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Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858

Iain H. Murray
Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust (1994).
455 pages, cloth, \$27.95.

Revival and Revivalism is an outstanding, thoroughly researched work by the editorial director of the Banner of Truth Trust, Rev. Iain H. Murray. It not only resolves many nagging questions about revival and revivalism in general, but also argues persuasively that most revivals in America were largely Spirit-wrought, Calvinistic, and sound in doctrine prior to the introduction in the 1820s and 1830s of "new measures" (such as the anxious seat and protracted meetings) designed to promote revivalism and "conversions." Charles Finney is viewed as the major catalyst who led America's major denominations from God-centered revivals to a "revivalism" grounded on human methodology and instrumentality.

Thus, Murray firmly rejects the merging of "revival" with "revivalism" as is commonly done in secondary literature today. He argues that the New Testament idea of revival as inseparable from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was prevalent in most American denominations throughout the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries. Prior to 1830 revival was nearly always defined as "a sovereign and large giving of the Spirit of God, resulting in the addition of many to the kingdom of God" (p. 374). Revivals could not be predicted or produced, but were dependent upon the "out-letting" of the Holy Spirit.

Revivalism, on the other hand, is different both in its origin and its tendencies. Its ethos is man-centered and its methods too close to the manipulative to require a supernatural explanation. Through Finney and others a new theology of conversion developed in America which downplayed the depravity

Whitefield saw the great change that began in America in the winter of 1739-40 "as an earnest of future and more plentiful effusions of God's Spirit in these parts." Samuel Blair wrote of the same change: "It was in the spring of 1740 when the God of salvation was pleased to visit us with the blessed effusions of his Holy Spirit in an eminent manner." Similarly, Jonathan Dickinson observed of the same period that "they were again visited with the special and manifest effusions of the Spirit of God." For these men the words "effusion," "baptism," and "outpouring of the Spirit" were synonymous in meaning with "revival of religion." The latter term, which was beginning to come into standard use only in the 1740s, was always understood in this sense ... nearly a hundred years were to pass before it began to be obscured.

Iain Murray

The work of God is carried on with greater speed and swiftness, and there are often instances of sudden conversions at such a time. So it was in the apostles' days, when there was a time of the most extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit that ever was! How quick and sudden were conversions in those days.... So it is in some degree whenever there is an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God; more or less so, in proportion to the greatness of that effusion.

Jonathan Edwards

In so speaking of the Spirit's work in revival these evangelical leaders were not disparaging the reality of his normal and regular work in the church. They were far from believing that true Christianity can only spread in the manner that it did in 1740.

Iain Murray

of man and embraced Arminian teaching without reservation. Ultimately, by focusing on man, the spirit of "revivalism" did more to detract from real revival than to promote it.

Due to the multiplicity of material on the Great Awakening, Murray begins his study of revivals in America at approximately 1750. His first chapter deals largely with Samuel Davies (1723-61), the often-neglected founder of the "Southern Presbyterian Church," called by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones the greatest preacher of America. Davies' ministry was used for the conversion of thousands, including numerous black slaves and plantation owners. Murray concludes from Davies' life and ministry that revivals are not different in *kind* from the church's normal work, but are different in *degree*. Spiritual influence is more widespread, feelings are more intense, conviction of sin generally runs deeper, the sense of God is more overwhelming, love to God and to others in different denominations is greatly heightened, but all this is only an augmentation of normal Christianity (p. 23).

The role of Princeton College occupies Chapter Two. Brought to the fore are interesting accounts of preachers often bypassed—John Rodgers, Robert Smith, Samuel Finley, Alexander McWhorter, Timothy Johnes, John McMillan, Thaddeus Dod, James Power, and Joseph Smith. When Princeton was founded the cultivation of biblical piety was deemed of greater importance than academic learning. Princeton's later opposition against revivalism (e.g., see writings of Charles Hodge) is not to be confused with its early support for Spirit-worked revivals (e.g., see Archibald Alexander's *The Log College*).

"Glory in Virginia" is the appropriate title of Chapter Three which is devoted to descriptions of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit through Baptist, Anglican, and Presbyterian ministers in Virginia during the years immediately prior to the War of Independence. Blessings upon the ministries of Devereux Jarratt, Daniel Marshall, Samuel Harris, Lewis Lunsford, Rob-

ert Semple, David Thomas, and Robert Williams are brought to the fore. Murray concludes that true revivals are remarkably ecumenical in character; they "rarely remain within denominational boundaries" (p. 74).

Chapter Four focuses on what the Presbyterians came to call "the Great Revival" (1787-89), "on account of the extent to which its influence spread and the permanence of its effects" (p. 104). During these years many college students (particularly at Hampden-Sydney College) were saved and "theology took fire." Old Puritan literature was rapidly reprinted; experimental religion took priority (pp. 107, 105). Archibald Alexander was to call the weeks he spent at the center of this revival the most unforgettable of his life (p. 100). Here we learn to appreciate the ministries of John Blair Smith, Robert Smith, Henry Pattillo, David Caldwell, and James Hall.

Around 1800 a new and great work of the Spirit began which history now refers to as the Second Great Awakening. In Chapter Five this awakening is described in general; in Chapter Six, its spread into Kentucky is detailed. After describing the general spiritual barrenness of the 1790s, Murray provides a graphic comparison between the First and Second Great Awakenings (pp. 118ff.). The First Great Awakening lasted approximately four years, and on several occasions led to excesses; the Second Great Awakening continued for at least twenty-five, perhaps even thirty years, but was kept remarkably clear from external excesses such as faintings or muscular contortions. The Second Great Awakening also reached far more people in a far broader geographical area than did the First. Certainly this Awakening has been vastly underrated, no doubt in part to a lack of good, accessible sources. The author would do great service if he were to expand Chapters Five and Six into a full-length book, detailing the sovereign, saving wonders of the Holy Spirit in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Murray underscores for us that the Second Great Awaken-

ing used none of the special means advocated by Finneyism. Prior to revival, all that could be noticed was a growing desire in some areas to pray for revival. Moreover, the Second Great Awakening multiplied evangelical causes and interdenominational activity throughout the nation. Most of the country's colleges were greatly affected as well. This in turn led to the rise of seventeen additional seminaries in less than twenty years, such as Andover (1808), Princeton (1812), and Yale (1822)—all of which were theologically sound institutions at their commencement (p. 225).

The emergence of revivalism is described in Chapter Seven. Near the end of the 1820s some preachers began to encourage emotionalism and fanaticism so as to *promote* revivals (revivalism). These ministers also came to reject “the Calvinistic understanding of the gospel that had hitherto prevailed among all evangelical Christians” (p. 177). The last half of this chapter focuses on the Methodist movement, Francis Asbury and others. It provides a succinct account of the Methodist understanding of the Gospel, and how the Methodists differed from “the common consensus of belief” in the late 1820s (p. 178). Murray concludes that Methodist effectiveness did not depend upon their differences from the Calvinists, but rather upon what they had in common with them.

Chapter Eight is largely biographical, focusing on five leaders who experienced revival in the Northeast: Edward Griffin, Asahel Nettleton, Lyman Beecher, Edward Payson, and Gardiner Spring. In terms of how to preach the Gospel and how to direct seeking souls, the concluding applicatory pages of this chapter (pp. 208-22) are worth the price of the book.

Chapters Nine to Twelve swirl around Charles Finney (1792-1875) and others, whose major impact upon exchanging revivalism for revivals eventually won the day among the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists. These are the depressing chapters as it becomes increasingly plain that Finney's man-centered techniques wreaked havoc through-

out the church of God. In the process, Finney embraced Arminianism, belittled those ministers who sought to maintain balance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and even “fudged” on past facts and dates (knowingly or unknowingly), so as to give the impression to future generations in his *Memoirs* that the revivals of 1800-25 were inconsequential compared to the revivalism promoted by Finney himself after the mid-1820s. Over the years, Finney increasingly defended his “new measures” as being of the essence of any true revival. His *Memoirs* serve as a polemic against the older Calvinistic way of evangelism which stressed that depravity is very deep, and that only God's sovereign grace can change the heart through the miracle of Spirit-worked regeneration.

Throughout this book, Iain Murray argues that an inability to recognize the distinction between “revivals” and “revivalism” led many evangelicals to ignore the new understanding of evangelism and revival which began to be popularized in the 1820s and swelled under the ministry of Finney, et al. While the case against this new view was argued almost universally by the leaders of the Second Great Awakening, their testimony was submerged beneath propaganda which promised a “new era” if only the churches would abandon the older ways.

Happily, Murray's work does not end on a melancholic note. Dedicated to J.W. Alexander and the famous New York Awakening of 1857-58 (sometimes referred to as the Prayer Revival or the Third Great Awakening), Chapter Thirteen reassures us that God is able and willing to do mighty things in His inscrutable sovereignty even in the midst of Arminian revivalism. Clearly, a definitive work needs yet to be written on the Third Great Awakening.

Murray's concluding chapter, “Old and New, Past and Future,” brings together many strands of thought on the subject of revival, as well as on what constitutes Gospel preaching (pp. 371-74). The author acknowledges that it is

often difficult to distinguish revivals from revivalism during a period of intense religious activity. For one thing, there can be much chaff among the wheat of true revivals; hence a winnowing season generally follows revival (pp. 82-85). Periods of revival can also be times of great danger (p. 382). Then again, God can gather in wheat under the "chaff" of revivalism (p. 383). "In the end, while evangelicalism was seeking to guard faith in Scripture, it was her readiness to be impressed by pragmatic arguments, and by alleged success, by quantity rather than quality, that did so much to deprive her of true authority and strength" (p. 383).

Two important chapters are appendix. Appendix One describes the rise and advance of revivalism in Britain. Appendix Two sketches how the New York Awakening (described in Chapter Thirteen) spread to the Southern States.

This book is "must" reading. It is biblical, historical, doctrinal, experimental, and practical. It is instructive, humbling, encouraging, and in some cases, depressing. Church history, biography, doctrinal nuances, and spiritual accounts of revival are interwoven in a most edifying manner. Once started, it is a volume difficult to set down.

We Americans owe much to the author for unscrambling a large chunk of American church history and putting it back together in a cohesive fashion under the theme of "revival" vs. "revivalism" without sacrificing the complexity of the period. Today we need to take seriously the author's clarion call implicit throughout his work, namely, to seek the grace of the Spirit to return to the earlier understanding of revival possessed by those who most intimately experienced it. In the face of today's virtual collapse of orthodox Christianity in many places, the church needs the kind of clear direction and encouragement this book gives as she seriously pursues her mandate of (re)evangelizing the world. What a blessing that the old Calvinistic way of evangelism, exercised primarily through faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, has

proven to bear the best fruit in generations past! Let us therefore never seek to "work up" a revival (=revivalism), but as we wait upon our sovereign God to do for us, our churches, and others what we are not able to perform, let us pray fervently, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).

Joel Beeke

Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Great Awakening

Joseph Tracy

Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1976.

433 pages, cloth, \$21.95.

This book is a work of history. It also serves as a theology on spiritual awakenings. Whether we define a *classic* as "serving as a standard of excellence" or "something enduring" or "an authoritative source," Joseph Tracy's *The Great Awakening* dutifully fulfills each mandate. Through his careful research and recording of the religious upheavals of the mid-eighteenth century, Tracy reminds us of our spiritual heritage and calls the church back again to reformation and revival. Few today have responded to that call. Many seem to be moving in the opposite direction. All the more urgent for *The Great Awakening* to be revisited.

Every reviewer must begin in his work with questions. There can be no thinking without questioning—questions are the engines of inquiry—no study of the past is complete without them. My questions for *The Great Awakening* moved along three lines: (1) What is Tracy's purpose in writing? (2) What means, logic and resources did he use in pursuit of his goal? (3) Did he, in the final analysis, achieve his aim? Our

objective clearly, was to be selective, not exhaustive.

With reference to his purpose, Tracy himself supplies an appealing answer.

No history of that revival had ever been attempted.... There was, therefore, evident need of a work, which should furnish the means of suitably appreciating both the good and the evil of that period of religious history (p.iii).

The sheer dimensions of such an undertaking must have been daunting. While records of what Jonathan Edwards called *The Revival of Religion in New England in 1740* existed, some even in abundance, they were scattered willy nilly over several Colonies and buried in the archives of numerous libraries and churches. An hour of synthesis must have demanded days, perhaps weeks, of analysis. Yet Tracy did not wander aimlessly through his search.

A slight inspection of these multifarious documents was enough to show, that the period of "The Great Awakening" needed to be carefully studied; that some *great idea* was then extensively at work, breaking up established and venerated habits of thought, feeling and action, and producing a revolution in the minds of men, and thus in the very structure of society ... with a knowledge of that *idea*, we shall be able to understand the history of those times (p.viii, italics mine).

To the mind of Tracy, the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrated that that "great idea" was the doctrine of the new birth. Simply put the teaching of the new birth, together with its implications for marginal, if not unregenerate, clergy, church members and communicants, was *the* central catalyst of the Great Awakening. It was this truth, preached in the doctrinal context of Justification by faith, that literally enflamed men's hearts, transformed their lives and completely rearranged the ecclesiastical landscape. Its identity was essential

for Tracy's stated purpose, "for it fitted all the wards of the complicated lock." Thus the history of the Great Awakening is the history of this "idea" rejected by some but gratefully seized by the minds and hearts of others as it moved its way into the communities, churches and homes of both colonial America and Great Britain.

Yet knowing this, remarkably, we do not find Tracy suggesting that the doctrine of the new birth was the cause of the Great Awakening. Its catalyst, yes, but not its genesis. That, he wisely attributes to a gracious work of God, sovereignly given. Tracy does not stumble over the logical fallacy of trying to answer a nonempirical question by empirical means. Why the revival happened is not necessarily his first concern, only that it happened and with telling results. "Why" questions are elusive and difficult to define. "Why then?" "Why there?" "Why this?" All tend to be questions of cause, reason, motive and justification. Why does God save one man and not another? Why does He send revival at one time and place and not at another? These dilemmas, raised by our perennial "why" questions, are generally avoided by Tracy as he recognized that true revival is Spirit-born. Instead Tracy chooses interrogatives of a far more practicable sort—who? what? when? where? and how?—which vigorously serve his historian's purpose. *The Great Awakening* was never meant to formalize, standardize, and certainly not to trivialize the salient and scriptural principles of historic revival. No "five easy steps" or "ten secrets" or "how-to-have-a-revival" mentality here. Tracy consigns such humbug to the religious rubbish heap. The result is that there may be more to revival than there is in this book, but there is not more in this book than there is to revival.

We are not implying, however, that *The Great Awakening* is silent as to the secondary causes which contributed to the awakening era. Powerful, biblical preaching that exalted Christ, aimed at sin and warned of judgment was prevalent, as were the doctrines of grace from many pulpits, in private homes

and open fields. Prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit issued in calls for repentance, confession, fasting and intercessions. Many sensed a profound burden for revival and renewal in the church. In the full light of such activity, we cannot avoid the impression that before God sends revival to us, we must send to God for revival; that to have revival come, the church must want what revival brings! Scripture does promise that God will pour out His Spirit on the thirsty and satisfy the hungry soul that earnestly believes. Still, all these means combined and multiplied do not in themselves guarantee spiritual awakenings on a wide scale. Revival is not a human activity but a divine appointment. Ultimately (as Tracy does) we must fall back on God's good pleasure and sovereign will.

As to the means, logic and resources applied by Tracy to his task, we have here the markings of a first-rate historian. Primary sources, eyewitness accounts, private journals, personal correspondence and copious interviews all blend and weave together into a sturdy fabric of thorough and fair-minded research. Tracy, however, is not entirely objective. His love of his subject and thorough devotion to the Savior cannot be missed, nor should it be. Here is a man trying to capture on paper and for posterity a powerful and profound movement of God. His intense interest and sheer enthusiasm are catching. *The Great Awakening* is not for those who wish to be left undisturbed in their spiritual slumbers. Through its pages God seems very near.

Indeed, the enduring nature of this work allows the reader to *rewind* history, so to speak, so that we can see the Great Awakening not only in its effects, but as it happened. Tracy opens up a window to the past, permitting a panoramic view of what can transpire when there is a genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is a singular display of divine power! Men and women (many of them quite young) convicted and converted on a grand scale, stepping out as pardoned sinners into the

Christian life. Congregations swollen as memberships double, triple and quadruple (added numbers estimated in New England alone range between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand). Family worship where once there was domestic division, disorder and drunkenness. Scandalous sinners who trembled at the Word, and cried out for mercy. Christians exultant with joy as whole communities are touched and transformed by the everlasting Gospel. The student of history will be especially pleased with Tracy's observations as to the affect of the Great Awakening on various aspects of American life—social, educational, political and cultural. It is a telling reminder of how God digs the channels through which all history flows.

Does *The Great Awakening* achieve its lofty purpose? Splendidly—and with convincing fashion. Tracy succeeds in sorting out the realities of the revival from its excesses and exaggerations. He deals fairly with its critics (though he turns most of their arguments to dust). And while Whitefield and Edwards figure predominately in his narrative, Tracy brings to our attention many “lesser lights” whose experiences and testimony are no less than striking. Most of all, *The Great Awakening* has faithfully registered the seismic tremors of spiritual upheaval, when God moves the tectonic plates of history. This book is a definitive treatment of a remarkable era. It should be read, but don't read it as simple history. The fact of the Great Awakening should move us all to seek God's good pleasure in renewing and reviving His church. We have enough wood, hay and stubble stored up for a lifetime. Tracy's narrative would have God grant to us holy inclinations, and the all-sufficient grace to live them.

In the church, as in the natural body, painful and alarming symptoms are generally the struggle of the vital powers against some latent cause of disease; but, as the church cannot die, the struggle ends in the victory of the vital

powers, and the establishment of more perfect health (p.432).

James Wells
Waterford, Michigan

Sanctify the Congregation: A Call to the Solemn Assembly and to Corporate Repentance

Richard Owen Roberts, Editor
Wheaton, Illinois: International Awakening Press, 1994.
338 pages, paper, \$18.95.

This book was first recommended to me by a charismatic Pentecostal Christian who is opposed to Toronto blessing claims and is seeking to warn others of its dangers. He referred in particular to an outstanding and unusual sermon, the third of fifteen in the book, titled "Wine for Gospel Wantons: or, Cautions Against Spiritual Drunkenness" (see Jer. 13:12-15). The sermon on "spiritual drunkenness" is exceptionally useful for its insights. It does not exactly fit the drunkenness of epidemic hysteria which is the central obsession of the Toronto Vineyard Church movement, but is full of helpful parallels, and worth the price of the book.

In his introduction Richard Owen Roberts observes that sin is not confined to individuals. Whole churches can sin grievously, as can mission boards and entire denominations. Paul charges the church at Corinth as a church guilty of corporate grievous sins: an awful party spirit and divisiveness, the toleration of incest, going to law against each other before secular magistrates, and disgusting behavior at the Lord's Table.

The Corinth church came to repentance and acted honorably in correcting abuse. The repentance at Corinth was hearty. "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what

earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done." In an introductory chapter Roberts expounds these characteristics of repentance and makes application of them to the contemporary church.

I have noted five reasons why I value this volume.

The Importance of Corporate Sanctification. It is unusual to find a book devoted to holiness as it applies to all in a congregation and to groups of churches and to the churches of a nation as a whole.

Western society is fiercely individualistic. Dr. Robert Letham, writing in the January-March issue of *The Evangelical Quarterly* on the subject, "Is Evangelicalism Christian?" suggests that evangelicalism as such is based on the individual and his or her spiritual experience, and is decidedly not a churchly phenomenon. In addition to individualism it is to be noted that evangelical churches are mostly independent in a way which is detrimental to the common good. Independency acts as a barrier to reformation and revival. Too many churches are isolated. The blatant disregard that evangelical churches have of each other is unbiblical and inimical to spiritual blessing. They need to relate to each other in unity and love and share common concerns. In these sermons and covenants (see note five) we have a healthy stress on working together. We grow together and we are corrected and reformed together. A sense of the Lord's displeasure affects us all together. Spiritual blessing is shared. We all rejoice together.

The churches of New England in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century (from which period these sermons came) were acutely aware of their unity and independence. Compared with America today, those times were dangerous. Joseph Rowlandson, whose sermon "The Possibility of God Forsaking a People," was away seeking better army protection when his town was attacked by 1,500

Indians. Many, including Rowlandson's brother, were killed. His wife was wounded and taken, with his children and many others, into captivity. You will have to buy the book to find out about the outcome. But my point is made that there is a much greater sense of unity when we all have to depend on each other for survival.

Of the fifteen sermons, thirteen are from the Old Testament. One reason for this is the corporate nature of the Old Covenant people. They experienced everything together: reformation, revival, judgment, exile, and restoration. We are New Covenant people. Nevertheless we are not intended to be 10,000 splinters. Jesus prayed for the visible expression of our oneness. The character of the evangelical believers as a whole in different nations is mostly clearly discernible. As much as possible we need to pray together, plan and carry forward evangelism together, and seek reformation and revival corporately. That was certainly true of these New England churches.

Valuable Cameos of the Preachers Adorn the Volume. Sanctify the Congregation prefaces each sermon with a biographical sketch of the preacher. Thomas Shepherd, Increase Mather and Gilbert Tennent are well known. Most are less famous, such as John Cotton, great grandson of the renowned John Cotton. He was not sure about Whitefield at first but came to appreciate the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit attending his ministry. An instance is cited of a man in mature years who cried out loudly while Whitefield was preaching. Asked afterwards why he did this, he responded by saying he could not refrain because he was brought to see his sin, misery and danger, and his need to be saved, and that if a saving change was not wrought in him he would be undone forever. This man turned out to be an enduring believer. Such anecdotes enhance the value of the book.

The Message of These Sermons is Highly Relevant to Our Churches today. I will point out several examples. Attention has already been drawn to the exposition on spiritual drunk-

ness. That material has to be adapted to the contemporary scene, but its timelessness is amazing. "Returning Unto God the Great Concern of a Covenant People," by Increase Mather (1639-1723), is eminently relevant and practical. When the exercise of fasting is almost extinct, it is challenging to read Thomas Thatcher's (1620-78) exposition on Isaiah 58:5-6, titled "Is It Such a Fast As I Have Chosen?" There is a sermon titled "The Dangers of Not Reforming Known Evils" that is relevant in our contemporary church scene when we are publicly disgraced by notorious instances of neglect of church discipline and willful misuse of ecclesiastical authority in neglecting victims of scandalous sin.

Joseph Sewall's (1688-1769) exposition of Ezekiel 36:37, titled "Thus Saith the Lord God; I will Yet for This be Enquired of by the House of Israel, to Do It for Them," is full of practical exhortation and incentive. Why not survey Romans 11 and Isaiah 62: 6-7 and ask whether we should not be stirred by the challenge of Ezekiel 36:37? Solomon Williams (1700-76), grandson of Solomon Stoddard and cousin of Jonathan Edwards, opens up Matthew 12:25 ("Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand") in his sermon. Typical of the Puritan style his sermon title reads, "The Sad Tendency of Divisions and Contentions in Churches to Bring on Their Ruin and Desolation." One of his headings reads, "Divisions and contentions tend to quench the Spirit of God and provoke him to withdraw from them." The high standard of exposition is maintained by Benjamin Colman (1673-1747), one of the most prominent supporters of George Whitefield, in his exposition of Psalm 106:6, titled, "Our Fathers' Sins and Ours." Four reasons for, and five applications of, the doctrine are opened up, all of which engender heart repentance. Thomas Foxcroft (1696-1769) expounds Jeremiah 44:10-11. You will know that Jeremiah was taken against his will by an unrepentant and rebellious remnant into Egypt. There Jeremiah warned this

remnant of the Lord's displeasure. Foxcraft titles his sermon, "God's Face Set Against an Incurable People."

The sermons are well structured with clear informative headings throughout. The type is generous and the layout attractive.

The Book Promotes the Concept of Concerts of Prayer for Reformation and Revival. The editor of this volume pleads for the practice of solemn assemblies. The opening chapter is devoted to this theme in which Richard Owen Roberts shows that this is not just an Old Testament practice. On page 12 he describes an appalling crisis which came on a present-day church in Colorado, a crisis which threatened the complete financial ruin by unjust litigation of the church and its leaders. A solemn assembly was called and the Lord answered their prayers and delivered them in a very dramatic way.

This Book Reminds Us of the Place of Church Covenants. Five short appendices made up of church covenants are valued. These are examples of written statements to be read at solemn assemblies in which the Lord's assembled people can express unitedly their repentance and intercession.

In conclusion I would say that, providing allowance is made for the time gap, the thrust of *Sanctify the Congregation* is an excellent practical expression of what *Reformation & Revival Journal* is all about.

Erroll Hulse
Leeds, England

Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals; 1737-1770

Frank Lambert
Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press (1994).
238 pages, cloth, \$24.95.

A major book on George Whitefield has not appeared since the 1991 publication of *The Divine Dramatist*, by Harry S. Stout. Many who admire Whitefield's legacy were deeply disappointed by Stout's unreasonable and inaccurate assessment. (For a helpful review see *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Fall 1992.) When the publication of a new text on Whitefield labeled him a "Pedlar in Divinity," I assumed that another misrepresentation of the eighteenth-century evangelist had been completed. I was only partially correct.

First, some negative aspects of *Pedlar in Divinity*. There are several historical inaccuracies throughout this text. Describing the "Holy Club" of Oxford as evangelical (p.17) is not correct, nor is the 1739 date for the beginning of Whitefield's ministry (p.52). The Holy Club members knew nothing of the new birth when Whitefield joined, and thus could hardly be called evangelical, while the correct date for the beginning of Whitefield's ministry is 1737, not 1739. Some additional historical inaccuracies concern Whitefield's relationship to John Wesley. Lambert mentions numerous times throughout his text that Wesley served as a mentor to Whitefield (pp. 15, 52, 229). In reality, Wesley was heavily dependent upon Whitefield in such areas as open-air preaching and the formation of evangelical religious societies. It was, in fact, the converts of Whitefield who were given to Wesley's supervision when Whitefield left England for the Colonies.

Now some theological problems. I do not believe that Whitefield nor other leaders of the Great Awakening would agree that "emotional experience ... [is] the basis of true religion" (p.76). An emotional experience may or may not follow the regeneration of a human heart. What the author means by "emotional experience" is unclear, but I believe Whitefield would rather assert (and frequently did) that the blood of Christ applied to an individual human heart by the Holy Spirit is the actual basis of true religion. Also, I doubt that the Calvinistic theology of Whitefield could tolerate such a

comment as, "But even God is thwarted by hard hearts" in *Salvation* (p. 130). Whitefield would and did declare simply that those whose hearts were hardened to his Gospel message were either not of the elect, or they were elected to Salvation, to have the eyes of their understanding opened at another time. Finally, I assume that the word "penance" (p.20) should be replaced with repentance, in reference to events preceding Salvation.

Let us presently consider numerous statements of questionable use of rhetoric. Lambert uses merchandising phrases in reference to Whitefield's preaching, such as "exploiting demand" (p. 7), and as "an advertiser of divinity" (p. 34). Referring to Whitefield as one who "plied the trades" of his "goods and ideas" (p. 41), and as "staging events to attract crowds" (p. 64), may begin to make admirers of the evangelist uncomfortable. There is more. Mr. Lambert speaks of Whitefield as one who was "just like a trader, [who] would sell in the marketplace" (p. 47), and as one who considered that "evangelicalism was a prize commodity which should be sold in the most creative ways . . ." (p. 230). Using such merchandising vocabulary to excess, he describes Whitefield as an "itinerant salesman" (p.112) and as a "powerful salesman" (p. 113) who commanded an enormous market.

Before we relegate *Pedlar in Divinity* to the same unobjective and slanderous status as *The Divine Dramatist*, there are several aspects of this book that are worthy of respect. The section on Whitefield's conversion (pp. 15-25) is better than most, as is the author's setting of the socio/economic climate of England and the American Colonies. Lambert also reveals that he is well-read in the history of literature distribution, printing press developments, the onset of commercial advertising, and the so-called "pamphlet wars" that developed between opponents in eighteenth-century revivals.

Lambert has done extensive original research in the use of the printed word to contemplate the spoken word during the

spread of the Great Awakening. He has not rehashed or reworked old data, but portrays a dimension of Whitefield's success as an evangelist from an unexplored perspective. He goes unto extensive detail in describing Whitefield's efforts to print sermons, distribute his journals, and form a trans-Atlantic literacy network to promote revival. He mentions Whitefield as a private publisher of evangelical sermons, hymnbooks, and polemical works, as well as an editor, preface writer, and publisher of other evangelical or Puritan literature (pp. 85, 145-46).

Lambert is at his best when describing Whitefield's use of literature as an aid to his revival preaching. The author details Whitefield's use of printed sermons and newspaper reports being sent in advance of an actual visit by the evangelist. A steady stream of Whitefield literature crossed the Atlantic during his years of ministry, promoting revival, encouraging believers, and converting the unregenerate. Because of Whitefield's use of the printed word, thousands of individuals who had never had the opportunity to hear Whitefield personally were exposed to evangelistic preaching and orthodox theology. These remarks may be refined as follows.

Preaching imposed obvious restrictions on the itinerant [Whitefield]: at any given time he could appear at only one place. Print allowed him to extend the spatial and temporal dimensions of his mission, giving him an audience reaching far beyond the sound of his voice. While he preached in one location, men and women throughout the Colonies participated in the revivals by reading newspaper accounts of his progress, scanning advertisements of his printed work, following pamphlet wars between supporters and opponents, or reading one of his sermons (pp. 107-108).

An unfortunate aspect of Lambert's book is that it fails to fully develop the themes chosen in its title. While claiming to be a work on "Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770," the author

nowhere clearly explains his use of the term “revival.” Actually, his description of this term is decidedly anti-supernaturalistic, believing that revival is a blend of relationships between “evangelists, printers, and audience” (p.9), and that Whitefield could “organize a revival” (p. 14). Lambert also states that newspapers were a key element in the spread of revival (p. 96), while nowhere asserting a divine or sacred element in revivalism. The reader is left believing that revivals are a work of clever and creative men, not the result of a fresh outpouring of the Spirit of God. The author also uses the dates 1737-70 in his title. My quick calculation determined that more than three-quarters of the book covers the years 1737-45.

Lambert’s text provides some fresh research. Acknowledging the numerous problems mentioned above, helpful insights are present, especially in reference to Whitefield’s use of literature as an aid in his ministry.

Kenneth Lawson
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***George Whitefield: The Life and Times
of the Great Evangelist of the
Eighteenth-Century Revival***

Arnold Dallimore

Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth (1970, 1979).

Two volumes, cloth, \$41.95.

Lo! by the Merrimac Whitefield stands
In the temple that never was made by hands,—
Curtains of azure, and crystal wall,
And dome of the sunshine over all!—
A homeless pilgrim, with dubious name
Blown about on the winds of fame;
Now as an angel of blessing classed,

And now as a mad enthusiast.
Called in his youth to sound and gauge
The moral lapse of his race and age,
And, sharp as truth, the contrast draw
Of human frailty and perfect law;
Possessed by the one dread thought that lent
Its goad to his fiery temperament,
Up and down the world he went,
A John the Baptist crying—Repent!

John Greenleaf Whittier
The Preacher, 1859

I think I have never known of such a beautiful life. I never knew the example of a man who lived more than two hundred years ago could live so powerfully in the mind today. I never knew that reading the life of another man could make one long so to be more like Jesus Christ. And I certainly never knew that one man could be so greatly used by God.

He began preaching in 1736 at age 22, thrust somewhat unwillingly into the pulpit, longing still for several more years of quiet study and preparation. Almost from his first sermon, churches could not contain the thousands who flocked to hear him. In the early years people hung from the rafters of overflowing churches when he spoke, while drops of condensation dripped from the ceiling onto the heads of the hushed crowd below. Before long, in order to reach more people with the Gospel and not be hindered by the religious system which had begun to deny him its pulpits, he moved into the open air to preach, defying all Church of England conventions and further arousing the opposition of its torpid leaders.

He kindled the spark, then fanned into flame the fire that became the great eighteenth-century Methodist revival in England. He gathered the Wesley brothers to himself, then thrust them out, at first unprepared and hesitant, into the harvest fields of their land while he moved on to the American

Colonies. There he was the catalyst used of God to unite and fan into flame the isolated sparks of religious revival which became the First Great Awakening. It is said that before 1775 only two names were universally known in the thirteen American Colonies—that of King George III, and that of George Whitefield. He made six round trips to the Colonies and back, preaching up and down the length and breadth of England, then up and down the Colonies, over and over again. In an age when sea travel was still dangerous, he crossed the Atlantic thirteen times, dying in Massachusetts following his last trip westward.

Though he was far and away the greatest preacher of his age, he viewed his own accomplishments as lacking, and longed to be more greatly used by God. He lived a life of almost unmatched sacrifice, purity and joy, yet mourned the sins which kept him from being more effective. Several journal entries written in 1738 during his first return voyage to England reveal much more about his character and beautiful, trusting spirit, which never questioned God's goodness. A terrible storm early in the voyage had flooded the boat, washed most of the food overboard, and left the sails in tatters.

Nov. 1 ... Our food is so salty, that I dare eat but little, so that I am now literally in fastings often ... they have not above three days water on board.

Nov. 2 ... our allowance of water is but a pint a day ... our sails are now exceedingly thin, some more of them were split last night, and no one knows where we are; but God does, and that is sufficient.

Nov. 8 ... Parched ... inwardly fainting, and unable to read scarce anything; but, blessed be God, though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him.... Most in the great cabin begin to look weak and hollow-eyed. . . .

Nov. 11 ... Still we are floating about, not knowing where we

are; ... The weather now begins to be cold, so that I can say, with the Apostle, "I am in hunger and thirst, cold and fastings often." ... My outward man sensibly decayeth, but the spiritual man, I trust, is renewed day by day. . . .

After weeks of near starvation, constant cold and wet, and an ever growing fear of death among them, the *Mary* finally reached the Irish coast. How did Whitefield view these weeks of constant cold, wet and near starvation and drowning?

... this voyage has been greatly for my good; for I have had a glorious opportunity of searching the Scriptures, composing discourses, writing letters, and communing with my own heart. We have been on board just nine weeks and three days—a long time and perilous, but profitable voyage to my soul; for I hope it has taught me, in some measure, to endure hardships as becometh a minister of Christ.¹

He preached more than 18,000 sermons, often speaking twice a day during the week and three or four times on Sunday. Knowing nothing of the modern half-hour message, his sermons often stretched to two hours or more. They were given out of doors, in all weather conditions, without amplification, to crowds sometimes exceeding 30,000 people. He rode from town to town and preached so continuously that his public life could in a sense be viewed, as his biographer puts it, one thirty-four-year-long sermon. He died in 1770, still a relatively young man. Not yet 56, the last years of his life were spent wracked in pain, his body worn out and sickened by the ceaseless activity and Herculean demands of preaching unendingly to the huge crowds which had gathered wherever he went.

He died as he had lived—preaching the Gospel. On the last night of his life, weary, worn and dying, having just returned from a week of preaching in the towns surrounding Boston, he began climbing the outside stairs to his lodging. The crowd following him begged for one last word. With candle in hand,

he turned at the balcony, saying he would preach till it burned out. Somehow, as he always did, he found strength in God. For forty-five minutes he preached, telling the people one last time of the glory of God, of the great truths of forgiveness and Redemption from sin in Jesus Christ, of God's everlasting love for His people, and of the coming judgment day. As the flickering candle died, he said farewell, turned and entered the bedroom. He died that night as he had lived—his life aflame for God.

Arnold Dallimore was pastor of the Baptist Church in Cottam, Ontario, for twenty-four years. He has powerfully recreated the life and times of George Whitefield. This two-volume, 1200-page work is written with a passion and insight which will stir the hearts of all who long for God to once again visit this land with revival. First published in 1970, this definitive work has gained increasing recognition in recent years. It is thoroughly researched, and as timely today as it is scholarly. Dallimore's interest in Whitefield was first stirred while a student at Central Baptist Seminary in Toronto six decades ago. Religious and secular historians alike referred to Whitefield as one of the greatest preachers in church history, yet little detailed information was available on him, and large areas of his life were almost unknown. That such a prominent historical figure should be left to posterity as only an enigmatic image aroused Dallimore to what became a long and arduous, yet richly rewarding, course of study. In writing this biography Dallimore has restored a historically accurate picture of Whitefield, a picture which, for several paradoxical reasons, had been largely lost over the past two hundred years. In the process, however, he has also helped create a profoundly challenging revisionist view of the great religious revivals which swept both England and the American Colonies in the 1700s. Traditionally regarded as separate events, Dallimore has shown that they were actually closely related. George Whitefield's amazing ministry of preaching not only linked

them both, but proved to be the catalyst for both Awakenings.

Dallimore's biography of Whitefield is a book of hope at a time when our culture needs hope. We see moral decline and the loss of Western Civilization's Judeo-Christian ethic all around. A generation ago Francis Schaeffer warned that the West was entering the post-Christian era. Five years ago in *Against the Night: The New Dark Ages*, Charles Colson pondered the next step for a culture which rejects its Christian heritage. As happened during the Middle Ages after the collapse of the Roman Empire, Colson predicted the eventual retreat of Christians to pockets of community, or enclaves of light, surrounded by a hostile culture espousing neobarbarian values which have gained complete ascendancy. Against this backdrop a study of the great eighteenth-century revival offers hope.

One of the most intriguing aspects of studying Whitefield's life is to learn of the depraved social and moral condition of English society at the time of the Revival. Dallimore brings this to life. He comments with great insight on the moral and spiritual depravity of the times. England in the early 1700s was a society which had thrown off all moral restraint as it forcefully rejected its Puritan heritage of the previous century. Championing deism, the dominant intellectual currents of the day had pushed the once vigorous faith of the Reformers and the Puritans into murky backwaters of social approbation and derision. England had become a gin-crazed society where immorality flourished openly. God was publicly mocked on the stage and in the press. It was out of these dark and hopeless circumstances that the Revival came. Out of the lessons of this Revival Dallimore draws lessons for our own time:

This book goes forth with a mission. It is written with the profound conviction that the paramount need of the twentieth century is a mighty evangelical revival such as

that which was experienced two hundred years ago. Thus, I have sought to show what were the doctrines used of God in the eighteenth-century Revival, and to display the extraordinary fervor which characterized the men whom God raised up in that blessed work. Yea, this book is written in the desire—perhaps in a measure of inner certainty—that we shall see the great Head of the Church once more bring into being His special instruments of revival, that He will again raise up unto Himself certain young men whom He may use in this glorious employ. And what manner of men will they be? Men mighty in the Scriptures, their lives dominated by a sense of the greatness, the majesty and holiness of God, and their minds and hearts aglow with the great truths of the doctrines of grace. They will be men who have learned what it is to die to self, to human aims and personal ambitions; men who are willing to be “fools for Christ’s sake,” who will bear reproach and falsehood, who will labor and suffer, and whose supreme desire will be not to gain earth’s accolades, but to win the Master’s approbation when they appear before His awesome judgment seat. They will be men who will preach with broken hearts and tear-filled eyes, and upon whose ministries God will grant an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, and who will witness “signs and wonders following” in the transformation of multitudes of human lives.

Indeed, this book goes forth with the earnest prayer that, amidst the rampant iniquity and glaring apostasy of the twentieth century, God will use it toward the raising up of such men and toward the granting of a mighty revival such as was witnessed two hundred years ago.²

Throughout the two volumes Dallimore points out the high, noble view of conversion Whitefield and his contemporaries in the Revival had. There was no cheap grace in the minds or theologies of these brave men. They looked for solid, lasting results to accompany conversion. They accepted only a deep work of God in the heart as evidence of the new birth. And why? Because they believed that God was a great God,

and that if a great God entered the human heart, there would be profound and great results in that heart. How different from today’s evangelism, where men grub and fawn for numbers, mistaking manipulating people’s emotions or getting a signature on a piece of paper for God’s transforming power of Regeneration and conversion! How different from the shallow super-churches and result-oriented Christian organizations of today! These men were not afraid to call sin what it is. With hearts aflame with love for God and man, they stood alone on their platforms braving often hostile crowds, and changed the face of the English-speaking world.

Endnotes

- 1 Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust), 1:209-211.
- 2 *Ibid*, 1:15-16.

Bob Pyke
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Beyond Culture Wars

Michael Horton

Chicago: Moody Press (1994).

287 pages, cloth, \$16.99.

Michael Horton has provided a bolt of light so bright it nearly hurts. His is one of the few voices on the evangelical scene that is serious about Reformation—old and new. *Beyond Culture Wars* provides penetrating insight into the many issues that assault the evangelical mind, issues recently plaguing the “Religious Right” in their struggle with newly won political power.

The ground staked out by Horton is neither Left nor Right. He is critical of both because the position from which he argues identifies “both the Religious Left and the Religious

Right (as) heirs of a common evangelical tradition" (p. 22). He is historically correct. The Reformation gave rise to both.

Horton strikes a sympathetic chord by arguing on a philosophically higher level than what we hear in the media. Where the new media right is fixated on the moral crisis in America, Horton argues that morals are the outcomes of theological belief. With the Christian Reformers of the past he believes that the proper beginning place to discuss, and more importantly to *affect*, morals is theology, not morality or politics. People act out their beliefs, so a change of behavior requires a prior change in belief. Horton's concern is that "we continue to be so caught up in moral and political solutions ... that we end up, ironically, actually deepening the crisis" (p. 20).

He suggests that America has, in fact, never been a Christian culture, and the desire to return to such a past is misdirected, at best. Pressing further, he argues that Christianity itself is not a culture, but that the modern evangelical movement has created a kind of artificial evangelical pop culture that actually functions as a Christian ghetto in the midst of pagan America. Christians ghettoize themselves by spending all their time and resources within the pop culture of their own making—Christian radio, literature, TV, etc.

In addition, the evangelical culture that has been created has grafted American nationalism onto the Christian root. What passes for evangelical Christianity today is often so wrapped up in the American flag that the Cross of Christ has been obscured. The Right and Left are locked in a struggle with each other to preserve what they believe are historic values regarding church and state from the decadence of their political opposites. Right rails at Left. Left counters Right. Yet nothing changes.

Horton accurately observes that the battle currently rages in the domain of morals and politics. As such, it is a struggle for the power to impose one's morals and/or politics upon others—Right or Left.

Horton says we cannot expect godless heathens to live by Christian morals. When Christianity is imposed by the state or the media or academia or whomever, it wins the battle but loses the war, Horton suggests, since Christian love cannot be imposed and remain love.

Horton argues that Christians should bone up on theology, particularly Reformation theology, rather than waste precious resources on big media drives to take political power for Christ. Theology gave rise to the modern world, and it was the evangelism of the apostles that did it. They argued Jesus into people's minds and hearts with clear, articulate, cutting-edge, rational, and worldly disputation. They convinced the world of the reality of God in Jesus Christ. They took Jesus to the world. They didn't simply invite the world to church.

Jesus got out into the streets, Horton reminds us. Christ persuaded people of God's reality. Jesus didn't try to affix blame. He fixed people's problems.

Horton presents the case for Christian theology with verve and acumen.

He argues that Christians must return to theology, the rightful place for Christian persuasion in the first place, because, he says, the cultural war has already been fought—and lost. Secularism not only won the world, but the church—even the evangelicals (p.79).

Yet he argues that much of evangelicalism has already succumbed to secularism. To be secular is to make man the measure of all things. Secularism begins with humanity, rather than with God. Secularism requires that everything be relevant and translated into the latest idioms and styles. But the forcing of Christianity into popular cultural relevancy is what, in fact, makes Christianity secular.

Evangelicals are more drawn to pop styles of music and preaching than to orthodox doctrine. Rather than *sola scriptura*, the modern model is *anything contemporary!*

So, why not package orthodox doctrine into a contempo-

rary styled worship service? We must be careful here not to throw all contemporary worship into the same pot, just as we must be careful not to throw all orthodox worship into the same archaic pot. Finer discrimination is required. Horton argues that worship form cannot be separated from worship content. Scripture calls Christians to be separate and holy, not to imitate the world, but to imitate Christ.

Yet, too many evangelicals are “of the world, but not *in* the world,” where they should be “*in* the world, but not of the world” (p. 232). Caution must be raised where there is porosity between the world and the church. Too often the church wants to affect the world for Christ, and ends up only bringing worldliness into the church.

Beyond Culture Wars maintains that it is the church and not the world that is the primary target for reformation. What is needed is not political agendas nor pop evangelism, but real reformation, beginning in the church, with God’s people.

Only then can Christians avoid falling further into the pit of secularism—Left and Right.

Phil Ross
Zion, Pennsylvania

Men may say that the churches should not depend on these special visitations for their prosperity, but should so live as to enjoy the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in his convincing, converting and sanctifying power; in other words, in a constant revival. Granted: and what then? Has any body of Christians ever lived thus in this wicked world for any great length of time? Did even the apostolic church long sustain that revival state of which we read in the second chapter of The Acts . . . or has any church, since that great and notable day of the Lord, been found for any very prolonged time in what may be termed a revival state? Surely not. But all history goes to demonstrate the proposition that no church has ever lived and grown and prospered without special visitations from the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father sends in the name of his dear Son to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come, and who will take of the things of Christ and show them unto his disciples.

George Punchard

I believe in revival with all my heart, but revival is not evangelism. If, however, we slip into thinking that we can do nothing until revival comes—and it has not come for well over a century—then we slip into irresponsibility of the most diabolical kind. Our Lord commanded evangelism. We are to obey as best we can. We may be weak and the churches may be weak. Nevertheless we may never excuse ourselves.

Erroll Hulse

Edwards' last century admirers quite overlooked Edwards' most original contribution to theology; namely, his pioneer elucidation of biblical teaching on the subject of revival. This oversight is, perhaps, pardonable, since Edwards' thoughts on this subject were put out piecemeal in five early works which he composed in his thirties. . . . All these [except one], in one way or another . . . vindicate the two revivals which Edwards had himself seen against the current charge that they were more outbreaks of fanaticism. This immediate aim might seem to limit their interest for later generations of readers. Embodied in them, however, is a fairly complete account of revival as a work of God—in other words, a theology of revival—which is fuller than any produced before Edwards' time and is of lasting value. It is perhaps, the most important single contribution that Edwards has to make to evangelical thinking today.

James I. Packer

It is essential that we should be clear about this great doctrine [justification by faith alone]. It was the thing that revolutionized the life of Martin Luther, and ushered in the Protestant Reformation, the thing that was again rediscovered in the eighteenth century by Whitefield and the two Wesleys, and by Rowland and Harris in Wales, and by all these men who were so used of God. It was the realization of justification by faith that really led to the outpouring of the Spirit. It has always been the case. And so we cannot afford to neglect, to ignore this crucial doctrine.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones