴⁶ “The Invitation System,” Iain Murray, pgs. 5-6. It must be admitted that Murray is opposed to giving invitations entirely because of his Calvinism.

say a prayer which supposedly saves them before having them come forward or receive personal counsel.⁴⁷ Among fundamental Baptists, the gospel of salvation by repentant faith in Christ alone has been abandoned for a salvation by sinner's prayer,⁴⁸ to the point of official opposition to the fact that repentance is necessary for salvation, by Jack Hyles, those within his sphere of influence, and others.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, Biblical methods of counseling the unconverted are also abandoned within the Hyles-movement, since the gospel itself has been rejected. Many fundamental Baptist churches who officially still hold to the true gospel of repentance and faith also employ extremely weak methodology of dealing with the unconverted; while this is officially noticed most among those that employ "promotion"-style giveaways— and certainly many churches that practice such things are weak in evangelistic methodology— plenty of

⁴⁷ pg. 100, *The Great Invitation*, Hulse.

⁴⁸ For example, pg. 68-69 of Jack Hyles' book *Let's Build an Evangelistic Church* counsels prospective soul-winners to pray with the lost, and in the middle of prayer while the head of the unsaved is bowed, to stop and get him to pray as well so he will be "saved." Such counsel to personal workers obviously makes sense only if the gospel is not viewed as the repentant sinner cleaving by faith to the crucified Christ, but as a guaranteed result of praying a prayer where one asks to be saved. It is not just the replacement of the Spirit with carnal and deceptive salesmanship (for it is clear that the personal worker's prayer here is not a sincere coming to God but merely a technique to manipulate the lost man, and so an abomination of false worship, a quenching of the Spirit who regenerates, and a trifling with Jehovah Sabaoth), but apostasy from the gospel for the proclamation of a false Christ, one who is received by prayer and not by faith alone (Jn 1:12), and one who does not demand repentance and is not Lord and Savior bound inextricably in one Person who must, by grace, be received for who He is to escape eternal damnation. Frighteningly, the 2001-2002 catalog from Hyles-Anderson claims that it, in combination with Hammond Baptist Schools, enrolled approximately 4,000 students the previous school year (pg. 3). It must, in fairness, be mentioned that recently First Baptist of Hammond has changed its official position and now accepts that repentance is part of the gospel again, which is good, although, sadly, its methodology still leads to tremendous numbers of false professions of faith.

⁴⁹ It is sad, but not surprising since the unconverted are children of the devil, that the rejection of the gospel of Christ within Hylesian fundamentalism has also been accompanied by increasing sexual immorality, deceit, and the multiplication of heretical doctrines. See, for example, Sumner, Robert, "The Saddest Story We Ever Published!" in *The Biblical Evangelist*, May 1989, Vol. 23, #5, Ingleside, TX, or Glover, Voyle A., *Fundamental Seduction: The Jack Hyles Case*, Schererville, IN: Brevia Publishing, 1990. That much factual material is in these books does not, of course, signify endorsement of all the theological positions of either of the authors, nor the bitter spirit that the latter book evidences.

fundamental Baptist churches which do not employ give-aways have abandoned the Biblical imperative to engage in aggressive soulwinning,⁵⁰ and also do not know how to counsel the unconverted. However, since they do little to win them, their failure is not as generally obvious. While the situation within separatist Baptist churches not generally as bad as it is in evangelicalism, where apostasy from the gospel is widespread and those who still profess it are often unconverted themselves, modern fundamentalists have much to learn about true revival from their predecessors, and a return to a more Scriptural practice of evangelism is essential if

⁵⁰ God has always expected His people to win souls (Prov 11:30), and He commanded His church to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The book of Acts clearly teaches that aggressive evangelism is for every church member; all should go “every where preaching the word” (Ac 8:4). In this day when many fundamental Baptists have abandoned door to door evangelism, it must be noted that it is the explicit pattern of the book of Acts. For example, in Acts 5:42 the apostles “daily in the temple, and in every house, [] ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” This preaching “in every house” must have referred to house to house evangelism, not simply holding church meetings in the houses of believers. The context of Acts chapter five involves the apostles preaching the gospel to “the people,” (from the Hebrew אֲמֵרָא) that is, lost Israelites, and v. 42 is a continuation of this action. Every residence in Jerusalem obviously did not have believers in it, so preaching in “every house” indicates bringing the gospel to the residences of the unconverted. Finally, “preach” in v. 42 is not κερυσσω, but ευαγγελιζω, which indicates that specific evangelizing or preaching of the gospel, rather than the simple proclamation of Biblical truths, is in view in this text; they were evangelizing in the temple and in every house. Acts 20:20-21 also refers to door to door evangelistic preaching of repentance toward God and faith toward Christ, that is, preaching the kingdom of God (v.25) to unconverted Jew and Gentile. Verse twenty-one refers to “testifying” (Gk. verb διαμαρτυρομαι, primarily used for evangelistic preaching to the lost in Luke-Acts) to Jews and Greeks, and this verb is used again in v. 24 of Paul’s “ministry, which [he] received of the Lord Jesus, to testify (vb. διαμαρτυρομαι) the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:20-21 indicate that Paul taught the elders at Ephesus to practice door to door soulwinning. To attempt to interpret the text otherwise would require it to refer simply to the teaching of Jew and Gentile elder within the Ephesian church the necessity of daily repentance and every-increasing faith in Christ. It would also make this sort of testifying about repentance and faith in Christian life the essence of Paul’s ministry (v. 24). Someone who would declare that this verse does not refer to house to house evangelism either does not know how to employ literal hermeneutics, has never bothered to study the passage, or comes at it with an unwillingness to obey God in this matter. The specific illustrations of Scripture, given for the saints’ examples and admonition, in addition to the general commands to give the gospel to every creature and the logical necessity, for those with a Christ-like love for the unconverted, for aggressive evangelism because of the fact that all without Christ are headed to eternal torment, renders inexcusable the Christian and church that does not go house to house in nations such as the United States, where the chances of imprisonment or martyrdom for such a labor of love are essentially non-existent— first century Rome heavily persecuted believers, yet house to house evangelism was still practiced. Churches and Christians that do not aggressively evangelize grievously sin against God, and apparently do not esteem the blood of Christ highly enough to simply inform others, in line with the Savior’s command, of the salvation their professed Lord had to leave heaven and suffer infinitely to make possible.

they are to see revival of the sort given by God in the book of Acts. Yet there is room for hope, for their God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and, since He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” that the world might be saved by belief in Him, and He is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance (2 Pe 3:9), the faithful Baptist remnant can lift up their petitions and expect powerful answers from He who inspired the prayer “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (Psalm 85:6).

Appendix I: Revival and the Decline of Infant Baptism

Revival, believer’s baptism, and the need for personal conversion, and justification by faith alone apart from sacraments are very closely connected, as are baptismal regeneration, traditional Reformed theology, and opposition to revival. Rich Lusk, a high-church Presbyterian who accepts Calvin’s doctrine of baptismal regeneration and consequently rejects the Biblical and Baptist necessity of personal conversion, as well as the value of revival, powerfully describes what he believes is the unfortunate connection between revival, experimental religion, and the decline of infant baptism in his well documented essay, “Paedobaptism and Baptismal Efficacy: Historic Trends and Current Controversies” (Pgs. 71-125, Chapter 3 of *The Federal Vision*, ed. Steve Wilkins & Duane Garner. Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2004). Lusk writes:

America became progressively “baptist” on a massive scale in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. . . . [T]he loss of paedobaptism [was closely connected with] experiential Revivalism[.] . . . [T]he experientialism of Puritanism (which was only exacerbated by revivalism) eventually overthrew the Calvinistic principle of the church membership of children. . . . As baptism degenerated into a “mere ceremony” . . . New England Congregationalism continually lost members to newly formed Baptist churches. . . . Charles Hodge . . . [u]sing statistics provided by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church . . . pointed out that from 1812 onward, the number of children being brought for baptism was radically declining in relation to the overall number of communicants. In 1811, there had been 20 paedobaptisms per 100 communicants; by 1856, the ration was just over 5 per hundred. . . . Hodge reported a similar downgrade was occurring in other ostensibly Reformed denominations. The Dutch Reformed ration was only slightly better than the Presbyterian in 1856, at around 7 paedobaptisms per hundred communicants. Things were even worse in other bodies. The New School Presbyterians were leaving six out of seven children unbaptized. Paedobaptism was so rare among the Congregationalists by the mid-1850s that Hodge could truthfully claim, “in the Congregational churches in New England, infant baptism is, beyond doubt, dying out.” Only the high church Episcopalians [who believed in baptismal regeneration and rejected revival] seemed unaffected by the trend. . . . [T]he 50 year period of decline Hodge traced out coincides, more or less, with the institutionalization of Revivalism in American Christianity. . . . The revivals of the Second Great Awakening totally restructured American religious life in radical fashion. . . . The doctrines of God’s sovereignty and predestination [as Calvin understood them] . . .

were jettisoned[.] . . . Paedobaptism also fell into disfavor since it . . . imposed a religious identity on an unwilling subject. Personal choice was exalted. . . . [T]he revivals focused on the immediacy of religious experience, to the exclusion of traditional means of grace [that is, sacramental grace]. . . . [I]t is easy to see that paedobaptism would fit very awkwardly into such a religious matrix. . . . Instead of “growing up Christian” under continual covenant nurture, children were expected to undergo their own “conversion experience” at the appropriate age. . . . A conscious conversion experience from enmity to friendship with God was looked upon as the only way of entrance into the kingdom. . . . Infants, it was thought, needed new birth, as well as adults. They could not be saved without it. But the only channel of the new birth which was recognized was a conscious experience of conviction and conversion. Anything else, according to Gilbert Tennent, was a fiction of the brain, a delusion of the devil. In fact, he ridiculed the idea that one could be a Christian without knowing the time when he was otherwise. . . . Obviously, revivalism was no friend of covenant children. . . . The experiential rigor of Puritanism and revivalism . . . seemed like a safeguard against merely “nominal” membership in the churches . . . As adult-like credentials for conversion and full membership were pressed more and more, infant baptism became an increasingly tenuous practice, until it finally gave out altogether. . . . [T]he rise of the Baptist movement, with its individualistic approach to the faith and its voluntaristic ecclesiology . . . [made] [i]nfant baptism . . . preposterous on such presuppositions. . . . [I]nfant baptism [declined as] baptistic principles of church membership [became] the essence of true religion. . . . [T]hese views eroded the traditional Catholic and Reformation view that God acts to accomplish God’s purposes through sacraments. The desacralizing tendencies played down God’s role in the sacraments . . . [Such] influence[s] . . . reshaped the way some conservative Presbyterians read their . . . Reformed confessions . . . [c]ertain[ly] the sacraments could not be viewed as powerful, saving actions of God. . . . The [alleged] mystery of God’s activity through these physical instruments could not be allowed to saint. Any view of sacramental efficacy came to be regarded as “magic.” The sacraments were viewed [instead] as visual teaching aids. . . . In short, then, . . . the sacraments are basically treated as human acts of piety[.] . . . Their value is completely subjective—they help us remember divine truth, profess our faith, stir up emotions, and so forth . . . they cannot be regarded as genuine means of saving grace, for God’s grace is not actually found in the lowly natural elements of water, bread, and wine. In such a context, the sacraments obviously cannot belong to infants in any true sense since infants cannot perform the requisite acts or experience the proper emotions. . . . Given the push and pull of Revivalism . . . perhaps the wonder is not so much that paedobaptism declined in America . . . but that it survived at all. . . . [Lack of interest in sacramental theology . . . became a distinctive feature of American religiosity. . . . Some Southern Presbyterians had severely degraded the meaning of baptism, so that baptized infants were not regarded as genuine church members, much less recipients of salvific blessings in union with Christ. Presbyterian giant James Henry Thornwell regarded baptized covenant children as enemies of the cross of Christ and under church censure until they made a mature and experience-based profession of faith. . . . For Thornwell, “covenant” children stood condemned until they passed revivalism’s test of an experiential conversion and . . . [made] an articulated, cognitive profession of faith. . . . A credobaptist victory was virtually inevitable unless strong views of baptismal grace were recovered. . . . [T]he real issue underlying the loss of infant baptism was the loss of baptismal efficacy . . . infant baptism presupposes an objective force in the sacrament itself . . . [that] children . . . were made Christians at the font. . . . Apart from an efficacious view of baptism, the question “Why baptize infants?” became progressively more difficult to answer coherently. The credobaptists won the day[.]

In a passage by Thornwell quoted by Lusk, as representative of Presbyterian baptismal theology affected by revival, Thornwell wrote:

[I]n heart and spirit th[ose] [who have received infant baptism] are of the world. In this aspect, how is [the church] to treat them? Precisely as she treats all other impenitent and unbelieving men—she is to exercise the power of the keys, and shut them out from the communion of the saints. She is to debar them from all the privileges of the inner sanctuary. She is to exclude them from their inheritance until they show themselves meet to possess it. By her standing exclusion of them from the Lord’s table, and of their children from the ordinance of Baptism, she utters a solemn protest against their continued impenitence, and acquits herself of all participation in their sins. It is a standing censure. Their spiritual condition is one that is common with the world. She deals with them, therefore, in this respect, as the Lord has directed her to deal with the world. . . . Is not their whole life a continued sin? Are not their very righteousnesses abominable before God? Repentance to them is not the abandonment of this or that vice; it is the

renunciation of the carnal heart, which is enmity against God: and, until they are renewed in spirit and temper of their minds, they can do nothing which the Church is at liberty to approve as done by them. . . . As *of the world* they are included in the universal sentence of exclusion, which bars the communion of saints against the impenitent and profane. They are sharers in its condemnation. They are put, as impenitent, upon the same footing with all others that are impenitent. As rejectors of Christ, they are kept aloof from the table of the Lord, and debarred from all the rights and privileges of the saints. Their impenitence determines the attitude of the Church towards them; for God has told her precisely what that attitude should be to all who obey not the Gospel. What more can be required? Are they not dealt with, in every respect, according to their quality? . . . Is it not equally clear that their condition, as slaves, determines their treatment in all other respects, until they are prepared to pass the test which changes their status? Is not this precisely the state of things with the Church and baptized unbelievers? Are they not the slaves of sin and of the Devil, existing in a free Commonwealth for the purpose of being educated to the liberty of the saints? . . . But until they come to Him, [Scripture] distinctly teaches that they are to be dealt with as the Church deals with the enemies of God. (pgs. 341-348, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, James H. Thornwell, vol. 4: Ecclesiastical. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1986)

Thornwell's views are set in contrast by Lusk with the view of baptismal salvation found in traditional Reformed theology, as presented, for example, by "John Williamson Nevin . . . [who sought] . . . along with . . . Philip Schaff . . . [in] the Mercersburg movement . . . to maintain the traditional ecclesial and sacramental theology of classic Calvinism" (pgs. 85-86, *The Federal Vision*). Nevin wrote:

If the sacraments are regarded as in themselves outward rites only, that can have no value or force except as the grace they represent is made to be present by the subjective exercises of the worshipper, it is hard to see on what ground infants, who are still without knowledge or faith, should be admitted to any privilege of the sort [quoted from pgs. 237-238, *Romanticism in American Theology*, Nichols] . . . [T]he Baptists . . . refuse to baptize infants, on the ground that they have no power to repent and believe in Christ, so as to be the subjects of that inward spiritual conversion of which baptism is the profession and sign, and without which it can have no meaning. What conclusion, indeed, can well be more logical, if we are to believe that there is no objective power, no supernatural grace, in the sacrament itself[?] . . . It belongs on the old order of thinking on the subject, as we have it in . . . Chrysostom and the Christian fathers generally, which made baptism to be the sacrament of a real regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost into the family of God. Why then should it [paedobaptism] be given up, along with this [baptismal regeneration], as an obsolete superstition? It is becoming but too plain, that the Paedobaptist part of the so-called Evangelical Christianity of the present day is not able to hold its ground steadily, at this pint, against the Baptist wing of the same interest. The Baptist sentiment grows and spreads in every direction. [Pgs. 214-215, "The Old Doctrine of Baptism," John Nevin, *Mercersburg Review*, April 1860.] . . . On this subject of baptismal grace, then, we will enter into no compromise with the anti-liturgical theology we have now in hand. . . . It is impossible . . . to establish the necessity of infant baptism, except upon the ground that baptism imparts a special grace. . . . [Revivalistic Presbyterianism is therefore] hostile to infant baptism . . . in reality, whatever it may be in profession . . . and unfriendly, therefore, to the whole idea . . . it has been based upon in the Reformed church from the beginning. . . . To what a pass things have already come in this respect throughout our country, by reason of the baptistic spirit which is among us . . . [t]hose who have eyes to see, can see for themselves. [Pgs. 399-400, "Vindication of the Revised Liturgy: Historical and Theological," John Williamson Nevin, in *Catholic and Reformed: Selected Historical Writings of John Williamson Nevin*, ed. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. & George H. Bricker. Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, n. d.]

The true gospel of justification by faith alone, the practice of believer's baptism as an ordinance, not a sacrament, and revival are intimately connected, as are baptismal regeneration, traditional Reformed theology, and infant baptism. Let the friends of Christ's gospel and of historic Baptist churches take note.

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