

## 5. History of Revivalism in Boston

*A fisherman speaks to the crowd in Jerusalem, “and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). A former baseball player speaks to the crowds in Boston two thousand years later and 64,484 more were added. A simple country preacher speaks and thousands “make decisions” in 1950. After reading such accounts from the past, one can’t help but ask, “What’s next?”*

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**“Certainly it becomes us, who profess the religion of Christ, to take notice of such astonishing exercises of his power and mercy, and give him the glory which is due when he begins to accomplish any of his promises concerning the latter days: and it gives us further encouragement to pray, and wait, and hope for the like display of his power in the midst of us.”**

—John Guyse and Isaac Watts (preface to Jonathan Edward’s “A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God...”)

### Revivalism

“**R**evivalism is the movement that promotes periodic spiritual intensity in church life, during which the unconverted come to Christ and the converted are shaken out of their spiritual lethargy.”<sup>1</sup> Revivalism has not been confined to rural and frontier areas, but has been strongly urban as well. Boston, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and other cities have all experienced revivalism. While revivalism has sometimes been characterized as highly emotional, it has had strong rational and educational elements as well. Preachers like Jonathan Edwards and Lyman Beecher were serious, rational theological writers. Even the dramatic and emotional Billy Sunday drew on considerable research and statistical data in some of his revival sermons. Other revivalists promoted education and started schools. While God has often used well-known Christian leaders in evangelism and revivals, local churches and lay people have also played an important role. For example, the Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857-1858 was initiated and led largely by laymen.

### First Great Awakening in Boston

Prior to the First Great Awakening, there had been considerable religious interest in Boston on the occasion of the 1727 earthquake. Although a significant number were converted, this renewed spiritual interest was short-lived. After several years of declining spiritual life, the pastors were so dissatisfied “that in the summer of 1734 they agreed to propose another course of days of prayer and fasting among their several congregations, to humble themselves before God for their unfruitfulness under the means of grace, and to ask for the effusion of his Spirit to revive the power of Godliness among them.”<sup>2</sup> In spite of the prayer and fasting that summer there was no immediate revival in Boston. The pastors and people were receiving word of the awakening under Jonathan Edwards in Northampton and western New England. The news caused people to reflect and to pray that the revival might spread throughout the country. However, in Boston the lack of piety and spiritual vitality continued.

In the summer of 1735, Dr. Benjamin Colman of the Brattle Street Church wrote to Jonathan Edwards and received back a letter with a report of the Northampton revival. Colman was very impressed and sent a copy to Rev. Guyse in London.<sup>3</sup> The resulting interest eventually led to the publication of a longer version of the report, titled *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God...* in London in October, 1737. By the end of 1738, Boston printers had already published three editions with a second preface by some of the Boston ministers.<sup>4</sup> This influential publication was certainly being read with interest in Boston, as well as in the British Isles. This very important report helped lay the foundation for the revival in 1740. Mark Noll says:

It was Edwards’s narrative of revival more than the theology he himself presented as its foundation that most fired the evangelical imagination. The *Faithful Narrative* became an instant classic. It was the exemplary exposition of revival,... [his] exposition of the preparation, onset, maintenance, regulation, dangers and effects of revival became normative for many in his generation and even more in the generations that followed.<sup>5</sup>

By 1738, some of the Boston pastors had received reports of the power and success of George Whitefield’s preaching. There was a general interest among the pastors and people to have Whitefield come to Boston. Not long after Whitefield came to America, Dr. Colman sent an invitation asking him to come to Boston. Later, other ministers, as well as the Secretary of Massachusetts (Mr. Josiah Willard), had also written to urge him to come.<sup>6</sup> Whitefield “came to America just in time to infuse new energy into the languishing work begun under Edwards, and to thrust it forward like a flaming torch into all the colonies.”<sup>7</sup>

George Whitefield was well known and widely read about before he arrived in Boston. Printed accounts of his life, ministry, and sermons were best sellers, which paved the way for his effective evangelistic ministry in Boston. In May 1740, Benjamin Franklin printed the first volumes of Whitefield’s journals and sermons. He and Whitefield had developed a subscription and distribution network of merchants and booksellers which included James Franklin, John Smith, Benjamin Elliot, and Charles Harrison in Boston. Elliot purchased 250 sets and Harrison received 1,000 volumes.<sup>8</sup> The fifteen booksellers in Boston competed aggressively with each other to sell Whitefield’s books before, during, and after his tour to New England. Some published their own editions. “In the peak revival year, 1740, Whitefield wrote or inspired thirty-nine titles, or 30 percent of all works published in America. ...[F]rom 1739 to 1742, one of the largest publishers in the colonies, Daniel Henchman of Boston, spent more than 30 percent of his printing budget

on producing the evangelist's books."<sup>9</sup> News accounts in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* and other sources all contributed to advance publicity for Whitefield. Rev. Thomas Prince of Boston noted the influence of all this printed publicity: "Accounts of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield as they successively arrived before his appearance here... prepar'd the Way for his Entertainment and successful Labours among us."<sup>10</sup>

On Thursday, September 18, 1740, Whitefield started out at daybreak from Rhode Island and traveled all day to Boston. Four miles outside of town, he was met by a welcoming party, which included the son of the Governor, one or two ministers, and several other gentlemen. They arrived in Boston at 8:00 in the evening, and he conducted a time of devotions and prayer for blessing on his ministry.

The next day, Friday, Sept. 19, he met with Gov. Belcher, who was moved to tears several times during personal meetings with Whitefield. Later Whitefield worshipped at King's Chapel and then met with the Church of England clergy, who questioned him on his beliefs. He met with several other ministers, and then was asked to preach at the Brattle Street Church in the afternoon. Rev. Prince observed that a crowd of 2,000 or more quickly gathered. The sermon was from John 17: 2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Whitefield made it clear that education and morality would not save them, but they must come to know God personally and experientially in Christ. Thomas Prince observed that Whitefield spoke "in demonstration of the Spirit and power. And especially when he came to his application, he addressed himself to the audience in such a tender, earnest and moving manner, exciting us to come and become acquainted with the dear Redeemer, as melted the assembly into tears."<sup>11</sup>

On Saturday, Dr. Sewall and his associate, Rev. Prince, arranged for Whitefield to speak at Old South Church. The message emphasized the Reformation teaching of justification by faith and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He spoke "with a mighty sense of God, eternity, the immortality and preciousness of the souls of his hearers, of their original corruption, and of the extreme danger the unregenerate are in."<sup>12</sup> His message was well received, and the pastors were charitable about the youthful preacher's occasional slips. In the afternoon he spoke to 5,000 people on the Common.<sup>13</sup>

At the First Church of Boston, the senior pastor, Rev. Thomas Foxcroft, was sympathetic to Whitefield's efforts to kindle the flames of revival. He gave a supportive sermon occasioned by Whitefield's visit and ministry (published in 1740), and in 1745 wrote an "Apology" defending his right to a fair hearing.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Foxcroft's colleague, pastor Charles Chauncy, was a strong opponent of the revival and its accompanying "enthusiasm." Although the pastors had their differences, Whitefield was invited to come over after attending the Sunday morning service at Brattle Street Church and preach at the First Church in the afternoon. His message had "a great and visible effect"<sup>15</sup> on the large audience. Apparently many more people were eager to hear him because immediately following this he went over to the Boston Common and preached to a huge crowd of 12,000 to 15,000 people.<sup>16</sup>

When Whitefield spoke in the Boston churches, they were often crowded with people squeezed into the pews, standing in the aisles, filling the pulpit area and stairways, and stretching to look in the windows. On at least one occasion the crowd was so packed that he had to enter the Old South church through a window.<sup>17</sup> After preaching at Rev. Webb's New North Church on the

morning of Monday, September 22, he went to speak at the Rev. Checkley's New South Church. That church was so overcrowded that when people heard the sound of a cracking board they were thrown into a panic, thinking the galleries were falling.<sup>18</sup> People jumped from the galleries onto the people below, threw themselves out of the windows, and trampled people trying to get outside. Within a couple of days, five people died as a result of the panic. Whitefield arrived in the midst of the chaos and had the presence of mind to calm the stampede and announce that he would preach on the Boston Common instead. Even though the weather was wet that day, many thousands followed Whitefield for his outdoor sermon.

The following day Whitefield went to Roxbury to visit Rev. Walter, who had succeeded Rev. John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians, as pastor of the First Church of Roxbury. Later in the day he returned to Boston and preached at both the Second Church and Old South Church. As usual he also exhorted and ministered in the evening to a crowd gathered around the house where he was lodging.

On Wednesday he went over to Cambridge and spoke twice at Harvard Yard to a large audience of students, teachers, and a great number of ministers from neighboring areas. Whitefield said, "In the afternoon I preached again in the College Yard with particular application to students. I believe there were seven thousand hearers. The Holy Spirit melted many hearts."<sup>19</sup> He had an opportunity to meet the lieutenant governor, Spencer Phipps; the local minister, Rev. Appleton; and the president of Harvard, Mr. Holyoke. The latter observed that religion had been "too much in show and profession only" and lacking in power at Harvard. President Holyoke commended the work of Whitefield and, later, Gilbert Tennent:

Indeed, these two pious and valuable men of God, who have been labouring more abundantly among us, have been greatly instrumental, in the hands of God, to revive this blessed work; and many, no doubt have been savingly converted from the error of their ways, many more have been convicted, and all have been in some measure roused from their lethargy.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the College, which had been founded one hundred years earlier to train clergy for the churches, received a new infusion of spiritual life. Dr. Colman wrote, "At Cambridge the college is a new creature; the students full of God."<sup>21</sup> The Harvard visiting committee of the overseers reported in June 1741 that "they find of late extraordinary and happy impressions of a religious nature have been made on the minds of a great number of students."<sup>22</sup>

On Thursday, Whitefield spoke at the weekly lecture at the First Church taking Dr. Sewall's place. He then had dinner at the governor's home, along with most of the pastors. At the governor's request Whitefield prayed for all the ministers. After ministering privately to the governor, he took the ferry over to Charlestown where he preached in the afternoon. The next day he preached in Roxbury where Rev. Walter was pastor. This elderly minister commended his preaching saying it was "Puritanism revived." Later in the day Whitefield returned to Boston and spoke from a scaffold raised up outside the Hollis Street Church of Rev. Mather Byles.

On Saturday he preached in the morning at the New Brick Church pastored by Rev. Welsted. In the afternoon, Whitefield again preached on the Boston Common to a huge audience of 15,000. Both sermons apparently had a powerful effect.<sup>23</sup> Rev. Thomas Prince of Old South Church described his sermon on the story of Zaccheus the next morning, saying he preached "to a very

crowded auditory, with almost as much power and visible appearance of God among us as yesterday afternoon.”<sup>24</sup> Although he was very ill in the afternoon, he was able to preach at the Brattle Street Church, where “Dr. Colman said it was the pleasantest time he had ever enjoyed in that meeting house through the whole course of his life.”<sup>25</sup> In both services Whitefield took up a collection for his Bethesda Orphanage in Georgia, and the total received was over 1,000 pounds (Massachusetts currency). Then he went and preached to a large group of African Americans at their request. He spoke on the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and had a great impact. When he returned to his lodging place, he found a large crowd waiting for him, and so he gave another message of exhortation. He wrote in his journal that he was exhausted and thought his legs would give out from under him, but the Lord gave him strength and he went to bed refreshed.

Early the next morning, Monday, September 29, he left Boston and traveled up the New England coast speaking at Marblehead, Salem, Ipswich, Newbury, Hampton, Portsmouth, and York during the week. The following Tuesday, October 7, he was back in Boston preaching morning and evening services at Dr. Colman’s church. During that week many people under conviction and spiritual distress sought to meet with him.

On Wednesday he spoke at the New North Church where he noted in his journal, “Many hearts were melted down. I think I never was so drawn out to pray for little children, and invite little children to Jesus Christ, as I was this morning.”<sup>26</sup> The next day he decided to speak on Nicodemus, since there were many ministers present at the public lecture at Old South Church. This is the occasion of his famous words, “For I am verily persuaded the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ; and the reason why congregations have been so dead is, because they have had dead men preaching to them.”<sup>27</sup> In the afternoon he spoke to a vast audience on the Boston Common. On Friday he spoke in Charlestown and Reading, and on Saturday he preached on Noah from the meetinghouse steps in Cambridge to a great crowd standing in the rain.

On Sunday, October 12, his final day in Boston, George Whitefield preached to an estimated 23,000 on the Boston Common at his farewell sermon.<sup>28</sup> This was probably the largest gathering of people in North America up to that time. It was more than the entire population of Boston (which was 17,000 in 1740). Whitefield described the gathering, “a sight, perhaps never before seen in America. It being nearly dusk before I had done, the sight was more solemn. Numbers, great numbers, melted into tears when I talked of leaving them.”<sup>29</sup>

On Monday morning, Whitefield left Boston and continued his New England tour westward through Massachusetts. “In a whirlwind forty-five day tour of central places in Massachusetts and Connecticut, Whitefield delivered over 175 sermons to thousands of hearers that included virtually every New England inhabitant.”<sup>30</sup> By that Friday he reached Northampton, where he was able to spend the weekend with Rev. Jonathan Edwards and speak several times in his church, the site of the 1734-35 revival.

Jonathan Edwards wrote of Whitefield’s visit to his church, “The congregation was extraordinarily melted by each sermon, almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of the time.”<sup>31</sup> His wife, Sarah Edwards, described him in a letter.

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, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob.... A prejudiced person, I know, might say that this is all theatrical artifice and display; but not so will anyone think who has seen and known him. He is a very devout and godly man, and his only aim seems to be to reach and influence men the best way. He speaks from a heart aglow with love, and pours out a torrent of eloquence which is almost irresistible.<sup>32</sup>

Gilbert Tennent, a Presbyterian leader from New Jersey, came to Boston in December, 1740 to continue the Awakening at the request of Whitefield. He stayed through the cold winter months until March, 1741.

Results of the revival included an increased reading of religious books, increased demand for church meetings, home meetings, widespread demand for pastoral counsel, increased church membership, and a renewal among the pastors themselves. The churches had to add new weeknight meetings for teaching because there was such a demand for religious instruction. Small groups also sprang up in a great many private homes. These private societies for religious exercises increased to a greater number than ever before, until there were thirty groups. "The people were constantly employing the ministers to pray and preach at these societies, as also at many private houses where no formed society met; and such numbers flocked to hear us as greatly crowded them as well as more than usually filled our Houses of public worship both on Lord's day and Lectures..."<sup>33</sup> Rev. Prince stated, "The Rev. Cooper was wont to say, that more came to him in one week in deep concern for their souls, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry. I can also say the same as to the numbers who repaired to me. Mr. Cooper had about 600 persons in three months; and Mr. Webb has had in the same space above a thousand."<sup>34</sup> These and other visible signs showed that the city had been transformed by the Awakening.

#### **Chart of Boston Churches and Pastors Related to the 1740 Visit of Whitefield**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Pastor</b>
First Church	Rev. Thomas Foxcroft; Rev. Charles Chauncey (opponent)
Second Church	Rev. Gee; Rev. Samuel Mather
Old South Church	Rev. Joseph Sewall; Rev. Thomas Prince
Brattle Street Church	Dr. Benjamin Colman; Rev. William Cooper
First Baptist	Rev. Jeremiah Condy
West Church	Rev. Hooper
Hollis Street Church	Rev. Mather Byles
Christ Church	Dr. Cutler (opponent)
Trinity Church	Rev. Addington Davenport (1740)
King's Chapel	Rev. Price
New North Church	Rev. Webb
New South Church	Rev. Samuel Checkley
New Brick Church	Rev. Welsteed; Rev. Gray
First Church of Roxbury	Rev. Walter
First Church of Cambridge	Rev. Appleton

#### **The Revivals of 1823-24, 1826-27**

During the 1800s, Boston experienced several cycles of revival and church planting which reflected a general renaissance of evangelical Christianity in the city. In general this was related to the northern development of the Second Great Awakening. As Charles Hambrick-Stowe points

out, the awakening did not have a clearly defined beginning and end, but can be seen as the ebb and flow of revivalism even through the 1840s and beyond; it is useful to see it as “the renewal of the evangelical spirit in American society.”<sup>35</sup> During the early 1800s, Park Street Church, Old South Church and Andover Seminary were very active in forming missionary organizations. They commissioned missionaries, and raised money to send them off to Hawaii, Jerusalem, India, the Pacific Islands and other distant lands. This evangelical effort and the planting of new churches in Boston were closely related to revival and growth in Boston’s evangelical church community. The mission efforts encouraged revival and in turn benefited from it. Likewise, revivals resulted in church planting. Park Street Church and Old South played a role in starting many churches during the first half of the nineteenth century. Many of these church plants also participated in the revivals of the period.

#### **Growth of Evangelical and Christian Orthodox Churches in Boston: 1808-1842<sup>36</sup>**

<b>Church group</b>	<b>No. of churches in 1808</b>	<b>No. of churches 1842</b>	<b>No. of total members (in 1842)</b>
Congregational Trinitarian	1	14	5,000
Baptist	3	9	4,000
Episcopalian	2	6	1,300
Methodist	2	9	2,613
Other	0	7	1,116
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>14,029</b>

Prior to the revival of 1823, Congregational pastors had met together during the 1822 annual convention to pray for revival, and had later joined with the Baptists to establish a union prayer meeting.<sup>37</sup> Rev. Benjamin B. Wisner of Old South Church says, “In January 1823, the church in full meeting, unanimously voted, to ‘observe a day of fasting and prayer, to humble ourselves before God for their sins, to seek direction as to their duty in endeavoring to promote the work of God, and to supplicate the more plentiful effusions of his Holy Spirit.’”<sup>38</sup> That same month three young women at Park Street Church came under “deep conviction,” and this was considered the start of the 1823-1824 Revival. Soon both men and women were meeting more often in homes for prayer and confession. The three orthodox congregational churches were holding special weekly prayer meetings. “By the end of March... some 250 persons were attending the inquiry meeting at Park Street Church, while 100 were present in Old South.”<sup>39</sup> “During Mr. Huntington’s ministry [at Old South] there were continual accessions [to membership], frequently of five, eight, and ten persons at one time. And since, there have been two seasons of general attention [revival]; each of which, in less than two years, added above an hundred members.”<sup>40</sup> Many conversions were occurring, and special meetings were multiplying. “Lectures, public and private are held as often as ministers can attend them. Seasons of fasting and prayer have been numerous and manifestly followed with a blessing.”<sup>41</sup> In 1823, Park Street Church added 97 new members by profession of faith, thereby growing by 34 per cent in one year.<sup>42</sup> The Boston leaders then sent for help from Rev. Lyman Beecher in Litchfield, Connecticut. He had experience in revival preaching and in battling the Unitarians. The Litchfield church allowed Beecher to come to Boston for a month of ministry beginning in April 1823.

Rev. Lyman Beecher was an important figure in the revivals of the 1820s, first as a guest preacher from Connecticut and later as pastor of the Hanover Street Church. He was educated at Yale and

studied there for the pastorate under Timothy Dwight, who was a “revivalist-oriented preacher stressing decision and commitment.”<sup>43</sup> Beecher recalled this time of study:

“[A] new day was dawning as I came on the stage... Dwight was a revival preacher,... and I was baptized in the revival spirit.” However, the kind of revival to which he referred was not of the same cut as that which flared out again and again on the edges of the cultural centers and on the moving frontiers. This was not a revivalism of ‘jerks’ and expostulations, of camp meetings and visions. The revivalism of Dwight and later of his students, like Beecher, was centered more fully in the existing church’s life. It was indeed a sharpening and focusing of this life in such a way that all attention was directed to the issues of life and death.... Its preaching and teaching called on the hearers to take their stand immediately in the army of the Lord, that they might fight against the hosts of infidelity and darkness.<sup>44</sup>

The new Hanover Street Church, which called Rev. Lyman Beecher, had a core group of leaders who were involved in many of the city’s revival activities. The church had been started by Park Street Church, Old South Church and the Union Church. In January, 1826, Beecher agreed to begin his pastorate in March. When he arrived the city was already in the midst of a new period of awakening. Hanover Street Church was to become a fortress of orthodoxy and a fountainhead from which many other new churches would flow. Hanover Street Church in the next few months had many seeking salvation, and the inquiry rooms were regularly filled with 50 to 60 people.<sup>45</sup> By the fall, the revival was cross-fertilized among the churches by an agreement to have orthodox pastors preach in one another’s pulpits. By November, there were 300 people inquiring after salvation in the three main churches holding revival meetings.<sup>46</sup> The revival was also characterized by combined prayer meetings. During Beecher’s first year at the new Hanover Street Church more than 150 conversions had taken place. However, Beecher had a larger vision for Boston. He wrote to his son Edward:

As to the importance of the stand in Boston,... I have never stood in such a place before, and do not believe there is, all things considered, such another, perhaps, on earth. It is here that New England is to be regenerated, the enemy driven out of the temple they have usurped and polluted, the college to be rescued, the public sentiment to be revolutionized and restored to evangelical tone. And all this with reference to the resurrection of New England to an undivided and renovated effort for the extension of religion and moral influence throughout the land and through the world.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Revival of 1841-1842**

The Revival of 1842 was primarily a Boston area revival, and it produced a remarkable amount of church growth in a large percentage of Boston’s churches. In many cases its focus was within the local churches and among the laity. Although the complementary styles of ministry of Rev. Edward N. Kirk, Charles Finney, and Elder Jacob Knapp had a great impact, many people were converted in their churches apart from the work of these evangelists. This revival began as early as July, 1841 in Boston’s Garden Street Church, and by autumn was evident in several other churches with an increased spirit of prayer. Martin Moore summarized the testimony of a number of churches which experienced increased prayer and the beginnings of revival in the fall of 1841: “It is evident that there was an awakened spirit of prayer considerably extensive in the city during the autumnal months.”<sup>48</sup> The Bowdoin Street Church, Marlboro Chapel, the Central



Congregational Church, South Boston Baptist, and several Methodist churches were among those experiencing early signs of revival.

In October, 1841, Charles Finney came to speak at the Free Congregational Church (Marlboro Chapel) at the invitation of his friend Willard Sears. He was not sponsored by other churches in this visit, but did minister to inquirers from various other congregations. The Marlboro Hotel, which was the base of his ministry, was a Christian hotel and chapel bought by Christian abolitionists. The Free Congregational Church meeting there was open to revivalists, abolitionists, and others promoting social reform. Finney reported, "I ...preached with all my might for two months. The Spirit of the Lord was immediately poured out, and there became a general agitation among the dry bones. I was visited at my room almost constantly every day of the week by inquirers from various congregations in all parts of the city, and many were obtaining hopes from day to day."<sup>49</sup>

One of the other evangelists who was even more visibly involved in the revival was Rev. Edward N. Kirk. In the summer of 1840 Rev. Kirk first preached in Boston at Park Street Church. "He preached the Gospel with great fervor and directness, and in a most winning manner... he had few equals in the land in making a popular impression."<sup>50</sup> He began a nine-day series of messages with a sermon titled "Prepare to Meet Thy God." "The daily services, afternoon and evening, were soon attended by overflow crowds, the people filling the aisles and the pulpit stairs. Many were turned away for lack of space."<sup>51</sup> In a letter, Kirk wrote, "All this week I have had three meetings a day... The interest in religion is rising here. The Unitarians are said never to have taken so much interest in the orthodox service before."<sup>52</sup> That fall he returned for a campaign of several weeks. Prayer meetings were held before and after each meeting, and the deacons had a daily prayer meeting. At an evening service after this campaign, seventy-one persons gave their testimonies of conversion. One hundred and one new members were added to the church as a result of the revival meetings.<sup>53</sup> Rev. Kirk gave another series of revival messages at Park Street Church in the fall of 1841. One noteworthy aspect here was the awakening of spiritual interest among young men and children in the congregation. Following the third series of revival meetings by Rev. Kirk, a number of evangelicals led by Daniel Safford and Rev. Silas Aiken helped organize the Mount Vernon Congregational Church and, in 1842, called the evangelist to be the founding pastor.

The third and most controversial leading evangelist in this revival period was Elder Jacob Knapp. Being a Baptist preacher, he primarily ministered in the Bowdoin Square Baptist Church, the First Baptist Church, the Baldwin Place Baptist Church, the Harvard Street Baptist Church, and the Tremont Street Church. He arrived from Providence, Rhode Island, at the end of December, 1841, and preached continually until March 18. His schedule included preaching afternoon and evening services and, for part of the time, a predawn service in South Boston. Knapp said, "Even at this early hour the house [South Boston Baptist Church] was crowded, for the religious interest was so intense in the community, that almost any sized house could have been filled at almost any hour in the twenty-four."<sup>54</sup>

He dressed in a humble fashion, and his preaching style has been compared to John the Baptist. He spoke out strongly against false teaching, the liquor trade, and other things, arousing strong opposition. In January, when he was speaking at the Bowdoin Square Church, mobs gathered and threatened to stone or club him, as the mobs in Lystra attacked the Apostle Paul. The mobs grew more fierce and intense day after day, until through prayer, support of other pastors, the mayor,

and the newspapers, the tide finally turned. One of the opposition “sat up all night preparing clubs with which to break my head,” said Knapp, “but coming in to hear me, God broke his heart. The chief officer, who called out the Lancers to quell the riot and disperse the mob, confessed that his heart was in sympathy with the mob and, that he hoped they might succeed, though at the same time he was resolved to discharge the duties of his office. He was convicted of his sins, and became an inquirer after salvation.”<sup>55</sup>

Though some said Knapp’s preaching was not always in good taste, most people agreed that he spoke with great power and was greatly used by God. One seminary professor said, “He is a man of genius and power, and though his preaching is not always in good taste, yet no thief, or profane swearer, or drunkard, or adulterer, can sit and listen to him a great while without feeling that the constable is after him.”<sup>56</sup> On February 9th, a periodical called the *Reflector* said:

The work has now attained to a degree of prevalence and power that renders it utterly impossible for us to convey to our more distant readers an adequate conception of what God is permitting his people to witness and enjoy in Boston. Every day brings to light facts and scenes of the most thrilling interest. Among the converts which now amount to hundreds, there are persons from every class and of every description of moral character.<sup>57</sup>

Knapp was especially concerned that churches welcome the poor and neglected, and not just cater to the wealthy. In the early months of 1842 dozens of new members were added to each of the Baptist churches. Martin Moore, in *Boston Revival 1842*, documents many amazing stories of conversions. The revival was not only strengthening the churches, but also having an impact on the city. While the population was flocking to the churches, they were abandoning the less than reputable theaters. By March 2, the great Tremont Theater had to close; it was then sold and turned into Tremont Temple. Billiard halls and bars were neglected, and several rum dealers were converted. Knapp observed, “You could scarcely meet a man in the market or on the street whose countenance did not indicate seriousness and whose language was not subdued. The Spirit of God was poured out on the whole city, and all the people seemed to be affected by power of his presence.”<sup>58</sup>

As a result of the 1842 Revival, over 4,000 new members were added to the forty-five orthodox churches of Boston in a single year.<sup>59</sup> Seldom, if ever, have so many churches received such a large proportionate increase in their memberships. For example, 266 of First Baptist Church’s 725 members were added in 1842; 126 of First African Baptist’s 267, and 187 of Baldwin Place’s 861 members.<sup>60</sup> Between 1840 and 1842 over four hundred of Harvard Street Baptist Church’s 558 members were newly received.<sup>61</sup> In 1842 the North Bennett Street Methodist Church received 530 new members on probation, and some estimated that as many as 800 people had been converted at the church. One hundred and fifty new members were received at both the Bromfield Street and North Russell Street Methodist Churches.<sup>62</sup> Among the congregational churches, Central Congregational Church added 203 new members in 1842, and the following churches added more than 100 new members: Marlboro Chapel, Park Street, Bowdoin Street, Salem Street, and Garden Street Churches.<sup>63</sup> The Spirit of God was truly moving throughout the city during this period, using a variety of revivalists, pastors and lay people to build up his church.

### **The Revivals of 1857-58**

Even before the Prayer Revival of 1857-58 reached Boston in full force, there were preliminary elements of revival. Thousands of young men were in the habit of gathering on the Boston Common on Sundays in the 1850s. Therefore, in the summer of 1856 the Boston YMCA started a series of Sunday evening outreach meetings under a great tent. “These were attended by thousands, and this work took on the character of a general revival.”<sup>64</sup> Preliminary cultivating of the soil also included the preaching of Charles Finney at Park Street Church beginning in the winter of 1856-1857. Although some of the other churches did not join in the meetings, Finney’s messages did have an impact on Pastor Andrew Stone himself, and many conversions resulted.<sup>65</sup>

In 1857-1858 the Prayer Revival led largely by laymen was sweeping across the country, beginning from New York City. Businessmen were gathering for noontime prayer meetings, and at its peak, there were thousands of conversions per week. In December, 1857, Finney returned to Boston with his wife and found the city full of religious interest. He was not the cause of the revival of religious interest, but he and his wife joined in what was already happening. Mrs. Elisabeth Finney held daily prayer meetings for women at the large vestry of Park Street Church. These meetings were filled to overflowing with women standing everywhere they could to hear. Her husband said, “If the businessmen have had their daily meetings, so have the women; if the men have visited and conversed with individuals, so have the women. God has greatly honored the instrumentality of woman... In Boston I have seen the vestries crowded to suffocation with ladies’ prayer meetings.”<sup>66</sup> While this revival is often reported as one involving businessmen, women like Elisabeth Finney, Phoebe Palmer, and others made important contributions.

In Boston, the “Businessmen’s” noon prayer meeting started on March 8, 1858, at Old South Church. At the time there was also some opposition and a divisive influence in Boston. Therefore, when the meeting place was reserved and advertised, there was considerable doubt about whether it could succeed. Charles Finney recalled in his *Memoirs*, “To the surprise of almost everybody, the place was not only crowded, but multitudes could not get in at all. This meeting was continued day after day, with wonderful results.”<sup>67</sup> From the beginning the Old South Church was too small; therefore, other daily prayer meetings were established throughout the city. Wherever there was a prayer meeting, the place would be full, even if it was at Park Street Church. Although Finney carried on a typical preaching schedule at Park Street Church and other churches in Boston and surrounding communities like Chelsea, this revival was strongly characterized by prayer. Finney commented, “But there was such a general confidence in the prevalence of prayer, that the people very extensively seemed to prefer meetings for prayer to meetings for preaching. The general impression seemed to be, ‘We have had instruction until we are hardened; it is time to pray.’ The answers to prayer were constant, and so striking as to arrest the attention of the people generally throughout the land. It was evident that in answer to prayer the windows of heaven were opened and the Spirit of God poured out like a flood.”<sup>68</sup>

### **The Dwight L. Moody Revival Meetings in Boston**

In 1854, young Moody left rural Northfield, Massachusetts, and came to Boston. After searching for work, he asked his uncle, Mr. Holton, for a job in his shoe store. His uncle gave him the job on the condition that he attend church and Sunday School. Moody started attending Mount Vernon Congregational Church and the young men’s Bible class taught by Mr. Edward Kimball. Mr. Kimball decided to talk personally to Moody about his salvation. So one day he went to Holton’s Shoe Store and met with him in a back room. Here in a Boston shoe store Moody

accepted Christ as his Savior. Moody later moved to Chicago where he was successful in business and soon became involved in Sunday School ministry among the poor. He also was deeply involved in the Chicago YMCA, leading it with an emphasis on evangelism and Bible teaching. Moody and Ira Sankey toured the British Isles from 1873 to 1875 and returned to America as famous revivalists. During the following years they led successful revival campaigns in major American cities.

Moody returned to Boston in 1877 for an evangelistic campaign. The Boston YMCA, along with the churches, invited him while he was in New York. The YMCA threw itself into the work, and its building became the campaign headquarters. The meetings began January 28, only a month after Moody had lost one of his close associates, P.P. Bliss. Bliss had died in a train crash on December 29 while on his way to join Moody in his Chicago crusade. A. J. Gordon, pastor of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church, was a supporter and friend of Moody in this campaign. Moody urged him “toward a love of the Holy Spirit”, and Rev. Gordon “set Moody afire with a desire to encourage worldwide missions.”<sup>69</sup> The Tabernacle built for the Moody and Sankey campaign seated 6,000, and was located around the corner from Rev. Gordon’s church, between Clarendon and Berkeley Streets facing on Tremont and Montgomery Streets. “It is estimated that often seven thousand people were crowded into this building. For three months three services daily, except on Saturday and Monday, were conducted by the evangelists. The revival grew to such proportions that other auditoriums were brought into contemporary use... In March, a Christian convention, lasting three days, to which delegates from all New England were invited, was held. This resulted in revivals throughout the six states.”<sup>70</sup> Moody also developed a close relationship with Henry F. Durant, founder of Wellesley College, who opened his home to Moody and his family during the ten-week Boston campaign.<sup>71</sup>

By almost every angle of vision, Boston was another great success. Hundreds of thousands attended the meetings, thousands made commitments of faith in Christ, and many churches gained new members. One of the remarkable success stories came to A. J. Gordon’s church. Moody had pushed the pastors and lay leaders to look to the hurting masses. He especially urged them to reach out to alcoholics, prostitutes, the poor, and dispossessed children. Thirty alcoholics who were rescued by Moody’s zealous program were baptized and became members of Gordon’s city church. Nearly twenty years later, twenty-eight of these ex-drunkards were still on the wagon, and they were loyal disciples and faithful churchmen.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to his emphasis on temperance, Moody encouraged a well-organized, cooperative effort by 90 churches to do house-to-house religious visitation, especially among the poor. Two thousand people were spending a large part of their time in visitation, covering 65,000 of Boston’s 70,000 families.<sup>73</sup> YMCA workers visited every saloon in Boston to bring a word of witness or invitation. Rev. Joseph Cook wrote, “If there is one measure in which our American evangelist has shown his generalship more effectively than anywhere else, it is in setting men [and women] to work, and in so setting them to work as to set them on fire.”<sup>74</sup> The effort to reach out to urban families through visitation was a strategy Moody felt was necessary to reach those in the large cities who would not come out to church. He believed women could best get into homes by serving the practical needs of mothers and children. To train women workers Moody established two training schools at Northfield, Massachusetts (in addition to Moody Bible Institute).

The revival meetings in Boston lasted about three months and were accompanied by many prayer meetings. The noon prayer meetings were crowded with men. Meetings were established for men

in the dry-goods business, for men in the furniture trade, for men in the market, for men in the fish trade, for newspaper men, for all classes in the city. Prayer meetings were springing up all over the city. “Certainly Moody’s determination to focus on God and not on himself, plus the tremendous prayer support before and during the meetings, were significant factors in the ensuing blessing.”<sup>75</sup>

Some additional evangelistic meetings were held in the Tabernacle after Moody left. It was decided to leave the building standing through the following year. In March, 1878, Moody returned for twelve days of further evangelism. The crowds were as large as the year before.<sup>76</sup>

### **The 1916–1917 Billy Sunday Revival**

In our time it is hard to imagine the excitement and anticipation generated in the population of greater Boston by the visit of Billy Sunday in the late fall of 1916. At that time, Billy Sunday was at the height of his popularity. Boston’s religious leaders started planning the campaign in early 1915 with the help of Sunday’s advance men. The preparations included recruiting and training 1,500 ushers, 500 secretaries, 5,000 personal workers, 7,000 prayer group leaders, and 4,500 choir members.<sup>77</sup> Close to \$50,000 was raised to build a steel and terracotta brick tabernacle on Huntington Avenue for the three-month crusade. The large building would hold 15,000-18,000 people, and the city built an extra train track down Huntington Ave. to handle the huge crowds.<sup>78</sup> Over 1,000 people came to the tabernacle in early November just to hear one of the three choirs practice. The two main choirs each had 2,000 members and the Women’s Choir had 500 more singers.<sup>79</sup> The papers were full of stories about Billy Sunday and every aspect of the coming revival in the days leading up to his arrival. On November 6, the main story on page one of *The Boston Globe* was “12,000 Aid Dedication: Huge Throng Flows in for Tabernacle Service.” This was before Billy Sunday even arrived in Boston. The article goes on to say:

Twelve thousand men and women by their presence, their prayers, their singing and their chatauqua salutes, dedicated yesterday afternoon the largest building ever erected on this continent for religious purposes, the \$50,000 tabernacle built on the old Huntington Avenue Ball Grounds for the greatest evangelist of modern times to preach in.<sup>80</sup>

Preparation for the revival meetings included six weeks of prayer meetings. Well over 100,000 greater Boston Christians attended the 7,402 parlor prayer meetings leading up to the campaign.<sup>81</sup> By January 16, Christians had held 48,661 home prayer meetings with an aggregate attendance of 630, 828.<sup>82</sup> In addition, campaign workers visited every shop, factory and store with more than a few employees, inviting workers to meetings and recording all places where Sunday’s assistants might hold meetings in the coming months. This led to 160 meetings attended by nearly 34,000 men. Booklets called “Suggestions for Personal Workers,” with practical, sensitive, and common-sense words of advice were provided for the personal workers. On Thursday before the first week of meetings Christians fasted and continued to pray.

Then on Saturday, November 11, at 11:55 a.m., Billy Sunday leapt from the Twentieth Century Limited train onto the South Station platform to greet a crowd of several thousand held back by 150 policemen. Upon his arrival, he led a motorcade parade through Boston to the five-story townhouse on Commonwealth Avenue where he and his team were to live for the coming weeks.<sup>83</sup>

The Boston campaign began with three services on Sunday, Nov. 12, 1916. In first page headlines, *The Boston Globe* reported that Billy Sunday “Rivets the Attention of All from Start to Finish.” He was in “his best form” for the opening day crowds of 40,000-50,000, although he decided to cut down on his typical slang. Another 12,000-15,000 people were unable to get into the Tabernacle that first day.<sup>84</sup>

Billy Sunday’s campaign had a profound impact on men. As a former professional baseball player with the language of the common man, he attracted thousands of men. On November 23, he began a series of meetings for men only. On that night every last seat in the Tabernacle was filled with men. After an impassioned invitation to come up and say, “I will live for Christ from this time on,” over 1400 came forward amidst cheers and tears.<sup>85</sup> On Saturday, December 2, nine men had to be carried out after they fainted in the meeting. That day 36,000 men saw Billy jump around like a boxer and climax a story from his baseball days with a slide across the platform. The *Globe* said, “words slipped from his lips at a rate which makes a ‘Gatling gun-delivery’ an inadequate descriptive.”<sup>86</sup> At the invitations, nearly 2,800 men came forward. “Billy was the [Teddy] Roosevelt of preachers, the tough, manly Rough Rider of religion, charging into the enemy lines sword drawn, slashing at those who would tear down his America or blaspheme his God.”<sup>87</sup> With his dramatics and stories, he could move tough men to tears.

On December 10, he preached his famous sermon against saloons and “booze,” called “Get on the Water Wagon.” This message detailed the effects of alcoholism on fathers and families, but also used extensive statistical data on the liquor industry and its negative impacts to argue for national structural changes to eliminate this social evil. In today’s terms it was parallel to declaring war on drug trafficking. Anticipating a great speech, 17,000 men packed the Tabernacle in both the afternoon and evening services, and 20,000 more were turned away. “With an effect like that of a potion, [the sermons] sent those 34,000 bursting the bounds of ordinary enthusiasm, brought them to their feet with the suddenness of jumping jacks, time and again and set them cheering loudly and louder.”<sup>88</sup> At least two or three Boston area mayors and an ex-governor attended. On December 10, his powerful presentations of those sermons made this the biggest day of his career up to that point.

Women were touched by the revival in a variety of ways. They thronged to the regular meetings at the Tabernacle and to special meetings there, like the Day for Mothers. Miss Frances Miller also led several special mass meetings for women at Mechanics Hall. For example, on December 2, 4,500 women heard her message on “Personal Purity.”<sup>89</sup> As a part of the overall campaign, working women were invited to noon luncheon meetings at Park Street Church. Frances Miller led these meetings, which drew 500-1000 women three times a week.<sup>90</sup> She organized 200 volunteers to go out to all the downtown businesses and invite female employees to the lunches prepared by two thousand volunteers.<sup>91</sup> On December 1, *The Boston Globe*, evening edition reported, “Business Women’s Luncheon Thronged – Miss Miller gave four of these half-hour talks, and at each one, the historic building was well filled with young women... At the close of each talk the girls went to the parlor downstairs where luncheon was served for five cents.”<sup>92</sup> Overall they held 54 of these meetings providing spiritual and physical food for 28,456 working women. Mrs. William Asher organized an additional 130 meetings in various shops and workplaces for another 26,000 women. An additional 81,000 women attended the 54 afternoon Bible classes at the Tabernacle led by Grace Saxe.<sup>93</sup> Thus Billy Sunday, his well-organized staff, and local volunteers all contributed to the effective outreach to women in greater Boston.

By the end of the Revival, the total attendance for the 133 messages Sunday gave at the Tabernacle reached 1,320,000,<sup>94</sup> and the number of “trailhitters” who had made a decision and come down the sawdust trail was 64,484.<sup>95</sup> On the closing day, attendance was 62,000 as he preached four sermons. Probably 40,000 more were turned away. *The Boston Globe* commented, “No one can gainsay that 100,000 persons tried to hear him, for there seemed to be as many outside the Tabernacle as inside through the afternoon and evening.”<sup>96</sup> The record-breaking free will offering for that day alone was \$50,898 plus church offerings, and 5,196 came forward at the invitations.<sup>97</sup> These January 21 goodbye meetings brought to a climax the greatest revival campaign Billy Sunday had experienced to date, “meetings which had broken every high record Billy Sunday had set up in other great cities of America.”<sup>98</sup>

### **The 1950 Billy Graham Revival**

While the Billy Sunday campaign had been planned in detail over a two-year period, the Revival of 1950 began initially with a simple invitation for Billy Graham to come and speak at Park Street Church for ten days after a mass meeting at Mechanics Hall. In some ways, the keys to these evangelistic meetings were in the preparation of the speaker and in his previous Los Angeles campaign six weeks before. During 1949, Graham had led unremarkable campaigns in Miami and Baltimore and a discouraging one in Altoona, Pennsylvania.<sup>99</sup> Why did he then have such a big impact in Los Angeles and Boston less than a year later? During the summer of 1949, Billy had some deep experiences in prayer where he asked “the Lord for a chance to serve him in a greater way.”<sup>100</sup> Before coming to Los Angeles, he had also struggled with the issue of accepting the full authority of Scripture. He had made the decision to surrender “to the authority of the Bible, which he would simply accept by faith as God’s Word.”<sup>101</sup> As he began the Los Angeles campaign, his preaching seemed transformed. Billy Graham’s experience demonstrates that one cannot preach with power and authority from God unless one believes in the authority of the Bible. The Los Angeles meetings were also supported by more than 800 prayer meetings and 250 churches. Then the latter half of the campaign led to some high profile conversions and subsequent national publicity. Therefore, when Graham came to Boston six weeks later, people were waiting with considerable interest and anticipation. By then, more churches were supporting the meetings. Nevertheless, the organizers were not fully prepared for the revival and its large crowds.

Dr. Harold Ockenga had prayed for revival for fourteen years and preached about it throughout the 1940s. He had organized evangelistic meetings and invited well-known speakers before, but the desired large-scale revival response he prayed for had not yet materialized. Although Billy Graham was still a young country preacher from the South, this time would be different.

The campaign began on New Year’s Eve, 1949, with a surprisingly large audience of 6,000 at Mechanics Hall, where hundreds more were turned away. The organizers quickly decided to rent the hall again for the next afternoon. It was again filled nearly to capacity with little advance publicity. The front page of *The Boston Globe* said, “Although hotels, night clubs, and bars in the city were crowded last night, the largest gathering in all of Greater Boston packed Mechanics Building to hear Rev. Billy Graham.”<sup>102</sup> He used the New Year’s opportunity to speak out against all forms of wickedness and to urge people to let Christ change their lives and enable them to make a new beginning for the new year. According to the *Globe* report, he said, “Your gangsters can be converted.<sup>103</sup> Your places of iniquity can be closed up. Your politics can be cleaned up. And when that is done, the city could enter the greatest year of its history. It isn’t impossible. It

can be done if the church people will meet God's conditions for revival.' He made a dramatic plea to all of Boston to make a new start."<sup>104</sup> In those first two services a total of 300 people came to Christ. The front page story in *The Boston Globe* on January 2 read, "Attracted by the magnetic personality and youthful fervor of blonde, handsome evangelist Billy Graham, thousands of Bostonians thronged his revival meetings yesterday, in what was described by local ministers as one of the greatest religious outbursts to sweep the city in years."<sup>105</sup>

On the evenings of January 1 and 2, Billy spoke to 2500 people packed into Park Street Church, with thousands more turned away. The sponsoring leaders had promised God that if they all clearly discerned that he was at work in Monday night's meeting, they would step out in faith and seek larger meeting space. God was leading them step by step in faith. They had originally rented the massive Mechanics Hall with the assurance that businessmen Allan C. Emery, Jr. and Malcom Calder would back up any financial needs.<sup>106</sup> However, now they followed the moving of God to rent it for the next four days in faith. On Tuesday, the editor of the *Boston Post* called Dr. Ockenga and challenged his faith further by asking, "If I get you the Boston Garden, will you take it?"

God moved Mr. Emery and all the trustees to agree to this added expense, even though a leading pastor cautioned Ockenga not to rush in and make a fool of himself.<sup>107</sup> The Boston Garden was engaged for January 16 even though it had previously seemed to be fully booked for months. With this new meeting arranged, the organizers decided to fill in the extra days and double the length of the campaign. They were able to rent the Opera House and the Mechanics Hall for the additional days. Even though the additional rentals added up to more than \$10,000, God was clearly moving in a special way, and by the end all expenses were covered. The next four meetings at Mechanics Hall each drew well over 5,000 people.

On January 4, Billy's call for a week of prayer in Boston made first page news in *The Boston Globe*. Prayer meetings for revival were being held every day at Tremont Temple. In the first week of meetings, about 900 people accepted Christ as Savior and signed cards.<sup>108</sup> Thousands attended the second week of meetings as well. With the various Boston papers giving front-page coverage to the meetings, the greater Boston area was becoming aware of the growing revival.

The preparation for the final meeting included an all-day prayer meeting at Tremont Temple, attended at various times by 2,000 to 3,000 people. An hour before the service that night, the Boston Garden was packed with 16,000 people, with 2,500 people in the lobby and 10,000 more in the streets outside. In response to Graham's message on Noah, 1,200 to 1,500 people made decisions to turn to Jesus. In all, the campaign resulted in 3,000 conversions in January.<sup>109</sup> In his autobiography, Graham says, "Response to the invitation at each service overwhelmed us physically. There had been no significant training of counselors in advance of the meetings. Hence, all of us on the team – including Grady, Cliff, Bev and myself – met with individual inquirers, helped by volunteers who stepped forward on the spur of the moment."<sup>110</sup> Dr. Ockenga and other pastors were experiencing many additional conversions in response to their own preaching within their churches.

Because all the meeting places were unavailable after January 16, Billy and the campaign leaders reluctantly decided to close the Boston effort. However, they agreed to organize a second phase beginning in late March. When the Billy Graham team returned on March 28, local committees in many of New England's larger cities were prepared to spread the revival to all six states in the region. Dr. Ockenga provided leadership with the help of the Evangelistic Association of New



England and the New England Fellowship of Evangelicals. In the intervening months, pastors and leaders had a little more time to prepare and plan for overflow crowds. They had also recruited people in New England and around the country to pray for the revival. The twenty-day itinerary covered about fifteen cities including Portland, Maine; Manchester and Concord, New Hampshire; Burlington, Vermont; Springfield, Worcester, and Lowell, Massachusetts; Hartford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury, Connecticut; and Providence, Rhode Island among others. God used national and local news media to give the meetings widespread publicity, with newspapers sending fifteen to twenty reporters everywhere Billy went.<sup>111</sup> “Headlines appeared constantly throughout the campaign, and no less than four hundred and seventy-six newspaper articles were printed about the meetings.”<sup>112</sup> Hundreds and thousands of people packed the city auditoriums, sports stadiums and theaters,<sup>113</sup> with crowds overflowing halls and spilling out into the streets. Attendance at the indoor meetings of this second phase was conservatively estimated at 115,000, and more than 6,000 people signed confessions of faith on the decision cards. This phase of the campaign also included important meetings held on college campuses, including MIT, Brown, Harvard, Yale, Amherst, Vassar, Wellesley and the University of Massachusetts. Graham learned that in spite of students’ apparent lack of seriousness, they were open to his straightforward presentation of the Gospel.

After speaking in the various New England cities and universities, Graham returned to Boston for four nights (April 19-22) at the Boston Garden and a final Sunday afternoon rally on the Boston Common. When Sunday came, there was a cold, pouring rain, but Billy’s team prayed for the sky to clear. In the afternoon as the first hymn began, the rain stopped, and when Billy stood up to preach the sun came out on the crowd of 40,000-75,000.<sup>114</sup> Here on the same hallowed ground, George Whitefield had preached 210 years before with the theme, “Shall God Reign in New England.” Dr. Ockenga planned the final meeting as a “Peace Rally,” a theme which he felt would draw together many people in those times of cold war and gathering threats to peace in the Far East. Using Genesis 6 along with Romans, “Ockenga concluded that wherever you have righteousness you have peace, which is the fruit of righteousness. And the way to peace is through repentance, revival, and righteousness.”<sup>115</sup> Ockenga presented a peace offensive for America, and Graham outlined a five-point peace plan emphasizing a revival of true religion of the heart. Then the audience joined in a prayer for peace. In his main message, Billy urged the vast crowd to “Prepare to Meet Thy God.” In response to his closing invitation, hundreds raised their hands to receive Christ.

In all these times of revival, prayer played an important role. While persistent prayer for revival was clearly evident, God often did not bring revival until several years later. In some revivals, church planting was an important result or ingredient. Generally, God worked through a specific person or persons who were filled with his Spirit and power and provided a focus for attracting the public’s attention. Quite often God used publicity from newspapers and other printed sources to prepare the way in arousing the interest of the general public. Although well-known personalities were often involved, the efforts of local pastors and countless laymen and laywomen were always crucial. God seemed to often use people who, in the world’s eyes, were not the most experienced or the most well-educated. These speakers were totally dedicated to God, and their weaknesses perhaps enabled the power of God to shine even more brightly. They were not known for brilliant, and uniquely new ideas, but for preaching the basic Gospel with simplicity, clarity, and power.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> W. G. Travis, "Revivalism, Protestant," *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1012.
- <sup>2</sup> Hamilton Hill, *History of the Old South Church, vol. 1* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890), 1:503.
- <sup>3</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 79.
- <sup>4</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God... 3rd edition* (Boston: S. Kneeland, T. Green, 1738). Shorter preface by the Boston ministers signed by Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, John Webb, and William Cooper.
- <sup>5</sup> Mark A. Noll, 91.
- <sup>6</sup> Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival, vol. 1* (Westchester, Ill.: Cornerstone Books, 1970), 1:527.
- <sup>7</sup> Edward S. Ninde, quoted in Dallimore, 1:412.
- <sup>8</sup> Frank Lambert, "Pedlar in Divinity": *George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 123.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.
- <sup>11</sup> Hill, 1:506.
- <sup>12</sup> Hill, 1:506 (Quoting Rev. Thomas Prince's account).
- <sup>13</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 26. Quoting *The Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 25 Sept. 1740.
- <sup>14</sup> Arthur B. Ellis, *History of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1880* (Boston: Hall and Whiting, 1881), 182, 202.
- <sup>15</sup> Hill, 1:506.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Dallimore, 1:533.
- <sup>18</sup> This had actually happened in Jonathan Edwards's church, and he had written up the account of how God had miraculously preserved the congregation from death and serious injury.
- <sup>19</sup> Hill, 1:508 (quoting Whitefield's Journals).
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:508 footnote.
- <sup>21</sup> Hill, 1:510 footnote.
- <sup>22</sup> Justin Winsor, editor, *The Memorial History of Boston*, 4 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1881), 1:234.
- <sup>23</sup> Dallimore, 1:531; Hill, 1:508.
- <sup>24</sup> Hill, 1:508.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:509.
- <sup>26</sup> Dallimore, 1:532.
- <sup>27</sup> Hill, 1:509 (quoting Whitefield's Journals).
- <sup>28</sup> Mark A. Noll, 105. (Citing Peter Timothy's crowd estimate. Whitefield estimated 20,000).
- <sup>29</sup> Hill, 1: 534.
- <sup>30</sup> Harry S. Stout, "Whitefield, George," *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1252.
- <sup>31</sup> Dallimore, 1:538.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:539.
- <sup>33</sup> Hill, 1:519
- <sup>34</sup> Dallimore, 1:536-537.
- <sup>35</sup> Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 204.
- <sup>36</sup> Moore, 143.
- <sup>37</sup> Vincent Harding, *A Certain Magnificence: Lyman Beecher and the Transformation of American Protestantism, 1775-1863* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1991), 173.
- <sup>38</sup> Wisner, 64.
- <sup>39</sup> Harding, 174.
- <sup>40</sup> Benjamin B. Wisner, *The History of the Old South Church in Boston, in Four Sermons* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1830), 63.
- <sup>41</sup> Harding, 174.
- <sup>42</sup> Park Street Church records, Feb. 1809-Feb. 1834.
- <sup>43</sup> Harding, 25.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.
- <sup>48</sup> Martin Moore, *Boston Revival, 1842* (Wheaton, Ill.: Richard Owen Roberts, Publisher, 1980), 135. Originally published in Boston by John Putnam, 1842.
- <sup>49</sup> Hambrick-Stowe, 205.

- <sup>50</sup> Increase Tarbox, "The Congregational Trinitarian Churches Since 1780," in *The Memorial History of Boston*, 4 vols., edited by Justin Winsor (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1881), 3:412.
- <sup>51</sup> H. Crosby Englizian, *Brimstone Corner: Park Street Church, Boston* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 142.
- <sup>52</sup> David Otis Mears, *Life of Edward Norris Kirk* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks and Company, 1877), 165.
- <sup>53</sup> Englizian, 142.
- <sup>54</sup> Jacob Knapp, *Autobiography of Elder Jacob Knapp* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1868), 125.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.
- <sup>59</sup> Moore, 141.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, 125.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.
- <sup>64</sup> L. L. Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association* (Boston: Boston Young Men's Christian Association, 1901), 27.
- <sup>65</sup> Englizian, 148-149.
- <sup>66</sup> Hambrick-Stowe, 281.
- <sup>67</sup> Charles Finney, *Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, Chap. 33, [www.gospeltruth.net/1868Memoirs/mem33.htm](http://www.gospeltruth.net/1868Memoirs/mem33.htm) (Jan. 2007).
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> Lyle Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 251.
- <sup>70</sup> L. L. Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association*, 55-56.
- <sup>71</sup> Dorsett, 252.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.
- <sup>73</sup> Joseph Cook, "Introduction," in *To All People...* by Dwight L. Moody (New York: E. B. Treat, 1877), 9.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>75</sup> Dorsett, 241.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>77</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalists in the City: Conflict and Division in Boston's Churches, 1885-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144,145.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.
- <sup>79</sup> *The Boston Globe*, Nov. 4, 1916.
- <sup>80</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 6 Nov. 1916, 1.
- <sup>81</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 11 Nov. 1916, 2.
- <sup>82</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, 5.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, evening edition, p. 14.
- <sup>84</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 13 Nov. 1916, page 1; Bendroth, 146.
- <sup>85</sup> Bendroth, 149; *The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, 4.
- <sup>86</sup> "Nine Men Knocked Out by Sunday Talk," *The Boston Globe*, 3 December 1916, 1.
- <sup>87</sup> Roger A. Bruns, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big Time American Evangelism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 200.
- <sup>88</sup> "Roar from 34,000 as Sunday Lashes Booze," *The Boston Globe*, 11 December 1916, 1.
- <sup>89</sup> "Hear Appeal for Purity," *The Boston Sunday Globe*, 3 December 1916, 4.
- <sup>90</sup> Bendroth, 146.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>92</sup> "Business Women's Luncheon Thronged," *The Boston Globe*, 1 December 1916, 9.
- <sup>93</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, 5.
- <sup>94</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, 5.
- <sup>95</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 92. (*The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, page 1, gave the number as 62,000).
- <sup>96</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 22 January 1917, 1.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> "Sunday Goodbys to Boston Begin," *The Boston Sunday Globe*, 21 January 1917, 1.
- <sup>99</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 220.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.
- <sup>102</sup> "Graham Scores Typical Revelry of New Year's Eve," *The Boston Globe*, 1 January 1950, 1.
- <sup>103</sup> Jim Vaus, a wiretapper for West Coast gangster Mickey Cohen, had been converted in the recent Los Angeles campaign.
- <sup>104</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 1 January 1950, 1.
- <sup>105</sup> "Thousands Hear Billy Graham at Two Revivals," *The Boston Globe*, 2 January 1950, 1.

- <sup>106</sup> Harold Lindsell, *Park Street Prophet: The Story of Harold Ockenga* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1951), 146.
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.
- <sup>110</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco and Zondervan, 1997), 161.
- <sup>111</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, 164.
- <sup>112</sup> Lindsell, 157.
- <sup>113</sup> In Houlton, Maine, they even used an airplane hangar for the meetings.
- <sup>114</sup> Lindsell, 159.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

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