

CHAPTER FIVE:
PIETISM AND THE GREAT AWAKENINGS (1675-1835)

Pietism, a movement for spiritual renewal originating in late Seventeenth Century Europe, directly influenced American churches in the Great Awakening of 1739-42. Although this mass movement suddenly subsided, pietism did not die out. A Second Great Awakening, lasting approximately from 1795 to 1835, brought renewal to the churches, and created institutions that gave form to the life of Protestantism in the new republic.

PART A:
PIETISM IN EUROPE

Spener

Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705), senior pastor of the (Lutheran) Church in Frankfort, Germany, looked about him and saw a church in decay. The theologians were more interested in polemics than in piety. The clergy were more interested in advancing their professional careers than in communicating to the people. And in a land devastated by war, the people had sunk to a low level of morality. It was time for a new Reformation!

Spener published his platform for reformation in *Pia Desideria* in 1675 (See *LTH* 4:39).

1. Have the lay people gather in small groups for Bible study and prayer.
2. Encourage the lay people to engage in a spiritual ministry to one another.
3. Put love into action.
4. Avoid theological controversy.
5. Include spiritual formation, as well as intellectual formation, in the program of theological schools for training ministers.

The small group for prayer and Bible study was the heart and energy source of Spener's plan. Called a *collegia piatatis*, it gave Spener's movement a name: *Pietism*.

Spener's concern for a person's walk with God was not new to the Lutheran Church. Johann Arndt's (1555-1621) devotional classic *True*

Christianity, and John Gerhard's (1582-1637) hymns (See *NCH* 94, 102, 226, 269, 404) had laid a foundation. Spener's movement was a revival of this spiritual dimension of Lutheranism. Pietism spread as a movement within the Lutheran Church and in other churches. Reformed people, including Puritans, had long promoted small lay-lead groups. Many responded to Spener's movement with renewed enthusiasm.

Pietists cared about feelings. They practiced acts of charity. They believed an emphasis on piety instead of polemics would build Christian unity. They believed in a devout, articulate and active laity. They practiced a strict personal moral code. Pietists could become self-righteous and judgmental. They could also be self-critical and compassionate.

Pietists wrote many hymns. Reformed Pietists wrote hymns of such spiritual power that their churches began to allow hymns other than psalms in worship. The hymns of Joachim Neander (1650-1680) (*NCH* 408, 566, 2), Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769) (*NCH* 68, 50), and Isaac Watts (1671-1748) (*NCH* 199, 281, 379, 224, 225, 12, 27, 511, 300, 132, 25), the first two Reformed and the third an English Congregationalist, are still with us.

Zinzendorf and the Moravians

Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), a pious German nobleman, allowed some religious refugees to settle on his land. These refugees, the Moravian Brethren, were the successors of a movement begun by Jan Hus (ca. 1372-1415), a Czech reformer before the Reformation who was influenced by Wyclif. Zinzendorf led the Moravians into pietism. In 1737 Daniel Ernst Jablonsky, a Reformed pastor who had been ordained a bishop for the Moravians, ordained the Lutheran layman Zinzendorf a Moravian bishop.

Wesley and the Methodists

John Wesley (1703-1791), an Anglican priest, was moved by an encounter with Moravians to consider pietism, and experienced a "heart strangely warmed" in 1738. John Wesley, his brother Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and George Whitefield (1714-1770) began preaching a warm evangelical faith wherever they could get a hearing. Wesley organized his *collegia pietatis*, or classes, into a network with preachers and superintendents over them. Throughout his life Wesley remained a priest of the Church of England, but his movement functioned independent of the Church, and after his death became the Methodist Church.

Wesley vehemently opposed the doctrine of pre-destination, and proclaimed a doctrine of free will: that each person has the free will to accept

God's gift of salvation. The Methodist movement became a strong opponent and rival of the Reformed family of churches, even though their other beliefs were similar. Whitefield, a Calvinist, parted from the Wesleys' movement.

PART B: THE MORAVIANS AND THE REFORMED IN PENNSYLVANIA

Heinrich Antes (1701-1755), an Elder of the Reformed Church at Falkner's Swamp, in 1736 gathered a *collegia pietatis*. Antes promoted pietism among persons of many German churches and sects in Pennsylvania. In 1740 George Whitefield stayed at Antes' home, and preached to three thousand persons. In 1741 Antes hosted Zinzendorf. Encouraged by Zinzendorf, Antes invited pietists of all German denominations to a meeting on 1 January 1742,

not for the purpose of disputing, but in order to treat peaceably concerning the most important articles of faith, and to ascertain how far we might agree on most essential points for the purpose of promoting mutual love and forbearance.¹

Lutheran, Reformed, Moravian, Schwenkfelder, Mennonite, Brethren and Spiritualist came. Seven meetings, called "synods," were held over the next six months. Gradually the sects withdrew, leaving only Lutherans, Reformed, and Moravians. These synods organized a fellowship of pietists called "The Congregation of God in the Spirit." Within this "Congregation" several denominational *tropes*, or circles, were organized.

The Reformed trope, led by Johannes Bechtel (1690-1777), Reformed pastor at Germantown, rejected the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Bechtel wrote a new Reformed catechism agreeable to the doctrines of the Moravian Church. Zinzendorf ordained Bechtel (he had been licensed by the Reformed Church in the Palatinate) and appointed him inspector over all the German Reformed churches in Pennsylvania.

Samuel Guldin and John Philip Boehm both strongly opposed the Congregation of God in the Spirit and wrote tracts against it. Boehm, loyal to the *Heidelberg Catechism*, criticized Bechtel's catechism as lacking in theological depth and not exploring basic articles of faith. As the Congregation became increasingly dominated by Zinzendorf and the Moravians, Boehm saw the

¹James I. Good, *History of the German Reformed Church, 1725-1792* (Reading, Pa.: Daniel Miller, 1899), 204.

movement as an attempt by the Moravians to swallow up the Reformed and the Lutherans. Boehm criticized the aristocratic Zinzendorf's severity with those who disagreed with him.

Guldin, a pietist, attended the first synod and left disillusioned. He criticized Zinzendorf's domination of the movement and rejected what he saw as a human attempt to unite God's church. Guldin believed, "There must first be a union in Christ before there can be a union with each other. It must be a union from above, rather than a work of man."²

The Congregation of God in the Spirit continued as a de facto Moravian institution. After the organization of the Reformed coetus in 1747 and the Lutheran Ministerium in 1748, the Congregation reorganized in 1748 as the Moravian Church in America. The Congregation had ordained five Reformed ministers who organized a few Moravian churches among the Reformed. Some of the Reformed people who had connected themselves to the Congregation of God in the Spirit later returned to the Reformed Church.

PART C: JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE GREAT AWAKENING

The full impact of the Pietist movement swept through the English colonies in North America in the "Great Awakening" of 1739 to 1742. Here the key factor was not the *collegia pietatis*, already familiar to persons in the Reformed tradition, but the *revival*. The Great Awakening centered on preaching to large crowds of people, many of whom repented and made a faith commitment. The Awakening was marked by outbreaks of unusual emotional expressions. The new converts, after further counseling and instruction, were received into the existing churches. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), a Congregational pastor, was the leader of the Great Awakening in New England. The Great Awakening greatly reinvigorated New England Congregationalism, and also produced deep divisions.

Jonathan Edwards

As Lutherans look to Luther, and Methodists to Wesley, so Congregationalists and Presbyterians would for over a century look to Jonathan Edwards as the definitive articulator of Christian doctrine. Yet one of his best known biographers called Edwards' life a tragedy. He was a pastor rejected by his parish, a church leader opposed by those who thought he went too far and those who thought he didn't go far enough, and a scholar who died tragically

²Good's translation and summary in *History of the German Reformed Church, 1725-1792*, 221.

when on the threshold of a new career. In Jonathan Edwards the old Puritan tradition, redefined in the language of the Enlightenment, embraced America's emotional version of pietism.

Jonathan Edwards graduated from Yale College in 1720. He continued to study for the ministry there, briefly served a Presbyterian Church in New York City, then tutored at Yale. In 1726 the Congregational Church in Northampton, Massachusetts, served by Edwards' aging grandfather Solomon Stoddard, called the young Edwards to be its pastor. As sole pastor following his grandfather's death in 1729, Edwards led the Northampton church through a revival in 1734-35, and participated fully in the Great Awakening of 1740-42. Edwards' efforts to get his congregation to re-institute the testimony of religious experience as a membership requirement led to the congregation dismissing him in 1750. Edwards then became a missionary, preaching to the Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, from 1751 to 1758. He was then called to be President of Princeton College, a Presbyterian school in New Jersey. Soon after his arrival there in 1758 Edwards received a vaccination for small pox, and died from the vaccination.

Edwards contributed to the life and thought of the church in at least three ways: (1) Restating the Reformed faith in ways that an age of Enlightenment could understand; (2) Laying the foundation of the future missionary movement; and (3) Promoting, analyzing and giving intellectual justification for experiential religion.

(1) Restating the Reformed faith: In *Freedom of the Will*, Edwards opposed the doctrine of Free Will by applying the scientific view that every "effect" has a "cause." In *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, Edwards noted that history and observation of the world provide abundant evidence of the reality of this doctrine. In such ways Edwards used the methods of the new Enlightenment science to prove old Reformed doctrines.

(2) Laying the Foundation of the Missionary Movement: Edwards participated in 1734 in the organization of a mission to the Indians in Stockbridge, where he later became a missionary. In *Humble Attempt* Edwards advocated regularly scheduled prayer for missions. In this and other works Edwards presented post-millennial eschatology: the belief that God is at work bringing God's reign of peace, justice and faithfulness to this world, and that God may use people to further this work.³ Edwards supported the work of David Brainerd

³For the continued discussion on eschatology go to Chapter 12, Part E: Fundamentalism

(1718-1747), missionary to the Indians. Brainerd stayed in the Edwards home during his illness and death, where he was nursed by his fiancée, Edwards' daughter Jerusha (1730-1748). Edwards edited and published Brainerd's devotional diary, *The Life of David Brainerd*. Edwards defined the greatest good as "benevolence to being in general" in his posthumously published *Nature of True Virtue*. All of these works provided the theological and devotional foundation of the missionary movement in the next century.

(3) Promoting Experiential Religion. Edwards described and analyzed the effects of his first revival in Northampton in *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*. After the Great Awakening had swept through New England, its emotionalism was condemned by some and uncritically embraced by others. Edwards then published his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. Edwards justified the role of emotion in religion and carefully analyzed the "affections," or emotional responses, of people in the revivals. Asking what signs were evidence of a true work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life, Edwards rejected the emotional outbursts as such evidence, and pointed rather to the practical presence of love in a person's life.

The Great Awakening

Effective preaching, calling forth emotional responses, leading to committed Christian lives, was not confined to Northampton. Dutch Reformed pastor Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen (1691-1748) had been doing it in New Jersey. The Presbyterian Tennent family, particularly Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764) was doing it in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. A preaching tour by George Whitefield in 1739-40 coalesced these separate efforts into one movement (See *LTH* 3:9).

Whitefield's powerful preaching drew great interest and generated emotional responses. Soon many other clergy and lay people were preaching revival and creating the same emotional responses. Some cried out, fainted, or sobbed, so that sometimes the preacher could not be heard. Tens of thousands of persons joined churches, new churches were organized, and public morality improved. The churches became more representative of all classes of society, and traditional Calvinist doctrines were reinforced.

And then it was over. The fires of revival would break out here and there from time to time for the rest of the century, but the mass movement was over in a couple of years. The Awakening had been discredited by its excesses. Critics condemned the Awakening for:

1. *Itinerancy*—Preachers preached in other pastors' parishes without permission.

2. *Censoriousness*—Evangelists claimed to know who was truly converted and who was not, and condemned many ministers by name as unconverted.
3. *Lay participation*—Exhorters without Biblical or theological training preached messages not always theologically sound. To some clergy the lay exhorters were a threat to their status.
4. *Emotionalism*—Physical and emotional responses were accepted as *proof* of the genuineness of a person's conversion.

Some contemporaries declared that the principle cause for the abrupt end of the Awakening was James Davenport. Great-Grandson of the founder of New Haven and pastor at Southold, Long Island, James Davenport (1716-1757) itinerated across New England in 1741 and 1742, condemning clergy as unconverted, and haranguing crowds for hours without notes or continuity of thought. Declared mentally incompetent by courts in both Massachusetts and Connecticut, Davenport ended his career as an itinerant by conducting a book burning in New London, Connecticut, in 1743. Upon returning to Southold and listening to criticism from friends, Davenport published his *Confessions and Retractions*. But the harm had been done.

Parties within Congregationalism

For the remainder of the century, four factions competed within New England Congregationalism: (1) Old Lights, (2) New Lights, (3) Old Calvinists, and (4) Strict Congregationalists.

Charles Chauncy (1705-1787), pastor of First Church, Boston, led the *Old Lights* in ridiculing revivals for their emotional excesses at the expense of “understanding and judgment.” Chauncy and the Old Lights dominated the life of New England Congregationalism after the Awakening. These “broad and catholic” friends of Enlightenment de-emphasized traditional Reformed doctrine and emphasized the reasonableness of religion.

Jonathan Edwards had trained many pastors in his home, who in turn trained other pastors, all providing leadership to the *New Lights*. Valuing both the intellect and emotions, the New Lights promoted revival, education, and missions. Most New Light clergy had long pastorates in the interior of New England, where they restored the membership requirement of a testimony to a work of grace in one's life.

New Light Eleazer Wheelock (1711-1779) founded Dartmouth College in 1770 for the education of American Indians. New Lights cooperated with New

Side Presbyterians in supporting missionaries to the Indians, including Samson Occam (1723-1792), an American Indian from Connecticut educated by Wheelock and ordained by the Presbyterians.

Old Calvinists like Ezra Stiles (1727-1795) worked to bring Old Lights and New Lights together on a platform of the historic Reformed faith. They opposed both the excesses of revival and the unorthodox tendencies of the Enlightenment.

The *Strict Congregationalists*, or “Separates,” advocated full separation from congregations that allowed at the Communion Table persons who were not experiential Christians. Because they refused to pay taxes to support standing order churches, Separates were often fined or imprisoned. They supported their churches with voluntary contributions and rejected the Saybrook Platform in Connecticut (where most Separates lived) in favor of the Cambridge Platform. At one time well over a hundred Strict Congregational Churches preached a certain assurance of God’s grace based on an emotional experience of rebirth. Strict Congregationalists of Connecticut met in Convention annually from 1781 to 1811. Many of these churches were mixed including both advocates of believer’s baptism and advocates of infant baptism.

With the passage of time Strict Congregational ardor waned, and they became less distinguishable from the New Light churches around them. Many Strict Congregational Churches became Baptist, others reunited with churches of the standing order, or were received into the standing order consociations. Yet others moved to the northern frontier where there was no standing order church from which they were separate, and they were simply the Congregational Church.

PART D: OTTERBEIN AND THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH

Pietism impacted Pennsylvania’s German Reformed Church from two directions. (1) Pastors and people came to Pennsylvania from Reformed Churches in Germany that had been influenced by Spener’s movement. (2) In spite of the language barrier, the religious excitement of the English and Dutch speaking Awakening in America influenced German Reformed people.

Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813), ordained by the Reformed Church of Nassau, in Germany, came to America under the sponsorship of the Synod in the Netherlands in 1752. Active in the life of the German Reformed coetus, he served churches in Lancaster, Tulpehocken and York, Pennsylvania, and Frederick and Baltimore, Maryland. The pietist sympathies Otterbein brought

with him from Europe deepened in America. In his churches he consistently worked to establish church discipline and a weekly prayer meeting, and he preached a new birth (See *LTH* 4:85).

About 1767 Otterbein met Martin Boehm (1725-1812), a revival preacher forced out of the Mennonite Church. Henceforth Otterbein and Boehm worked together promoting class meetings and revival without regard to denominational distinctions. In 1775 Otterbein met Francis Asbury (1745-1816), John Wesley's emissary to America. Otterbein and Asbury often consulted, but worked independently, each in their own language group.

Reformed pastors committed to revival held a "great meeting" at Antietam, Maryland, in 1770. The great meetings, which became annual events, resembled what would later be called "camp meetings" with people gathered from great distances to hear much preaching with enthusiasm. By 1774, under Otterbein's leadership, the meetings appointed class leaders for the *collegia piatatis* in Reformed congregations. In 1776 Otterbein and Boehm began licensing (lay) preachers. The classes slowly evolved into congregations. The Antietam great meetings became the annual gathering for this fellowship.

In 1774 an independent Reformed Church in Baltimore called Otterbein to be its pastor. For the remainder of his life, Otterbein, a member of the Reformed Church, served this independent congregation. Otterbein never left the Reformed Church and continued to have many admirers – and critics – within the Reformed Church. However he gave his energy increasingly to the development of a network of classes which, like Wesley's classes in England, eventually evolved into a new denomination.

In 1789 Otterbein, Boehm, and their associates, drew up a Declaration of Faith and rules of discipline for their network of classes. In 1800, calling themselves the United Brethren in Christ⁴, they began annual conference meetings and designated Otterbein and Boehm superintendents.

Revival oriented Reformed pastors after Otterbein were not able to sustain a dual identity as he had. Several left the Reformed Church for the United Brethren in Christ; others promoted pietism from within the Reformed Church.

⁴The United Brethren in Christ united with the Evangelical Church in 1946 to form the Evangelical United Brethren, which united with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church.

PART E:
THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING (1795-1835)

For approximately forty years, beginning about 1795, waves of revival swept through the United States. This Second Great Awakening, unlike the first, established institutions that sustained revival for a long period of time. Pietism became institutionalized. Many of these institutions continued to thrive, long after revival enthusiasm faded, and are found in the United Church of Christ to this day.

Revivals

On Friday, 6 August 1801, people began arriving at Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church in rural Kentucky, for its sacramental meeting. Presbyterians had brought this custom to America. Several ministers preached at Preparatory Services Friday and Saturday on general themes related to conversion and the Christian life. More preaching accompanied the sacrament of communion on Sunday. Sometimes a parting service took place on Monday. Congregations scheduled sacramental meetings to not conflict with the neighboring churches, so that nearby ministers and people could attend.

Between 10,000 and 20,000⁵ people came to the little log church on Cane Ridge that weekend. Between 125 and 148 wagon loads of people camped in an area the equivalent of four city blocks. Preaching took place simultaneously and spontaneously in the meeting house, a tent erected for the occasion, and at several stumps and wagons around the grounds. People fell to the ground as if struck dead, were prayed over by their friends, and eventually rose again, praising God and preaching. Preachers were Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist, White and African American, ordained and lay. Over 800 received the sacrament, seated around tables in the meeting house, about a hundred at a time. After the parting service on Monday, many remained to sing and pray and hear preaching a couple more days.

The First Great Awakening ended a few years after it started. As a fire that has been extinguished may have a few hot coals that burst into flame much later, the First Great Awakening was followed by occasional local outbursts of revival. The fire was never completely extinguished. People like Barton W. Stone (1772-1844), the Presbyterian pastor at Cane Ridge, fanned the flames as they appeared. The sacramental meetings had become the setting for revival, growing in intensity on the frontier for a couple of years, and fanned into a raging

⁵The population of the state of Kentucky in 1800 was 220,095.

fire at Cane Ridge; the Second Great Awakening had begun.

In New England, the New Light clergy took seriously the training of new ministers throughout the last half of the eighteenth century, and their numbers had grown. With the election of Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) to the presidency of Yale College in 1795, a promoter of revival had assumed leadership of Connecticut Congregationalism. A wave of revivals in Connecticut, 1797-1801, began the Second Great Awakening there. Revival in Connecticut was more orderly than in Kentucky. The most common physical manifestations of conversion were tears. Conversion was followed by attendance in a membership class after which the church received the new Christian.

Revivals spread across New England, and became part of the strategy of the war against the Unitarians. As more people were won to a personal relationship with Christ, Trinitarians became more influential in society. Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844), the principle Congregational itinerant evangelist in New England, carefully avoided emotional excesses and theological controversy (see his hymns, *LTH* 3:15). Lyman Beecher (1775-1863) kept revival rooted in the church by establishing a pattern of “systematic itineration” through which settled pastors preached revival in each other’s parishes.

In German Reformed churches revivals occurred more frequently beginning in the 1820s. Those congregations surrounded by English speakers and becoming more American led the way in adopting these American religious practices.

Congregational, Presbyterian and Reformed were all conscious of the growth of the Methodists, who were a revival church. Revivalists of the Reformed tradition were adopting Methodist practices – and Methodist theology – to varying degrees.

Voluntary Societies

The Second Great Awakening was self-perpetuating. Revivals of religion created new converts to Christianity. The new Christians joined older ones in organizing voluntary societies for benevolent and missionary purposes. One activity of some of these societies was the sponsoring of revivals. And so the cycle repeated, for about forty years.

People of the Reformed family of churches who found the partisanship of American democracy repulsive, created voluntary societies as an alternative democracy. Through these societies believers worked together to promote

revivals, missions, and Sunday schools, to publish Bibles and tracts, and to work for social and moral reform. New Christians opposed dueling and slavery and supported Sabbath observance and peace through this alternative democracy. The voluntary societies democratized the church, giving lay people important responsibilities in the benevolent enterprise. Local men's and women's societies affiliated with county and state level organizations, which later united in national benevolent institutions.

The Second Great Awakening was not just revivals; it was a network of benevolent enterprises, publishing concerns, periodicals, educational institutions and churches, held together by an army of "agents" who spoke before any available audience to promote their cause. Together they sustained the piety on which the Awakening was grounded.

Female Societies

The Second Great Awakening was predominantly a women's movement. A majority of those converted at revivals were women.⁶ In spite of limited financial means, women gave a majority of the financial support to many benevolent concerns. Women's missionary societies sent out male evangelists. Women distributed tracts, and organized to address the social problems they encountered in those visits. Through voluntary societies women established, supported and managed orphanages, and widows' homes. Voluntary societies provided women with community, an understanding of self, and fulfillment in significant activity.

In 1802 Mehetabel Simpkins (1739-1817) organized the first "Female Cent Society" in Salem, Massachusetts. This was an organization of women who pledged to give one cent per week to missions. A network of cent societies was soon established among Congregational women across Massachusetts and beyond. With their pennies, the societies provided Bibles, catechisms and hymnals for frontier settlements of northern New England and upstate New York.

PART F: REVIVAL THEOLOGY

Revivalism challenged Calvinism. The revival preacher's call to accept Jesus Christ implied that the hearer had the free will to make such a decision.

⁶69% of revival converts 1795-1815 in New England were women—Richard D. Shiels, "The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1770-1835," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981): 54.

Calvin's doctrines of election and predestination were obstacles to be ignored, explained away, or rejected. The theology of Nathaniel Taylor and the methods of Charles Finney created controversy in the Congregational-Presbyterian community, and eventually led theology into more liberal directions.

Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858)

A frequent preacher in Connecticut revivals, Nathaniel Taylor served as pastor of the Center Church, New Haven, 1812-1822, and as the first professor of theology at the newly created Yale Divinity School, 1822-1858. Taylor did not feel compelled to defend Calvinism, but freely developed it in new directions. Contrary to the teachings of Calvin and Edwards, Taylor affirmed free will and did not defend predestination. Taylor argued not only from scripture, but often grounded his arguments on experience and reason (*LTH* 3:16).

Conservatives opposed to Taylor organized the Connecticut Pastoral Union in 1833, and the following year opened the Connecticut Pastoral Institute⁷ in East Windsor, with Bennett Tyler (1783-1858) as President. The Theological Institute trained pastors in traditional Calvinist doctrine. The two factions – Taylor and Tyler – coexisted unharmoniously in Connecticut Congregationalism for decades. The “New England Theology” developed by Taylor influenced many students, including Horace Bushnell, to question orthodoxy and to move beyond.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875)

On an October day in 1821, in a grove of trees just outside the village of Adams, New York, a young lawyer-in-training argued his case before God, and won an acquittal. Saying he had “a retainer from the Lord,” Charles Grandison Finney, the young lawyer, soon preached revival across New York state in Presbyterian and Congregational churches (*LTH* 4:69). Finney was effective; he was also controversial. Many church people, including other revivalists, criticized his “new measures,” while many others imitated them.

No official definition or list of “New Measures” existed. Asahel Nettleton, the New England revivalist, listed twenty-one new measures of Finney with which he found fault. Generally, lists of the New Measures – controversial revival methods of Finney – include the following:

1. Public prayer by women in “promiscuous” (that is, mixed male and female) assemblies. Women were generally prohibited from exercising any form of leadership over adult men in churches of the Reformed tradition. However, during a service conducted by Finney

⁷now Hartford Theological Seminary.

in Utica, New York, in 1826, a woman spoke. After that, women often prayed and spoke in Finney revivals. The practice remained taboo in most of the rest of the Presbyterian-Congregational community.

2. Protracted meetings—holding meetings on consecutive nights, and until very late.
3. Colloquial language in the pulpit.
4. The “anxious bench”—a special place to which persons were escorted who had been awakened to their need for conversion, but weren’t converted yet. On the anxious bench, the individual became the target of prayer and preaching, and the person’s conversion became the climax of the revival drama.
5. Prayer for people by name—that is, praying for people to be saved disregarding their own wishes.
6. Immediate church membership for converts.

New England revivalists Beecher and Nettleton criticized Finney’s new measures. Nettleton believed that *God* converted sinners; but Finney had converted conversion into a human (Finney)-run process. Beecher arranged a meeting of eighteen ministers from New England and New York, including Finney and Nettleton, at New Lebanon, New York, beginning 18 July 1827, to work out a consensus on revivals. After a week’s debate, most of the New Englanders were satisfied that Finney’s measures were not unsound. They reached consensus on most issues, but not on women praying in public.

Finney preached free will. He also became increasingly interested in Christian perfection – the experience of Christians after conversion that empowered them to live God’s law of love. These two doctrines, like lightning rods, drew criticism to him from more conservative Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

Finney often made social reform an issue in his revivals, opposing alcohol and slavery. The Chatham Street Chapel in New York City, which he served 1832-36, became a center of evangelism, urban ministry, and anti-slavery agitation. In 1836 Finney formally became a Congregationalist, and pastor of the new Broadway Tabernacle in New York City.

Charles Finney began teaching at Oberlin Seminary in Ohio in 1835, and continued as professor of theology or President to 1866. Oberlin College practiced open enrollment without regard to a person’s race or gender. The influence of Finney’s Oberlin College over Congregationalism in the West caused

tension between eastern and western Congregationalists for many years. Finney's rough evangelistic style had mellowed, and others were more rabid abolitionists than he. But his departure from Calvinism and his interest in perfectionism caused eastern Congregationalists to question the orthodoxy of western Congregationalists.

PART G: WINEBRENNER AND THE REFORMED CHURCH

John Winebrenner (1797-1860) was elected pastor of Salem Reformed Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and two rural congregations, in 1819. Winebrenner and his consistory were soon in conflict. In 1822 the consistory submitted to synod a list of complaints against their pastor. The complaints were a mixture of petty personal vendettas (they complained he didn't visit the sick but they wouldn't tell him when someone was sick), and criticism of new measures. They complained about groaning in prayer meetings, protracted meetings lasting until 4:00 a. m., a lay preacher of another denomination filling the pulpit, and the pastor cooperating with Methodists.

There was no peace at Salem Church. A zealous young pastor, confident in his rightness, had confronted older conservative "pillars" of the church, who paid the bills and thought they should control the church. Words were said. Stands were taken. Pride wouldn't budge. The synod called on pastor and consistory to forgive and forget. The pastor was willing to make some concessions; the consistory none.

In March of 1823 more angry words were said and misunderstood. Winebrenner came to church one Sunday morning and was locked out. With about half the congregation he walked two blocks to the banks of the Susquehanna River and held services there. The church was split. Winebrenner continued to serve the two country churches and the anti-consistory faction from Salem.

Winebrenner attended synod each year through 1825 to defend his position, then withdrew. Complaints made against Winebrenner at the 1827 synod were referred to a committee. As he did not respond to the inquiries of the committee, Synod in 1828 voted, "he ought not to be any longer considered a member of this body."

In 1830 Winebrenner organized the several independent congregations that had grown out of his revivals into the Churches of God. The beliefs and

practices of this new denomination parted from the Reformed Church in several areas. An 1844 Statement of Avowed Principles of the Churches of God included:

- free will
- foot washing as a third ordinance
- believer's baptism by immersion
- "fast days, experience meetings, anxious meetings, camp meetings, and other special meetings of united and protracted effort for the edification of the church and the conversion of sinners."
- opposition to the use of intoxicating beverages, the ownership of slaves, and participation in war.

Rejected by his consistory and his synod, John Winebrenner had chosen to create a new denomination and to chart a new course.

Pietism had taken over American Protestantism with revivalism, and was institutionalized through voluntary societies. As Edwards pointed out, religion had mostly to do with emotions, and true religion expressed itself in good works. The Second Great Awakening led to the formation of a new denomination, the Christian Church, and the division of another into (trinitarian) Congregational and Unitarian (Chapter 6). Out of the institutions of trinitarian Congregationalism grew the missionary movement, which included foreign missions, (chapter 7), Sunday School, ministry to the deaf and dumb, a peace movement, advancement for women (chapter 8), home missions (chapter 9) and the anti-slavery movement (chapter 10). Yet another denomination, a union of Lutheran and Reformed, would take root in America under the leadership of German pietists with the assistance of their American counterparts (Chapter 9, Part C). The reaction against revivalism, fed by romanticism, led to new theological movements (Chapter 11). American pietism often had a catholic spirit that challenged narrow denominationalism. Pietism was always liberal in its compassion for those in need, and occasionally contributed to a liberalization of thought.