

## Religious Revivalism

**Excerpt from Charles Finney, "What A Revival of Religion Is" *New York Evangelist*, (Dec. 6, 1834), 194.**

"When the churches are thus awakened and reformed, the reformation and salvation of sinners will follow, going through the same stages of conviction, repentance, and reformation. Their hearts will be broken down and changed. Very often the most abandoned profligates are among the subjects. Harlots, and drunkards, and infidels, and all sorts of abandoned characters, are awakened and converted. The worst part of human society are softened and reclaimed, and made to appear as lovely specimens of the beauty of holiness."

America's History in the Making:

[http://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/resource\\_archive/resource.php?unitChoice=8&ThemeNum=2&resourceType=2&resourceID=10024](http://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/resource_archive/resource.php?unitChoice=8&ThemeNum=2&resourceType=2&resourceID=10024)

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**Excerpt from America's History in the Making:**

"The Second Great Awakening, a religious revival of the early 1800s, contributed to the reform impulse by emphasizing individual responsibility and perfection.

America's growing prosperity and the social changes that accompanied it prompted many members of its growing middle class to become both more concerned over the rapid rate of social change and more optimistic about humans' capacity to shape their environments. This blending of anxiety and optimism contributed to a religious revival that had broad social implications.

The religious awakening, which began in the backcountry, moved north and east in the 1820s, where revivalists paired the passion of tent-meeting revivals with the logic and efficiency of the emerging middle class. Their programs of conversion were hardly less detailed and precise than a diagram for manufacturing clocks or firearms. The converted Christian, moreover, was expected to become a productive, orderly, and moral member of the community.

The emphasis on humans' ability to seize salvation put off traditionalists who stressed God's sovereignty or distrusted 'emotionalism.' But a faith in people's capacity for grace and perfectibility rang true at a time when anything seemed possible."

America's History in the Making: <http://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/units/8/themes/2.html>

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**Excerpt from Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, The Backwoods Preacher*, edited by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton Porter, 1856).**

"Somewhere between 1800 and 1801, in the upper part of Kentucky, at a memorable place called 'Cane Ridge,' there was appointed a sacramental meeting by some of the Presbyterian ministers, at which meeting, seemingly unexpected by ministers or people, the mighty power of God was displayed in a very extraordinary manner; many were moved to tears, and bitter and loud crying for mercy. The meeting was protracted for weeks. Ministers of almost all denominations flocked in from far and near. The meeting was kept up by night and day. Thousands heard of the mighty work, and came on foot, on horseback, in carriages and wagons. It was supposed that there were in attendance at times during the meeting from twelve to twenty-five thousand people. Hundreds fell prostrate under the mighty power of God, as men slain in battle. Stands were erected in the woods from which preachers of different Churches proclaimed repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and it

was supposed, by eye and ear witnesses, that between one and two thousand souls were happily and powerfully converted to God during the meeting. It was not unusual for one, two, three, and four to seven preachers to be addressing the listening thousands at the same time from the different stands erected for the purpose. The heavenly fire spread in almost every direction. It was said, by truthful witnesses, that at times more than one thousand persons broke into loud shouting all at once, and that the shouts could be heard for miles around.

From this camp-meeting, for so it ought to be called, the news spread through all the Churches, and through all the land, and it excited great wonder and surprise; but it kindled a religious flame that spread all over Kentucky and through many other states. And I may here be permitted to say, that this was the first camp-meeting ever held in the United States, and here our camp-meetings took their rise....”

Source: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6370/>