**History & Theology – Church History**

**Class 10: Awakenings in America (1662-1875)**

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## **Main Point:**

* Amid many ecclesiological differences and tensions revival spread through the American colonies in the early 18th and 19th centuries

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## **Class Goals:**

* Broadly summarize the types of churches in the various British North America in the 17th to 18th Century
* Define what constitutes a revival
* Explain the Halfway Covenant and its effect on churches in New England
* Summarize Jonathan Edwards’ view of the affections in matters of faith
* Distinguish the First and Second Great Awakening
* Summarize the presence and effect of slavery on the ministry of Edwards and Whitefield
* Understand the contributions and enduring influence of Charles Finney in American churches

# Introduction: Churches in the “New World”

What is a Revival? The idea and language of revival has always been popular in American Christianity. But agreement on what constitutes a revival is far less so. How does a revival happen? Is it primarily a supernatural work of God who employs fallible humans? Or is it primarily a work of preachers employing the right means? Connected with these questions are a host of theological assumptions we’ll see come to bear in this period. Assumptions about how God works in the world to draw others to himself, the church, the responsibilities of Christians, and many others come into view in the early history of Christianity in the British Colonies in North America.

In today’s class, we will look at a few different answers to these questions. We will discuss the First and Second Great Awakening by considering the ministry of some during that time.

For additional context it’s worth considering what was the State of churches in the American Colonies from the late 17th century to the early 18th century? Well, the answer varies by region and colony. There was a large Episcopal/Anglican establishment to the South and a Puritan Congregationalists/Nonconformists to the North. Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and later Methodists would all emerge in the New World during these times and their churches would all face different challenges.

Helpful to think of three sets of colonies. New England (Largely Puritan), Middle Colonies (Religiously Diverse – Roman Catholics, Quakers, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Baptist), and The Southern Colonies (Nominally Anglican and Catholic in (Spanish) Florida). Though we won’t spend more time on these distinctions, it’s helpful to have in the back of your mind as we consider contextual factors to gospel ministry in America’s early history. For our part, we’ll largely focus on what started in New England and made its way to the other colonies.

In New England by 1662 (the time of the Great Ejection in England) many of the first-generation American settlers were beginning to die out physically and their children lost much of their spiritual ardor.[[1]](#footnote-0) Church membership had high admission requirements, including recounting a conversion experience.[[2]](#footnote-1) Church membership was declining and nominal Christianity was increasing.

To deal with the problem an advisory convention was formed and recommended what became known as the Half-Way Covenant (1662).[[3]](#footnote-2) This Covenant recommended that New England Congregational churches allow for the baptism of the grandchildren of regenerate church members. That is baptism for children whose parents were unconverted.

Problems continued for the next 40 years and in 1700 Solomon Stoddard changes the Halfway Covenant to allow both the regenerate and unregenerate admittance to the Lord’s Supper.[[4]](#footnote-3) Previously, only regenerate members of congregations were allowed to take the Lord’s Supper, now Stoddard advocated opening the table to all who wanted to partake. The only exception was those whose lives were scandalous. Stoddard held that the Lord’s Supper was a “converting ordinance,” meaning individuals could be converted through taking it.[[5]](#footnote-4)

Though the actions of one pastor and one congregation shouldn’t be taken as representative for all church, it was Stoddard’s influence in the region and the problems this would create for those who came after that makes this example stand out in this period.[[6]](#footnote-5) Considered by some to be the “Pope of the Connecticut River Valley,” Stoddard was widely respected, and others followed his example.[[7]](#footnote-6)

We can observe a change in emphasis with such changes to the ordinances of a church. Positively considered, the Halfway Covenant and the decision of Stoddard and others were a means to gain a wider hearing for the gospel. They softened their exclusivity in an effort to welcome the unregenerate and more broadly influence society. The question that arises, however, is did these ministers have sufficient grounds or authority to change an ordinance that Jesus instituted for his followers?

Despite these challenges, it’s in the context of these churches where revival would begin. Revival was already happening in England, and as it moved to New England these Half-way members would be some of the first fruits under Solomon Stoddard’s ministry. But the flowering of such awakenings would come under Stoddard’s grandson, Jonathan Edwards.

We’ll turn to consider his ministry in just a moment, but before we do, are there any questions?

# First Great Awakening

## Jonathan Edwards (1703 - 1758)

### Childhood and Conversion

Jonathan Edwards was born October 5, 1703 in East Windsor, Connecticut.[[8]](#footnote-7) He was the son of Pastor Timothy & Esther Edwards. [[9]](#footnote-8) He entered Yale College in 1716 (age 13).[[10]](#footnote-9) Early in his life and ministry he embraced the Reformed Protestantism of his father.[[11]](#footnote-10) From August 1722 to April 1723 he pastored a Presbyterian church in New York City.[[12]](#footnote-11) Later, in 1726, he was called to Northampton, MA to be an assistant minister to his grandfather Solomon Stoddard.[[13]](#footnote-12) In 1727, he married Sarah Pierrepont in New Haven.[[14]](#footnote-13) Then, in 1729, Solomon Stoddard died and Edwards became the Senior Pastor the church in Northampton.[[15]](#footnote-14)

### Revival

#### Descriptions of Revivals[[16]](#footnote-15)

Over 10 years after Edwards began his pastoral ministry in Northampton a remarkable revival occurred in 1741.[[17]](#footnote-16) Edwards describes the events in a letter: “It was a very frequent thing to see a house full of outcries, fainting, convulsions and such like, both with distress, and also with admiration and joy.”[[18]](#footnote-17)

Around the same time, Edwards describes what happened after a Sabbath service when he met with all the children under 16 years of age: “The room was filled with cries: and when they were dismissed, they, almost all of them, went home crying aloud through the streets, to all parts of the town.”[[19]](#footnote-18)

Many would understand these outbursts as displays of conviction of sin as they were responded to the preaching of the word. But not everyone saw these experiences as being from the Holy Spirit. The revivals Edwards oversaw as well as other contemporaneous revivals at the hands of men like George Whitefield proved enormously controversial and divisive in New England.[[20]](#footnote-19) Much ink was spilled analyzing, defending, and attacking the revivals.

Edward’s ministry grew in this period. He worked to understand what was behind such actions and what were the characteristics of true conversion. After these early revivals, Edwards saw many who seemed full of spiritual joy sadly return to worldly ways.[[21]](#footnote-20) He considers such problems in perhaps his most well-known work, *Religious Affections.*

### A Theology of Religious Affections

*Religious Affections* (1746)[[22]](#footnote-21)

In this work, Edwards analyzes what are the reliable and unreliable signs (or affections) of true spirituality.[[23]](#footnote-22) He argues, “True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”[[24]](#footnote-23)

We should note, when Edwards says “affection, “he does not mean a display of emotion divorced from reason and will. It is more like an invigorated and visceral engagement of the will.[[25]](#footnote-24) Edwards held that religion must have good deeds attending these affections, but affections were essential: “True religion consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection, is in a state of spiritual death.[[26]](#footnote-25)”

Additionally, Edwards attempted to distinguish between true and false affections, listing signs of them.

“There are false affections, and there are true. A man’s having much affection, don’t prove that he has any true religion: but if he has no affection, it proves that he has no true religion. The right way, is not to reject all affections, nor to approve all; but to distinguish between affections, approving some, and rejecting others;[[27]](#footnote-26)”

[Discussion Question] - Does the Bible agree with Edwards on true/false affections and the necessity of religious affections?

In matters of discerning true faith, Edwards does seem to over-emphasize affections and work to discerning affections and diminish looking for an orthodox confession and accompanying fruit of the Spirit. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23) teaches us that some may respond with great joy to the gospel, but they eventually walk away when trials come. Other parables in Matthew, teach us that we should generally expect a response of joy upon discovering the kingdom of God.[[28]](#footnote-27)

[Application to Today] - We should be cautious about too quickly believing that a group of people talking about Jesus and having emotional experiences is a sure sign of God’s work. We should look for doctrinal accuracy, fruit of the Spirit, and long-term perseverance through time and trials. In brief, while discerning proper affections can plan an important role in discerning true faith it’s not the exclusive mark of right faith. That is, patience is needed as spiritual fruit is discerned over time.

### Edwards Change of Views & Dismissal

By 1748, Stoddard’s revisions to the Halfway Covenant had permeated the church in Northampton for 48 years. In that December, Edwards told someone that they must profess Christianity before they could join the church.[[29]](#footnote-28) His statement sparked no small controversy and much discussion and writing between Edwards and others on this topic ensued.[[30]](#footnote-29) Leading to the events of June 1750 where a congregational vote on Edwards was held.[[31]](#footnote-30)Upon this vote, only 10% of the members voted to retain Edwards[[32]](#footnote-31)

While it’s likely that many issues contributed to his dismissal, the most substantial was his change to the communion practice.[[33]](#footnote-32) Edwards knowingly took a controversial position on principle despite it causing significant trials for families and knowing it may well lead to his dismissal.[[34]](#footnote-33)

Edward’s dismal is one example cited today against congregationalism. So, it’s worth us asking the question, did congregationalism fail here? What do you think?

[Application for Today] - Dangers of Unregenerate Membership. The problem for the Northampton church is that it had knowingly admitted unregenerate individuals into membership. Its membership rolls, for years, became diluted with regenerate and unregenerate members. The problem for this church was upstream from its polity and lay with the admittance of non-Christians to the Lord’s Supper and extending membership to the unregenerate.

However, in a twist of irony, despite his dismissal, Edwards regularly filled the pulpit at the Northampton church for several years as they didn’t find a replacement.[[35]](#footnote-34)

## Revivals throughout the Colonies

What Jonathan Edward witnessed in New England through the regular preaching of the scriptures in the life of the church would soon spread throughout the colonies. The spread of revival can be seen by tracing the ministry of George Witefield.

## George Whitefield (1714 - 1770)

### Childhood and Conversion

Whitefield was born on December 16, 1714 in Gloucester, England.[[36]](#footnote-35) At 21 and a student at Oxford, he seems to have been converted through reading a book by Henry Scougal.[[37]](#footnote-36) He married Elizabeth James on November 14, 1741.[[38]](#footnote-37)

### Gifted Preacher

Whitefield was a skilled orator and an argent evangelist. It seems that many of Whitefield hearers, even unbelievers were deeply affected by his rhetoric. Sarah Edwards, wife of Jonathan Edwards and a friend of Whitefield, described his preaching:

“[Whitefield] makes less of the doctrine than our American preachers generally do and aims more at affecting the heart. He is a born orator.... It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence[[39]](#footnote-38)”

Additionally, the famed English actor and playwright David Garrick remarked that Whitefield could “make men weep or tremble by his varied utterances of the word ‘Mesopotamia.’”[[40]](#footnote-39) It’s said that unbelieving philosopher David Hume thought it worth going 20 miles to hear him preach.[[41]](#footnote-40)

### Doctrine

Whitefield was a fiercely evangelistic preacher and a staunch Calvinist. He saw the reformed doctrine of election as fueling evangelism rather than hindering it. He said,

“I cannot see how true humbleness of mind can be attained without a knowledge of it; and though I will not say, that everyone who denies election is a bad man, yet I will say ... it is a very bad sign ... for, if we deny election, we must, partly at least, glory in ourselves.”[[42]](#footnote-41)

### Breadth and Scope of Ministry

While it is impossible to know the exact statistics surrounding how often Whitefield preached and to how many, the numbers are staggering. Steve Lawson summarizes:

“In his thirty-four years of ministry, Whitefield preached some eighteen thousand sermons, often to multiplied thousands. If informal messages are included, such as in private homes, this number easily increases to thirty thousand sermons, perhaps more. Three sermons a day were common; four were not uncommon. Conservative estimates are that he spoke a thousand times every year for more than thirty years. In America alone, it is estimated that eighty percent of the colonists heard him preach.[[43]](#footnote-42)”

It's estimated that he preached to 650,000 people per month during 1739 (or 20,000 people per day).[[44]](#footnote-43) Where the revivals in New England occurred mostly in connection with the regular pulpit ministry of the local church, Whitefield preached extensively outside of the church—both in terms of physical location and spiritual oversight. As one historian said, Whitefield “combined an extraordinary disregard for inherited church traditions with a breathtaking entrepreneurial spirit.”[[45]](#footnote-44) This proved consequential for American Christianity. Over against the Reformation, Whitefield’s methods partly divorced preaching and the pursuit of godliness from the ecclesiastical structures.[[46]](#footnote-45)

Though extraordinary in the scope of his ministry, the ministry of Whitefield underscored some of the problems Edwards saw among churches in New England. Long-term spiritual growth happens primarily through the local church, not gifted or flashy itinerant ministers and the subjective effect of their preaching. Spiritual health cannot be judged by a crowd or a mass following but is best espoused over time. But at the core of Whitefield preaching was the enduring doctrine of the reformation. Still, in some ways, Whitefield helped lay the ground for parachurch ministries, for better and for worse.

## Revivals and Slavery

Though having each having remarkable ministries, both Edward’s and Whitefield’s ministry are entangled with the evil of their day. Both owned slaves and the revivals we’ve discussed so far took place in colonies where men and women were bought and sold as property. But as we will see, though the presence and proliferation of the African slave trade stains the ministry of some the same gospel they preached would unite those in a common bond that society sought to untie.

#### Jonathan Edwards

For his part, Jonathan Edwards always owned at least one slave.[[47]](#footnote-46) In 1731, Edwards traveled to Newport, Rhode Island where he “purchased” a 14-year-old girl named Venus for 80 pounds.[[48]](#footnote-47) Additionally, when another pastor faced criticism from his parishioners for owning slaves, Edwards defended both the pastor and the institution of slavery[[49]](#footnote-48) However, Edwards spoke out against the African slave trade and admitted 9 African-Americans into full membership of his church[[50]](#footnote-49)

#### George Whitefield

George Whitefield had his own plantation and slaves to work it.[[51]](#footnote-50) Whitefield criticized what he saw as the “abuse of and cruelty to” some slaves, but he did not see owning slaves as inherently sinful and in-fact defended slavery.[[52]](#footnote-51) Whitefield did interact at a spiritual level with slaves and showed concern for the spiritual life of slaves who came to visit him regularly.[[53]](#footnote-52)

### Assessing Edwards, Whitefield, and Slavery

Some have argued that Edwards’ (& Whitefield’s) views of slavery can hardly be surprising as they fit in with their view of a hierarchal society that was prevalent in their day.[[54]](#footnote-53) For others, the fact that both Edwards and Whitefield owned slaves is reason to condemn their ministry. To say the matter is fraught with complexity is an understatement as through these men and their ministry the good news of salvation came to many and their writings are some of the richest testimony from this time period. In Edwards case his devotional life and affections for the things of the Lord is compelling. But the challenge here is we cannot access the thoughts of Edwards and Whitefield on the matter of slavery. It’s possible they came to terms with the sad reality of slavery. It’s possible they sought to undermine the system by their treatment of slaves and quiet advocacy. Many things are possible, but the truth of the matter is we don’t know.

What we do know is the Bible is clear, and American, chattel race-based slavery is a heinous sin against God and man. It is sinful because it fails to love our neighbor. Any theological justification of such a system degrades people made in the image of God, advocates for man-stealing, destroys families, and much more. We should not that often, historically, such justifications included curtailments on the implications of the Christian Gospel.

### The Testimony of Phillis Wheatley

To aid our reflection on such realities, consider the testimony of Phillis Wheatley. In 1761, having been likely stolen from her parents in Africa and transported to the American Colonies on a slave ship when she was seven or eight years old, she was “purchased” by John Wheatly, a Boston merchant as a household slave for his wife Susanna.

Susanna noticed that Phillis had an early aptitude for reading and writing. Noticing such ability, the Wheatley’s encouraged her to pursue education. Wrote poetry in teen years, and would become well known in London and throughout the colonies. Phillis excelled in education and would later visit London seeking to publish her works. The Wheatley’s set her free in 1773 and continued as patrons.

Through her studies, Phillis came into contact with the preaching of George Whitfield and was converted. Reflecting on her experience she would write,

 ‘Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,

 Taught my benighted soul to understand

 That there’s a God, that there’s a Saviour too:

 Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

 Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

 “Their colour is diabolic die.”

 Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,

 May be refin’d, and join th’ angelic train.[[55]](#footnote-54)

What a testimony. How is it that such men and women like Phillis Wheatley would embrace such truths after seeing such brutality? Though experiencing the savagery of the slave trade at such a young age, Wheatley reflected deeply on what she gained in such bondage. She would see such circumstances as leading her to hear and understand the gospel message. We can learn much from her testimony and that of others like her. These men and women though subjugated to slavery, prized their eternal heritage more than their earthly state.

At such a point it should be noted that, like Jupiter Hammon her writings can be read to give a passing acceptance to slavery. However, Wheatley would challenge that as in her own life as she spoke out against the institution and practice.

Wheatley is only one example. We need more research into the lives of those like Wheatley who embraced a reformed understanding of Christianity despite the cruelty she experienced. Such men and women can teach us more of what it means to be strangers and aliens in this world and what it is to count the reproach of Christ as greater treasure than the riches of this world. Their stories deserve to be remembered and told amongst Christian churches.

[Discussion Question] - How do we think through the blind spots, errors, and sins of Christians in the past, especially the sin of slavery?[[56]](#footnote-55)

We can be thankful for Christians who did speak out against the evils of slavery. Such reality should be a somber warning about how easy it can be to uncritically imbibe practices around you and justify them with distorted Scriptural reasoning. We should recognize the way that evils from the past, even from hundreds of years ago, can still have profound effects today. And finally, we see that God uses even deeply flawed individuals to accomplish his purposes in the world.

## Summary of First Great Awakening

### Ordinary Means, Extraordinary Fruit

We’ve discussed many issues tied to the period of the First Great Awakening (1720s-1780s). On the matter of revival, what we see in the First Great Awakening that will be contrasted later is that the regular means of grace brought preached word to bear on individual consciences. Ordinary means were used (a gathered church, the preached word, etc.) and extraordinary fruit was seen.

The working of the First Great Awakening turned many from religious nominalism that pervaded many American colonies in the 18th century. The preaching of Edward and Whitefield emphasized familiar themes but pricked the conscience of many as they consied the dealings of a holy God with sinful humanity.

### A Boon for Baptists

Such encounters proved to be a boon for Baptists as conversion and its fruits were seen as demonstrable and necessary for baptism and membership in a local church. It was the preaching of the scriptures and sound doctrine that drove many to reconsider their previous position and led to regenerate church membership being rightly prized.

# Second Great Awakening

## Churches after the War for Independence

By late 1700s Under 10% of the population belonged formally to local congregations.[[57]](#footnote-56) The reasons for this varied. In battle-worn areas like New Jersey, New York City, Philadelphia, and the Carolinas congregational life had been disrupted and many members displaced. In other regions after the war the priority for many was building a new society and economy. These pressing concerns left little time for church life. With newfound freedom others thought about leaving traditional Christianity behind. Many frontier areas to the west were entirely devoid of Christian influence.

Though fraught with much complexity and challenges in a new nation, the work of revival would continue. Different from the First Great Awakening, however, these series of revival can’t be identified with one individual as a preeminent example. There were stirrings of revival as early as 1795 through 1810 and the work would continue until the Civil War.[[58]](#footnote-57) This period is notable for its diversity in forms and substance. Though emerging in the period of the First Great Awakening, Baptists and Methodists came to prominence in the Second Great Awakening.[[59]](#footnote-58)

As we will see what started with the ordinary means of grace in Edward’s Northampton change. New measures were introduced in this period, and different fruit was seen.

Some of these new measures can be seen in the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801 in Kentucky. Missionaries and itinerant ministers planned a series of protracted meetings known as “camp meetings” where many came to hear the gospel preached. In Cane Ridge thousands came to hear, Black, White, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist ministers preach the gospel. “Electrifying” results followed.[[60]](#footnote-59) Several responded dramatically, and churches were established as enduring witnesses in these communities.

Such protracted meetings grew, especially in frontier areas. And as they grew ever detached from churches and doctrinal oversight, theological lines were blurred. Among such efforts the reformed commitments that supported the preaching of men like Edwards and Whitefield were lost. Such a shift is best seen in the ministry of Charles Finney who’s ministry emerged in the 1820s.

## Charles Finney (1792 - 1875)[[61]](#footnote-60)

Charles Finney was born in Connecticut in 1792.[[62]](#footnote-61) In the Fall of 1821, Finney was converted.[[63]](#footnote-62) 2 years later in 1823 he was ordained to the New School Presbytery.[[64]](#footnote-63) From 1824 to 1827 worked as an itinerant evangelist throughout New York.[[65]](#footnote-64) It’s said that powerful revivals sprung up under Finney’s multi-week campaigns. Then in 1836, Finney faced such severe criticism of his writings and revivals that he left Presbyterianism to join Congregationalism.[[66]](#footnote-65) A year later in 1837, Finney joined the faculty of Oberlin College.[[67]](#footnote-66) Finney died in 1875 as the best-known evangelist of his generation.[[68]](#footnote-67) He is regarded as highly influential in the history of American Christianity—known as “the father of modern revivalism.”[[69]](#footnote-68)

### Theology[[70]](#footnote-69)

#### General Theology

In his life and ministry, Finney ardently rejected Calvinism, denied imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and denied penal substitution, and instead affirming a moral governance theory of the atonement.[[71]](#footnote-70) He argued,

“The doctrine of imputed righteousness, or that Christ’s obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption.... [Christ’s righteousness] could do no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us ... it was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey on our behalf.[[72]](#footnote-71)”

[Discussion Question] - Where else have we seen a denial of imputation in the doctrine of justification? i.e. Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent[[73]](#footnote-72)

Finney rejected the traditional protestant view of justification by downplaying the one-time nature of justification:[[74]](#footnote-73)

“Whenever he sins, he must, for the time being, cease to be holy. This is self-evident. Whenever he sins, he must be condemned; he must incur the penalty of the law of God.... The Christian, therefore, is justified no longer than he obeys, and must be condemned when he disobeys; or Antinomianism is true. Until he repents he cannot be forgiven. In these respects, then, the sinning Christian and the unconverted sinner are upon precisely the same ground.[[75]](#footnote-74)”

Additionally, Finney vehemently rejected depravity and instead believed sinners could immediately repent.[[76]](#footnote-75) Finney thought that a moral obligation implies a moral ability.[[77]](#footnote-76) That is God wouldn’t command something humanity is incapable of doing, a Pelagian claim.[[78]](#footnote-77)

Finney harshly criticized Presbyterians for lacking emotional fire and conviction in their preaching.[[79]](#footnote-78) He thought they spent too much time debating theological issues at length instead of spending that time saving souls. He wrote that Presbyterian leaders “contentions and jangling’s are so ridiculous, so wicked, so outrageous, that no doubt there is a jubilee in hell every year, about the time of the meeting of the General Assembly.”[[80]](#footnote-79)

Finney essentially rejected the doctrine of original sin.[[81]](#footnote-80) In 1831, he preached a sermon in Boston entitled “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts” where he described sin as a voluntary act.[[82]](#footnote-81) He told the sinful they had the obligation, and so the ability, to change spiritually.

The problem with such a view is it redefines God’s work of grace and of what a sinner should repent. It changes the economy of salvation by changing essential beliefs about God’s work to secure our salvation. So, though on the surface the call to repent and believe may sound the same as Edwards, Whitefield, and others, the theology that directs such repentance and belief have changed. Man’s effort is centralized and the holy God’s dealing with sinful humanity is confused.

#### Theology of Revival

Implications of Finney’s theology are seen in his understanding of revivals. In *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835) he says,

“[A revival of religion] is not a miracle according to another definition of the term miracle--something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not enabled to put forth exertions with they were unable before to put forth. They only exert the powers they had before in a different way, and use them for the glory of God.[[83]](#footnote-82)”

Such understanding led Finney to adopt and advocate for “new measures” to accomplish this work.

### New Measures

#### Anxious Bench

Finney placed a bench in the front of the meeting where those anxious about their spiritual state may come and be addressed corporately and individually.[[84]](#footnote-83) Such a measure tied a physical action, coming to the anxious bench, with the presence of spiritual conviction.

#### Protracted Meeting

Finney and others planned nightly revival meetings that lasted for weeks or more.[[85]](#footnote-84) Finney moved away from associating such works with local congregations. He would enter towns and hold campaigns without any permission from the local pastors.[[86]](#footnote-85)

### Summary

Finney’s revivals did not produce much lasting fruit. He lamented that many people fell away in three months’ time.[[87]](#footnote-86) The areas where Finney's revival occurred are now labeled the “burned over districts”—meaning the fires of revival broke out and were quenched quickly. Sadly, such places would prove harder to evangelize in successive generations because of Finney’s work. These people grew callous to the gospel having thought they heard it or saw its fruits and wanted nothing to do with it.

From Finney we can learn there is an inextricable link between one’s theological anthropology and one’s views of evangelism and revival.[[88]](#footnote-87)

# Conclusion

## True Conversion

As we conclude, we can see a major contrast in thinking about conversion from the 1730s to the 1830s and in America today.[[89]](#footnote-88) Often conversion is considered to be a decision to follow Christ. It’s equated to an individual’s decision. Contrast this with a prevalent understanding of conversion in the 1730s. Then, the spiritual reality was emphasized. It was expected that those professing Christ would show signs of a regenerated life. Conversion was equated with a new nature we receive as we’re made alive in Christ. It was thought that such a new nature could be discerned in an individual as their life is observed.

Though Finney’s theology dominates much of popular Christianity. The theology of Edwards and Whitefield—even with its flaws—represents a much more faithful Protestant theology.

## Continuing Challenges

As we discussed, the Second Great Awakening was mixed in its theology and practices. There were revivals on traditional protestant grounds running parallel to that of Finney and company. This created a more complex environment for churches in early America. Pragmatism grew as a specific mode of evangelism was championed over the ordinary means of grace. New alliances formed and new means were introduced. Many of these (historically) new instincts and measures can still be found in (Baptist) churches today (e.g. altar calls, spontaneous baptisms, relaxed membership practices, etc.). However, running parallel to these practices in other churches, so too can the regular preaching of the gospel and right administration of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism.

With declining participation in local churches across America and increasing nominalism, let’s pray for revival and commit to the means God has provided the church to accomplish his purpose in the world. Let’s pray for churches to prioritize the ordinary means of grace and confidently rely on the word of God to accomplish the work of God.

[Questions]

1. Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. “New England’s Half-Way Covenant, formalized in 1662 on the recommendations of a ministerial advisory convention of 1657, was the resulting compromise, allowing the grandchildren of regenerate members to be presented for baptism while not yet permitting the parents of the baptisands, who had no testimony of grace to recount, to partake of the Lord’s Supper or to vote in church matters” (Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014], 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41-42. McClymond and McDermott provide additional context: “Further controversy erupted after the publication of Solomon Stoddard’s *The Doctrine of Instituted Churches Explained* (1700), which affirmed the notion of national churches, denied the necessity of church covenants, and allowed the admission of unconverted persons to the Lord’s Supper. For Stoddard, the Lord’s Supper could function as a ‘converting ordinance.’” (Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012], 47). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Stout describes Stoddard’s “success in building Northampton into the largest, most influential church in the Connecticut River Valley” (Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012], 102). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 24, 508. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. One major point of discussion in some literature about Jonathan Edwards is the extent to which he deviated from key Reformed doctrines in either articulation or substance. Before giving a few examples, it is worth noting that in a letter to John Erskine, Edwards asserted that “there would be no difficulty” with subscribing to the Westminster Confession (Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014], 252). Nonetheless, some examples scholars adduce of Edwards deviation include: (1) Edwards reformulated original sin in ways that denied the imputation of Adam’s alien guilt (i.e., denied Adam as covenant head) and caused significant deviations from Reformed orthodoxy for subsequent generations. See Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 58-72. Robert W. Caldwell, “Original Sin” in *A Reader’s Guide to the Major Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 169-172. 350-356. Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 350-356. R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 85. For some interesting examples of how other Reformed theologians saw Edwards’ treatment of original sin, see Paul Helm, “The Great Christian Doctrine (Original Sin)” in *A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* ed. John Piper (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 175, 195. (2) Edwards made small adjustments to the traditional Reformed formulation of justification by faith alone by redefining faith and/or blurring imputed with infused righteousness. See Robert Godfrey, “Jonathan Edwards and Authentic Spiritual Experience” in *Knowing the Mind of God: The Westminster Conference 2003* (London, UK: The Westminster Conference, 2003), 33-41. R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 85. For literature on both sides of the argument about Edwards and justification, see Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 389-404, esp. 389n2. Likewise, for an overview of the debate, see Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 81-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiii, 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. For more examples of the way Edwards’ preaching and the revivals surrounding it produced what Edwards or other contemporaries described as “sobs”, “groans”, “screaches [sic]”, “yellings”, “moaning”, “crying out”, see Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 426-247. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 216-218. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Edwards to Thomas Prince, December 12, 1743, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, 16:17-18*. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Edwards to Thomas Prince, December 12, 1743, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, 16:17-18*. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. “The revivals and their fruits were splintering the clergy into a number of parties with varying ideological responses” (Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014], 112). “The Great Awakening also generated controversy and church splits... [Gilbert] Tennent himself contributed directly to the split through his 1740 sermon, ‘The Danger of An Unconverted Ministry,’ in which he labeled opponents of revival as unconverted, and implored church members under such pastors to abandon their congregation and find a true one.” (D. G. Hart, *Calvinism: A History* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013], 163, 165). See Harry S .Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209-214. For the way Whitefield especially proved controversial, see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 184-187. “The debate over the revivals between Edwards and [Charles] Chauncy has been seen as the most significant one of the First Great Awakening with good reason” (Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great* *Awakening* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007], 121). For the way the revivals divided, Baptists, see Kidd and Hankins who said the revivals “virtually destroyed older Baptist churches” (Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* [New York, Oxford University Press, 2015], 19). See also Douglas L. Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), esp. 316-317 for Chauncy and Edwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Gerald R. McDermott, “Religious Affections” in *A Reader’s Guide to the Major Writings of Jonathan Edwards* ed. Nathan A. Finn (Wheaton, IL: Crossway ,2017), 95-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. D.G. Hart writes that Edwards’ work “set the standard for sifting the chaff from the wheat of spiritual authenticity” (D. G. Hart, *Calvinism: A History* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013], 172). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Gerald R. McDermott, “Religious Affections” in *A Reader’s Guide to the Major Writings of Jonathan Edwards* ed. Nathan A. Finn (Wheaton, IL: Crossway ,2017), 95. One of the most fascinating cases of Edwards’ confidence in analyzing religious experiences is that of four-year old Phoebe Bartlett. On Bartlett, Nathan Parker writes: “Born in 1731, just before the inception of the evangelical revivals, Phebe Bartlett reportedly experienced conversion at the age of four, in 1735. Detailing his examination of her conversion in *A Faithful Narrative* (WJE 4:199-205), Edwards used her as a case study to defend the veridicality of childhood conversion...Edwards provides an in-depth description of the evidences for her conversion in *A Faithful Narrative*. After thoroughly questioning her, Edwards was convinced that she not only understood the rudiments of the Christian faith, but had in fact undergone genuine spiritual convictions leading to the new birth...Yet Bartlett was not admitted to full communion under Edwards, achieving that state only after his departure, when she was married in 1754 to Noah Parsons. Here, the extraordinary child was quite typical, since many people waited till their nuptials to join the church. To the end of her life she reportedly maintained a sincere Christian profession, thus vindicating Edwards’ estimate of the young girl’s spiritual state” (Nathan Parker, “Bartlett, Phebe (1731-1805)” in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia* ed. Harry S. Stout [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017], 59-60). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 2 (Rev. Ed.) ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 95. Interestingly, Richard Sibbes said something similar: “religion is mainly in the affections” (Richard Sibbes, *Works of Richard Sibbes* ed. Alexander B. Grosart [Edinburgh, Scotland: 1862-1864; repr. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001], 2:368). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Some helpful context about how Edwards understood affections: “According to Jonathan Edwards, the ‘affections’ represent ‘the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination of the will of the soul’ (WJE 2:97). As forces stir within the heart, ‘gracious’ affections bridge the rational and material and promote an active, visceral engagement with the supernatural and spiritual.” (Steve Edwards, “Affections” in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia* ed. Harry S. Stout [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017], 8). McDermott and McClymond write, “This brief definition of the affections rooted in the faculties of the soul is often misunderstood in two related eways: commentators either ignore the intellectual component or reduce the affections to ‘emotions,’ thus missing Edwards insistence on the unity of the human person” (Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012], 312). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 2 (Rev. Ed.) ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 2 (Rev. Ed.) ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. NIV translation of Matthew 13:44-46: “44 ‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.’ 45 ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 347-348. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 360-361. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 360. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. Rhys S. Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 170-172. See also Douglas L. Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 457-458. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. George M. Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), XXX [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. The book was Henry Scougal’s *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. Scougal (1650–1678) was a Scottish theologian, minister and author. For the influence this book had on Whitefield and his conversion, see Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 28-29 and Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishers, 2013), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. Cited in Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 126-127. Winiarski also notes that in Whitefield and his ministerial successors, powerful delivery that sought to engage the affections of listeners increasingly took precedence over careful sermon composition (Douglas L. Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017], 145). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. Whitefield, Sermon 44: “Christ the Believer’s Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,” in *Works, Vol. VI*, 188-189”. Cited in Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishers, 2013), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishers, 2013), 2. Unfortunately, Lawson does not provide a footnote for these statistics. The 18,000 number likely comes from Boyd Stanley Schlenther’s entry “George Whitefield (1714-1770)” in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford 2004). This 18,000 estimate is confirmed in Carla Gardina Pestana “Whitefield and Empire” in *George Whitefield: Life, Context, and Legacy* ed. Geordan Hammond (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 83. The statistic about one-thousand times every year in John Piper, *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 10n2. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
44. *George Whitefield’s Journals* (1738-1741, rep.; Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1998), 260-277. Cited in Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishers, 2013), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
45. Whitefield wrote that in England, “the generality of people think a sermon cannot be preached well [outside a church]; here they do not like it so well if delivered within the church walls” (Whitefield cited in Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014], 89). Noll wrote that Whitefield “combined an extraordinary disregard for inherited church traditions with a breathtaking entrepreneurial spirit” (Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 100). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
46. Historian D.G. Hart wrote: “The irony is that the new form of Reformed piety, if followed carefully, did not depend on ecclesiastical authorities either. This was personal and private reformation, independent from church reform” (D. G. Hart, *Calvinism: A History* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013], 163). Princeton theologian Charles Hodge expressed an overall lack of enthusiasm for the revivals because he saw them as diverting attention from the ordinary means that God uses to grow his church (Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017], 204). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
47. Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 526. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
48. Allan G. Hedberg, “Slavery” in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia* ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 535. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
49. Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 526. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
50. Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 526. Some of Edwards’ most prominent followers including his son Jonathan Edwards Jr. and Samuel Hopkins vehemently opposed slavery (621-622). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
51. Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 218. See Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 189, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
52. Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 109; c.f.; 110-111, 188, 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
53. Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 53, 76, 217. See Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 98, 110, 202. See also Irons: “George Whitefield himself sept little time in Virginia but nonetheless modeled for subsequent evangelicals how they could make concern for slaves an integral part of their ministry.... Whitefield made advocacy on behalf of the enslaved the foundation for his campaign for spiritual renewal in the South.” (Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008], 34; c.f., 33-35). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
54. George Marsden in his biography of Edwards writes, “we can consider Edward’s attitudes toward slaver in the context of his hierarchical assumptions. Nothing separates the early eighteenth-century world from the twenty-first century more than this issue.” Marsden, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
55. Phillis Wheatley, cited in Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening,* 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
56. Kidd helpfully points out other failings of Whitefield: “his besetting inability to maintain peace with evangelical colleagues, his appalling behavior in relationships with women, including his wife, and his advocacy of slavery and personal ownership of slavery” (Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014], 4). Whitefield said that a wife should not cause him to preach one fewer sermon (George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 208). Concerning the faults of Jonathan Edwards, Marsden points out in Jonathan Edwards’ church, parishioners received assigned seating based upon social status (George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 186-188). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
57. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
58. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
59. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
60. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
61. Caldwell helpfully provides a word of clarity about Finney and the Second Great Awakening: “Many associate the Second Great Awakening with the ministry of Charles Finney. There are at least two problems with this, however, First, the Second Great Awakening was characterized by much more diversity than the First Great Awakening, so much so that no one leader captured the spirit of the awakening in a way that Whitefield did in the early 1740s. Second, Finney was a latecomer to the Second Great Awakening; his ministry did not begin until the 1820s, thirty years after the first stirrings of revival began in the 1790s. It is perhaps better to view Finney as one who epitomized the theological trajectories of the age, rather than as the central figure who embodied the essence of the Second Great Awakening” (Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017], 102n1). Caldwell also notes that Nathaniel Taylor and the New Haven Theology strongly influenced Finney (125). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
62. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
63. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 166-167. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
64. Holifield places the date in 1823. See E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 361. Caldwell provides the information about the Presbytery. See Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
65. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
66. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 170. Ahlstrom “an extremely divisive figure” (Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004], 461). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
67. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 170. Finney served as the President of Oberlin College from 1851 to 1866 (Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004], 461). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
68. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 171. Holifield provides additional context: “Finney went on to become the best-known revivalist preacher of his day, traveling through the Northeast as well as England and Scotland” (E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 362). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
69. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 459. Noll writes, “Beyond doubt, he stands by himself as *the* crucial figure in white American evangelicalism after Jonathan Edwards” (Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992], 176.) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
70. Finney served as a powerful force in the anti-slavery movement. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 461, 652. Noll writes, “More than any other individual of his day he succeeded in joining evangelical religion to social reform. Although he never allowed other interests to supersede evangelism, Finney was an effective promoter of benevolence, an abolitionist, a pioneer of coeducation at Oberlin College, a reformer in many areas (temperance, peace, sabbatarianism, and care for the retarded)” (Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992], 174). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
71. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
72. Charles Grandison Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology* (repr., Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 321-322. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
73. See Canon 11 of the 6th Session of the Council of Trent. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* trans H. J. Schroeder (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1978), 43-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
74. Holifield wrote that Finney “qualified the doctrine of justification by making it conditional on obedience to the law. God could not ‘justify one who does not yield a present and full obedience to the moral law.’ As a moral governor, God had no right to justify the sinful; God could justify only the obedient. Any suggestion to the contrary was ‘sheer antinomianism.’ Finney disliked the doctrine of justification through faith alone; for him, sanctification was not merely evidence of justification but a condition of it. God justified only the sanctified, the obedient, who were consecrated fully to God through their disinterested love” (E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 365). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
75. Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1878), 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
76. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 176-178. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
77. Holifield wrote: “Describing sin as a voluntary act, he told the sinful that they had the obligation, and so the ability, to change their ultimate choice from selfishness to benevolence” (E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 364). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
78. “At the same time – may God forgive us! – we ascribe to the righteous One unrighteousness, and cruelty to the Holy One; first, by complaining that God has commanded the impossible, second, by imagining that some will be condemned by God for what they could not help; so that – the blasphemy of it! – God is thought of as seeking our punishment rather than our salvation… No one knows the extent of our strength better than God who gave us strength. … God has not willed to command anything impossible, for God is righteous; and will not condemn anyone for what they could not help.” Pelagius. Cited in Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
79. Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
80. Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
81. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 182. More detail in E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 364. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
82. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 364. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
83. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York, NY: Leavitt, Lord, 1837), 12. Cited in Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
84. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
85. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 460. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
86. Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
87. Finney wrote: “I have visited and revisited many of these fields, and groaned in spirit to see the sad, frigid, carnal and contentious state into which they had fallen... within three months after we left them.” Cited in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* 2nd. Ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 477. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
88. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
89. Robert W. Caldwell, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 29. Caldwell writes, “For them [in the 1730s], the experience of conversion did not commence with one’s decision for Christ, as is common among today’s evangelicals. Rather, it began when one discerned new principles of spiritual life within the heart: a new awareness of the beauty of Christ, new desires to love God, and a firm commitment to follow God’s holy law. These principles, moderates taught, cannot be the product of human decision or natural principles; they can only be wrought in the soul by God’s direct supernatural intervention” (29). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)