

Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform

William G. McLoughlin

Chicago History of American Religion
A Series Edited by Martin E. Marty



*I dedicate this book to my
friend and mentor, Oscar Handlin*

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

© 1978 by The University of Chicago

All rights reserved. Published 1978

Paperback edition 1980

Printed in the United States of America

06 05 04 03 02

9 10 11 12

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

McLoughlin, William Gerald.

Revivals, awakenings, and reform.

(Chicago history of American religion)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Revivals—United States. 2. United States—
Church history. 3. United States—Civilization.

I. Title.

BV3773.M32

269'.2'0973

77-27830

ISBN 0-226-56092-9 (paper)

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum
requirements of the American National Standard for
Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed
Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48—1992.

Awakenings as Revitalizations of Culture

Revivalism and Protestant Hegemony

Awakenings have been the shaping power of American culture from its inception. The first settlers came to British North America in the midst of the great Puritan Awakening in England bringing with them the basic beliefs and values that provided the original core of our culture.

Our Revolution came after the First Great Awakening on American soil had made the thirteen colonies into a cohesive unit (*e pluribus unum*), had given them a sense of unique nationality, and had inspired them with the belief that they were, "and of right ought to be," a free and independent people.

Shortly after the Constitution had launched the American republic, a second era of religious revivals created the definitions of what it meant to be "an American" and what the manifest destiny of the new nation was. After the Civil War had cemented our sense of the Union ("One nation, indivisible under God, with liberty and justice for all"), the Third Great Awakening helped us to understand the meaning of evolutionary science and industrial progress and led us into the crusades "to make the world safe for democracy" in 1917 and 1941.

Since 1960, Americans have been in the midst of their Fourth Great Awakening (or their fifth, if we include the Puritan Awakening). Once again we are in a difficult period of reorientation, seeking an understanding of who we are, how we relate to the rest of the universe, and what the meaning is of the manifold crises that

threaten our sense of order at home and our commitments as a world power abroad.

Great awakenings (and the revivals that are part of them) are the results, not of depressions, wars, or epidemics, but of critical disjunctions in our self-understanding. They are not brief outbursts of mass emotionalism by one group or another but profound cultural transformations affecting all Americans and extending over a generation or more. Awakenings begin in periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when we lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions, and the authority of our leaders in church and state. They eventuate in basic restructurings of our institutions and redefinitions of our social goals.

Great awakenings are not periods of social neurosis (though they begin in times of cultural confusion). They are times of revitalization. They are therapeutic and cathartic, not pathological. They restore our cultural verve and our self-confidence, helping us to maintain faith in ourselves, our ideals, and our "covenant with God" even while they compel us to reinterpret that covenant in the light of new experience. Through awakenings a nation grows in wisdom, in respect for itself, and into more harmonious relations with other peoples and the physical universe. Without them our social order would cease to be dynamic; our culture would wither, fragment, and dissolve in confusion, as many civilizations have done before.

Revivals and awakenings occur in all cultures. They are essentially folk movements, the means by which a people or a nation reshapes its identity, transforms its patterns of thought and action, and sustains a healthy relationship with environmental and social change. To understand the functions of American revivalism and revitalization is to understand the power and meaning of America as a civilization. Until the present generation these periods of cultural readjustment have been associated almost wholly with the Protestant churches. The association of awakenings with revivalism derives from the fact that Protestant ideology has, until recently, been so dominant in our culture that other faiths have not really counted, or have not been counted, in measuring the growth of the nation in its efforts to redeem the world.

Until recently, most Americans assumed that the progress of their nation toward the millennium could be measured in the growing adherence of people here and around the world to some form of Protestantism. Protestants assumed that the preaching of God's Word (especially by gifted evangelists or missionaries) would eventually bring the whole world into a right relationship with God. Periods of mass conversion were seen as evidence of God's favor and of man's obedience to his will. R. H. Tawney said, in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, that "Calvin did for the bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century what Marx did for the proletariat of the nineteenth . . . ; the doctrine of predestination satisfied the same hunger for an assurance that the forces of the universe are on the side of the elect as was to be assuaged in a different age by the theory of materialism." Americans, whose nation began with the upthrust of Calvinism in England and whose prosperity rose with the success of capitalist enterprise, have always felt that they were the elect of God, and the growth in church membership (which in seventeenth-century New England included about 20 percent of the population) to close to two-thirds of the population in the 1970s confirmed the view that God had blessed America spiritually as he had blessed it materially.

The success of the British colonists against the pagan Indians and their Catholic Spanish and French allies prior to 1776 seemed proof of this. Our successful revolution against British tyranny, our rapid expansion to the Pacific, our rise to industrial power, our triumphal role in the great European wars, and our assumption of global power after World War II added further conviction that we were indeed God's chosen people. But that conviction rested on the ideological assumption that Protestants had replaced Catholics as the true church after 1517 just as Christians had replaced Jews after the death of Christ. Protestant church growth was the measure of Christianity's success, and revivalistic evangelism was the means of that growth.

The first inkling of the possibility that evangelical Protestantism might not remain the dominant religious ideology of the new nation came with the massive immigration of Irish Catholics in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Their resistance to evangelistic effort produced a great fear among pious Protestants that

the safety and progress of the nation were endangered. Fear as well as hope has been a spur to revivalism ever since. Evangelistic efforts to reach the unchurched redoubled after 1830, and a host of "professional" revivalists arose to sustain Protestant church growth. After the Civil War, when the cities were described by home missionaries as seething caldrons of foreign, godless, and radical immorality among "the masses," new evangelistic techniques were directed toward "winning the cities for Christ." Revivalists like D. L. Moody, J. Wilbur Chapman, Sam P. Jones, and Billy Sunday led elaborate revival campaigns in cities across the country. Because they were thought to have a special gift for "reaching the masses," they were given broad Protestant support and publicity. Their success, however, proved limited.

After World War I, when it became statistically evident that non-Protestant church membership was rising more rapidly than Protestant membership and when the split between Fundamentalists and Modernists led many of the rising generation to abandon formal church affiliation for agnosticism, humanism, or atheism, xenophobic fears became so great that the nation's first immigration-restriction laws were passed. These were specifically written to exclude immigrants from non-Protestant countries (just as earlier laws and agreements had specifically excluded Oriental immigrants).

The New Pluralism

Fundamentalist Protestants began to adopt a premillennial perspective on human history at the end of the nineteenth century because their conception of America's covenant with God ceased to be dominant among the largest denominations. Pervaded by gloom as the non-Protestant immigrants increased and as Protestant leaders abandoned belief in a literally infallible Bible, the Fundamentalists concluded that they were the saving remnant. Yet they doubted whether they alone could save America or the world from the imminent Apocalypse. The Modernists or Liberal Protestants, accommodating the Bible to the higher criticism of the Bible and to Darwinian evolution, assumed that God still intended to work

through America to redeem mankind. However, they yielded considerable authority to the scientists (including sociologists, psychologists, economists, and political scientists) in working out man's progress toward the millennium. The nonchurchgoing humanists and agnostics, relying on science rather than revelation or the churches, had more in common with the Modernists than with the Fundamentalists. And, for the first time, Liberals (whether Modernist Protestants or lapsed-Protestant humanists) made gestures of including Catholic and Jewish liberals in their efforts to overcome the roadblocks to the millennium. After all, many of the poor, and many members of the working class, were recent immigrants; to uplift them, to allow them to participate fully in the working-out of America's millennial mission, could be construed to be as much the task of the Catholic and the Jew as of the Liberal Protestant and the progressive humanist.

Unfortunately, this tentative ecumenism was still tainted with superciliousness on the part of the native-born; their general support of restrictions on immigration and their feeling that Catholic and Jewish immigrants needed to be "uplifted" from their "backward" and "superstitious" ignorance scarcely contributed to religious equality. However, when the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 created a revolutionary force in the world that rivaled the potential power of the American Revolution as a source of hope for the oppressed of the world, a new kind of ecumenism began to develop among conservative Fundamentalists, Catholics, and Jews.

Fearing that Communism represented the Anti-Christ, aware that it threatened not only private property and American capitalism but the Judeo-Christian faith, many Fundamentalists and Catholics found common ground in defending "the Cross and the Flag" against this satanic foreign conspiracy. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (following Hitler's efforts to eliminate the Jews from human history) provided a link between conservative Evangelical Christians and Jews. According to Fundamentalist exegesis of the Bible, the redemption of the human race included a role for the Jews; particularly noted was the prediction that in "the latter days" a sign of the millennium would be the return of the Jews to their homeland. Defense of religious liberty, of capitalist

hegemony in the world, of "inalienable natural rights" against tyrannical fascists and communists alike, also united Liberal Protestants and humanists behind a common front with Catholics and Jews after 1950.

At this point Americans at last accepted the concept of a pluralistic nation, at least to the extent, as Will Herberg put it in 1955, of agreeing that "to be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew are today the alternative ways of being an American." The election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency in 1960 and the admiration for Henry Kissinger (a foreign-born Jew) as secretary of state after 1968 were outward symbols of this pluralism. Although Orientals were still only a tiny group in the nation, their religious outlook gained respectability in the 1950s when the rising generation found the ecumenism of the new pluralistic "establishment" too fear-ridden, conservative, and culture-bound. The interest in Zen Buddhism suggested that ecumenism should be worldwide rather than American or Western.

When a tremendous upsurge of interest in religion began in the 1960s, many journalists and social critics found signs that a new awakening was at hand, but they found them at first in the older symbols of revivalism. Protestant evangelists like Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and Kathryn Kuhlman resurrected the tradition of mass revivalism in the cities, while Catholics like Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen and Jews like Rabbi Joshua Liebman aroused tremendous popular response within their faiths. Revivalism seemed more ecumenical but not essentially different. What did not fit the old pattern was the new interest in Zen Buddhism, magic, astrology, satanism, and the occult. It seemed that, while the older generation of Americans was ready to reaffirm its Judeo-Christian heritage, a large proportion of the younger generation was ready to abandon it. There was also a renewed interest in atheistic Marxism in the 1960s, not to mention the continued appeal of scientism, evident in Scientology, Esalen, and est. Faith in the Holy Spirit was matched by faith in ESP. Revivalism was present, but it did not seem to be at the center of the new awakening. The emergence of the Jesus People and the new popularity of neo-Evangelicalism (personified in President Jimmy Carter and his faith-healing sister) were matched by the death-of-God movement and the new rural

communes, which seemed to reject the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage. To explain all this, a new definition of an "awakening" was necessary.

Toward a New Definition of an Awakening

The purpose of this essay is to indicate why the key to a great awakening is no longer to be found simply in Protestant (or even ecumenical) mass revivalism. Most historians, although they note a serious ideological shift in American culture between 1890 and 1920, do not describe that period (as I shall here) as America's Third Great Awakening. They do not because they rightly see that Dwight. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Aimee Semple MacPherson were not really at the heart of that ideological reorientation in the same sense that Jonathan Edwards was at the center of our First Great Awakening and Lyman Beecher at the center of our Second. Nevertheless, these four great eras of ideological reorientation (along with the Puritan movement) are similar. What we need, therefore, is a model that can abstract the causes, functions, and results of such reorientations from the Protestant revivalism that originally characterized them.

If we can rid ourselves of the old Protestant definition of revivalism and awakenings and think more sociologically and anthropologically about religion, we will better understand our past as well as our present times of concern with man's place in the universe. Ever since the first applications of psychological analysis to religious experiences in the 1890s there has been a tendency to denigrate their spiritual quality. But while such analysis freed us from doctrinal explanation of conversions, it also tended to deny their religious dimension. Despite the best efforts of William James, most psychologists, whether Freudian or behaviorist, have reduced religious experiences to secular terms by stressing latent versus manifest content. The scientific analyst of religion has also stressed the "primitive," "backward," "culturally impoverished," "economically deprived," "socially ostracized," or privately "neurotic" aspects of religious experience. But reductionism is not explanation. Nor does it help to say simply, as anthropologists have, that all cultures construct rituals to help the child transform

himself into a man or herself into a woman. To call conversion a *rite de passage* still begs the question of periodic mass awakenings. It explains what a culturally normal event is, but it does not explain the culturally abnormal event. Hence the new interest among anthropologists since 1960 in ghost-dance religions and cargo cults.

Some religious experiences are undoubtedly the results of pathological problems. Still, I would say with William James and Erik Erikson that, even in what may seem extreme cases, the results may be heuristic or cathartic. By and large, most religious converts move from states of anxiety and inhibition to states of functionally constructive personal and social action. Similarly, the abnormal cultural events that we call religious awakenings or revivals—movements that grip whole communities or nations for many years—are not only fruitful but necessary if a culture is to survive the traumas of social change.

I propose, therefore, to view the five great awakenings that have shaped and reshaped our culture since 1607 as periods of fundamental ideological transformation necessary to the dynamic growth of the nation in adapting to basic social, ecological, psychological, and economic changes. The conversion of great numbers of people from an old to a new world view (a new ideological or religious understanding of their place in the cosmos) is a natural and necessary aspect of social change. It constitutes the awakening of a people caught in an outmoded, dysfunctional world view to the necessity of converting their mindset, their behavior, and their institutions to more relevant or more functionally useful ways of understanding and coping with the changes in the world they live in.

The Protestant theologian speaks of great awakenings or revival times as divine manifestations of concern for the "salvation of Adam's children from the bondage of Satan," as signs of "the coming Kingdom of God on earth," or as *kairos* (the invasion of the temporal by the eternal). What I have to say will not necessarily contradict the faith system of either the behavioral psychologist or the Judeo-Christian theologian. My concern is with the social function of religious systems and with achieving a historical perspective on their periodic transformations.

Since there is agreement that widespread expressions of religious

concern have recurred periodically in American history, the task of the historian is to explain why they occurred in those particular spans of time, in that particular place, among those particular people, in that particular way. Such attempts have of course been made before (especially concerning what our textbooks describe as the First Great Awakening in the 1740s and the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century). These explanations have included efforts to associate revivals of religion with great natural catastrophes (floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves), or with epidemics, wars, and depressions, but without convincing correlations. Some historians have argued that charismatic individuals have the power to sway multitudes at will, but history is not the biography of great men. Others have traced revivals to the rise and decline of religious institutions, to the decadence of one ecclesiastical system and its challenge by a new one. Still others have explained these awakenings in terms of the conflict of ideas—the impact upon old theological dogmas of new modes of thought about the nature of the universe or the nature of man—as though religion were simply the rational process of convincing people that one world view is more consistent than another.

The causes of great awakenings and the revivalism that is part of them seem to me to lie in more complex social and intellectual relationships. There can be no single cause for such wide-ranging transformations in thought and behavior upon which millions are ready to stake their lives.

Human institutions generally assume that there is a fixed or normative relationship of one man or group to another, of one generation to another. They prepare men for continuity, not change; they are the means by which men try to insure stability, order, regularity, and predictability in their lives. The child-rearing practices of the family, the husband-wife relationship, the legal system, the schools, the churches, the government, all assume permanent relationships and therefore impose sanctions on deviations from these social norms. But times change; the world changes; people change; and therefore institutions, world views, and cultural systems must change.

In this study I have adapted a formulation of cultural change described by the anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace in his essay

to
to
under
society

“Revitalization Movements” (*American Anthropology*, 1956). Because Wallace derived his theory from studies of so-called primitive peoples (preliterate and homogeneous), it is not totally applicable to the complex, pluralistic, and highly literate people of the United States. Wallace speaks of a single prophet's inaugurating a revitalization movement and transforming a whole society, because he is concerned with the Seneca Indians and the Handsome Lake religious movement. Nevertheless, the general configuration of his model can be applied to American history, and he himself explicitly says that it applies to movements as broad and complex as the rise of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Wesleyan Methodism.

I shall treat each of the five awakenings as a period of fundamental social and intellectual reorientation of the American belief-value system, behavior patterns, and institutional structure. But I shall also contend that these reorientations have revolved around a constant culture core of rather broadly stated beliefs. These beliefs (though radically altered in definition during each awakening) have provided the continuity that sustains the culture. In short, great awakenings are periods when the cultural system has had to be revitalized in order to overcome jarring disjunctions between norms and experience, old beliefs and new realities, dying patterns and emerging patterns of behavior. Each of the awakenings has to be studied as a process of social change taking place in various stages over a thirty- to forty-year period. The specific revivals and revival leaders within these broad periods generate or articulate not a single theological system (as Handsome Lake did for the Seneca's revitalization movement) but a set of commonly shared beliefs and practices that cut across the specific denominational lines that divide American ecclesiastical life. Denominational organizations, sects, and cults provide alternative strategies within the grand overall design of revitalization suitable to the various regional, class, color, ethnic, or educational groups within the nation as they cope with the broad necessities of social change.

While I should not like to be held strictly to the dating, I would roughly describe our periods of awakening as follows: the Puritan Awakening, 1610-40; the First Great Awakening (in America), 1730-60; the Second Great Awakening, 1800-1830; the Third Great Awakening, 1890-1920; and the Fourth Great Awakening,

1960-90(?). These generations of transition were confusing and tumultuous, but it is important at the outset to stress the positive, unifying results of each of them. The Puritan Awakening led to the beginning of constitutional monarchy in England; America's First Great Awakening led to the creation of the American republic; our Second Awakening led to the solidification of the Union and the rise of Jacksonian participatory democracy; our Third Awakening led to the rejection of unregulated capitalistic exploitation and the beginning of the welfare state; and our Fourth Awakening appears headed toward a rejection of unregulated exploitation of human-kind and of nature and toward a series of regional and international consortiums for the conservation and optimal use of the world's resources.

Robert Bellah in *The Broken Covenant* (1975) stated well the reasons why the study of a nation's changing religious system is at least as important as a study of its political or economic system and, hence, why a book on America's great awakenings is relevant to those who do not share the religious concerns of the current awakening:

It is one of the oldest of sociological generalizations that any coherent and viable society rests on a common set of moral understandings about good and bad, right and wrong, in the realm of individual and social action. It is almost as widely held that these common moral understandings must also in turn rest upon a common set of religious understandings that provide a picture of the universe in terms of which the moral understandings make sense. Such moral and religious understandings produce both a basic cultural legitimation for a society which is viewed as at least approximately in accord with them, and a standard of judgment for the criticism of a society that is seen as deviating too far from them.

Our five awakenings came about when, by the standards of our culture core and the experiences of daily life, our society deviated too far from the moral and religious understandings that legitimized authority in church and state. Not surprisingly, each of our awakenings in the past (and undoubtedly the same will hold for our current one as well) has been followed by a period of drastic (once, truly revolutionary) restructuring of our social, political, and economic institutions.

Awakenings as Revitalizations of Culture

A great awakening occurs, Wallace says, when a society finds that its day-to-day behavior has deviated so far from the accepted (traditional) norms that neither individuals nor large groups can honestly (consistently) sustain the common set of religious understandings by which they believe (have been taught) they should act. When parents can no longer adequately guide their own lives or their children's, when schools and churches provide conflicting ethical guidelines for economic and political behavior, and when courts impose sanctions upon acts commonly recognized as necessary (or accepted) deviations from old rules, then a period of profound cultural disorientation results. Then leaders lose their authority and institutions the respect essential for their effective operation. Then men begin to doubt their sense and their sanity and to search about for new gods, new ways to perceive and comprehend the power that guides the universe. If they are lucky, they will find leaders able to articulate a new accommodation with "reality," a new sense of reality, of identity, and of self-confidence, and, above all, a revision of their institutional structure that will return daily life to regularity and order. If they are unlucky, their culture will disintegrate: their birthrate will decline, psychic disorder will increase, and some wild ghost-dance religion will mark the final sputtering-out.

In the perception of this crisis of legitimacy and the effort to cope with it lies the beginning of what Wallace calls a revitalization movement. Such movements follow certain patterns of evolution. The first stage he calls "the period of individual stress," when, one by one, people lose their bearings, become psychically or physically ill, show what appear to be signs of neurosis, psychosis, or madness, and may either break out in acts of violence against family, friends, and authorities or become apathetic, catatonic, incapable of functioning. Emile Durkheim described this as "anomie," or loss of identity. Often anomic individuals destroy themselves by drugs, alcohol, or suicide. By their friends, and by society in general, these early victims of social disjunction are seen as deviants, misfits, persons too weak or too psychologically infirm to cope with life. They are sent to ministerial or psychological counselors (medicine

men) or to hospitals and asylums to be cured or to "readjust." But as the number of these individuals increases, the institutional bonds of society begin to snap. Families are the first to suffer as husbands and wives quarrel, divorce, and neglect or mistreat their children.

The second state of the revitalization movement Wallace calls the "period of cultural distortion." Gradually people conclude that the problems are not personal but are resulting from institutional malfunction. The churches do not offer solace and acceptance of the prevailing order; the schools cannot maintain discipline over their pupils; the police and courts cannot maintain orderly processes of action (they often infringe the very laws they are supposed to enforce); the hospitals cannot cure; the jails burst at their seams; and, finally, the government itself fails to function with the respect and authority it requires. Political rebellion in the streets and schismatic behavior in churches create civil and ecclesiastical disorder, to which the authorities in church and state can react only by more sanctions, more censures, more punishments.

In a viable, healthy, effectively functioning society there are always, of course, strains and stresses, but the system is prepared to handle them. Every culture has stress-reduction mechanisms built into it. For individuals these include appeals to God through churchly offices, the medical assistance of doctors, and various legitimate outlets for aggression in recreation or sports. But in a period of cultural distortion the stresses are abnormal, the ordinary stress-reduction techniques fail to help those who resort to them, and the decreasing efficiency of these mechanisms leads to severe and widespread personality disorders. Similarly, when a culture is functioning harmoniously, it is able to cope with major natural disorders (floods, earthquakes, epidemics) and to pull its people together in a common cause against external dangers (military invasion, subversion, economic dislocations). However, in periods of cultural distortion the populace is at odds with itself. The people cannot agree on proper measures for coping with dangers; instead of joining together to meet it, they quarrel and divide, often blaming those in authority. They refuse to unite on any scheme. They may even flout the establishment by unpatriotic acts, seeming thus to give aid and comfort to the enemy.

At this early stage of revitalization, Wallace notes, there almost always arises a nativist or traditionalist movement within the culture, that is, an attempt by those with rigid personalities or with much at stake in the older order to argue that the danger comes from the failure of the populace to adhere more strictly to the old beliefs, values, and behavior patterns. Generally these traditionalists are found among the older generations, those in authority or closely associated with the hierarchy in various institutions. In the ecclesiastical system they point out that God is displeased because the old rituals have not been adhered to; in the civil system they point to the rise of crime and insist that disrespect for law and order lies at the root of the problem. They mistake symptoms for causes. Their solution is double-edged. First they call for a return to the "old-time religion," "the ways of our fathers," and "respect for the flag" (or other symbols of the old order). Second, they tend to find scapegoats in their midst (aliens, witches, conspirators, foreigners, traitors) upon whom they can project their fear; then, by punishing these "outsiders," they can set an example of revived authority. The nativists, denying any cause for disorder, often blame the younger generation for unjustifiable deviation from the right ways. "Rigid persons," Wallace says, "apparently prefer to tolerate high levels of chronic stress rather than make systematic changes" in their ways of thought or behavior. They are reactionaries who look backward to a golden time, "the period of homeostasis," when the system worked; they insist that it will still work if only everyone will conform to the old standards.

Wallace used the term "mazeways" to describe the enculturated patterns of thought and behavior that guide individuals in their daily lives. At the basis of any culture is a generally understood and accepted world view by which each adult orients himself or herself to the family, the neighbors, the employers, the rulers, the social order in general. Through the child-rearing process the individual learns what his role is in his own town and what his place is in the universal scheme of things. He learns that he should act in conformity with man-made laws because they are the ways prescribed by the power that controls the universe. "Culture," as Wallace says, "depends relatively more on the ability of constituent

units autonomously to perceive the system of which they are a part, to receive and transmit information, and to act in accordance with the necessities of the system" than it depends on the compulsory authority of any "central administration." Each individual maintains "a mental image of the society and its culture" and knows how to act automatically in any normal or normally-abnormal situation. But in periods of cultural distortion these routine mazeways become blocked, and the individual, unable to react automatically, becomes stymied and frustrated. His normal responses do not lead to the expected results. Fear and anxiety increase as he struggles to find a solution that lies outside his accepted patterns of thought.

Robert K. Merton defines a stressful or anxiety-ridden situation as one in which there is a "dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations." Seymour M. Lipset speaks of the need for "a dynamic equilibrium" in any social system between autonomous action and changing experiences: "a complex society is under constant pressure to adjust its institutions to its central value system in order to alleviate strains created by changes in social relations." A religious revival or a great awakening begins when accumulated pressures for change produce such acute personal and social stress that the whole culture must break the crust of custom, crash through the blocks in the mazeways, and find new socially structured avenues along which the members of the society may pursue their course in mutual harmony with one another.

So stressful a situation inevitably produces profound and widespread emotional confusion and excitement. People must be found who can help to formulate a new consensus, create new mazeways. These new mazeways must be understood to be in harmony not only with daily experience but also with the way in which that experience is understood to reflect the realities of the mysterious power that controls the universe. As Clifford Geertz puts it, "In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing

by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life." This is what occurs in the religious excitement of an awakening.

The final stages of a great awakening arrive with the building of the new world view or mazeway and the restructuring of old institutions. The most rigid and reactionary nativists are seldom able to make this transition; they continue, as much as they can, to follow the old ways, but they now represent the minority, the dissident view in the new consensus. But many who at first adopted the traditionalist stance gradually drift into the new consensus when they find it more satisfactory or when they conclude that they cannot sustain the old order. Wallace puts forth as the third stage of the revitalization movement the appearance of a prophet who (like Moses, Mohammed, Martin Luther, or Handsome Lake) personally undergoes a traumatic religious experience that epitomizes the crisis of the culture. Often such prophets have hallucinatory visions or dreams (for them as vividly real as any physical experience) in which they directly confront the deity. From that confrontation they receive (or have revealed to them) new formulations of divine law. Thereafter the prophet reveals (as God's chosen messenger) this new way to his fellow men. Gradually he develops a band of disciples or followers, whom he appoints (or anoints), and they fan out through the social system to proselytize for the new religious order. Among the precepts they inculcate are not only theological statements regarding the nature and will of God and how he is to be worshiped but also (more or less explicitly) a new set of social norms for individual and group behavior. Those who come in contact with the prophet or his charismatic disciples are "touched" by the same divine experience, and this validates both the prophet's vision and the new mazeway he inculcates as God's will for his people.

There has been no single prophet in America's five awakenings and no national displacement of the Judeo-Christian tradition. There have, of course, been individual religious leaders, of great force, who founded new denominations or cults: Joseph Smith and Brigham Young among the Mormons; Ann Lee among the Shakers; Aimee Semple McPherson and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; William J. Seymour among the black Pentecostals; William Miller and Ellen White among the Adventists;

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science; Charles Taze Russell founder of Jehovah's Witnesses. These leaders have sustained a core of believers, not by repudiating Christianity, but by supplementing or modifying it. They all fall within the Judeo-Christian tradition in major aspects of their theology, and, despite some eccentricities, they generally conform to the prevailing codes of behavior. They have not deflected the mainstream of American culture and, in fact, generally claim to represent a better version of it.

America's revitalistic movements consequently fall outside Wallace's model, and it is useful to cite Peter Worsley's work *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1968) to supplement it. Worsley argues that "charisma—sociologically viewed—is a social relationship, not an attribute of individual personality or a mystical quality." Charisma provides "more than an abstract ideological rationale. . . . It is a legitimation grounded in a relationship of loyalty and identification in which the leader is followed simply because he embodies values in which the followers have an 'interest' . . . The followers . . . in a dialectical way, create, by selecting them out, the leaders who in turn *command* on the basis of this newly-accorded legitimacy. . . . He articulates and consolidates their aspirations." He specifies and converts aspirations into "beliefs which can be validated by reference to experience." Worsley maintains that the message is more important than the medium in revitalization. "It is indeed highly probable that a prophetic movement will generate not a centrally focussed, single authority-structure but a fissiparous dispersion of leadership in the persons of numerous leaders, particularly where inspiration is open to all."

Worsley's view seems particularly relevant to American religious leadership. Because we have had a voluntaristic religious and political structure, together with fundamental religious freedom, leadership in our awakenings has been widely dispersed, differing in emphasis or tone in different regions and groups. We shall have to seek for the common elements among a wide variety of prophets in each awakening and choose as key spokespersons those who articulate and consolidate the new world view for the mainstream majority—in short, those whose appeal is interdenominational rather than denominational. Such persons have never repudiated the older world views entirely; instead, they have claimed merely to

shed new light on them, that is, to look upon old truths from a new perspective.

The concept of "new light" from God is intrinsic in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which thus has within itself the power of self-renewal. Each of the Old Testament prophets, though castigating God's chosen for departing from the old ways, shed new light on those traditions. Jesus of Nazareth, the last of these prophets, urged the Jews to live more truly by the old laws, not to abandon them. Martin Luther claimed to be returning the Christian churches to their original apostolic truths in his reformation of Catholicism. When John Robinson bade the Pilgrims godspeed from Holland to New England, he reminded them that their dissent from Anglican orthodoxy was justified: "The Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word." The belief that "God has yet further light to shed upon his revelations" has been a constant theme of English and American revivalism. Part of the strength of the new lights in every awakening comes from their placing the burden of corruption upon those who are illuminated by an older, dimmer light. Orthodoxy in America has been progressive or syncretic, offering new definitions for old truths. God is, of course, always and everywhere the same, but his spirit manifests itself in new ways to meet new needs. It is the old lights in each of our awakenings (variously called "Old Sides," "Old School," "Old divinity," or "Fundamentalists") who have clung to the letter and ignored the spirit of God's will. Their reliance on dead formalism and shibboleths that have lost their meaning has enabled the new lights to capture the imagination of a confused people and lead them out of the old churches and into new ones, constantly revitalizing the mazes.

There is no conservative tradition in America because God is not a conservative. God is an innovator. American culture is thus always in the making but never complete. It will be completed, according to one of our most cherished cultural myths, at the end of human time, the beginning of God's Kingdom, the coming of the millennium. Exactly how and when that will occur is itself constantly subject to new light. America, the New World, has easily become a metaphor for the New Eden; it is "the new Garden in the West," where, unspoiled by old and corrupt institutions (monarchy,

an established church, a nobility), man might create a perfect moral order with perfect moral freedom. From its first settlements, not only in Pilgrim Plymouth but in almost every colony, America has been a utopian experiment in achieving the Kingdom of God on earth. Our Revolution was justified on these terms in 1776. Our history has been essentially the history of one long millenarian movement. Americans, in their cultural mythology, are God's chosen, leading the world to perfection. Every awakening has revived, revitalized, and redefined that culture core.

To return to our model of cultural reorientation, Wallace says that the fourth state of revitalization begins when the prophet (or prophets) of the new-light vision begin to attract the more flexible (usually the younger) members of the society, who are willing to experiment with new mazes or life-styles. These persons "try out various limited maze changes in their personal lives," Wallace says, in order to relieve the stresses they feel. They leave home or school and travel to other parts of the country. They join informal groups trying out new communal (or utopian) forms of social relationship. Often they experiment with new economic, political, and familial arrangements or new sexual mores. Every awakening has brought new kinds of "communes" or communities of this sort. But some of these experiments become psychologically regressive, violent and destructive. There is a negative side to every new-light movement, and often the most pietistic and perfectionist new lights become the most destructive. They make transvaluation of all values the measure of their separatism from a corrupt order. They practice as truth what formerly was called demonic; they deify their leaders, invert Christian rituals, denigrate the individual. Eventually the more moderate new lights repudiate such extremists in order to establish their own stability and order.

But even among the moderate new lights there is at first considerable emotionalism (or enthusiasm); many are carried away in transports of hysteria by their vision of God in revivalistic meetings. It is considered a measure of one's commitment to the new ways that he or she experience a violent psychological break with the past through a direct confrontation with God (under the aegis of the new prophets). So profound are these confrontations that the convert from the old to the new way of belief feels that

God's power has totally transformed him, regenerated him, made him a new man. From that cataclysmic conversion experience he dates his "new birth," and many see the world thereafter through such different eyes that they seem to friends and relatives to be truly reborn. Their behavioral patterns are transformed. Frequently these persons conclude that God's spirit has come to dwell in them, for how else can they explain the different aspect in which they view the world?

In all awakenings the concept of divine immanence as opposed to divine transcendence becomes a central issue. The Calvinist tradition, so central to American culture, emphasized the separateness of God from his creation and the separation of man from God (through Adam's fall). However, in times of cultural stress, when institutionalized religion is unable to sustain, even among the faithful, a sense of regular communion with God in formal church rites, the distance between Creator and created becomes intolerably great; men sink in fear and loneliness. Then the pendulum swings to the pole of divine immanence (dating back, perhaps, to more primitive, animistic, or pantheistic religious feelings). God's absence from the churches is compensated for by his spiritual presence in nature; regular churchly practices begin to appear as a barrier rather than as a bridge to God. People seek him elsewhere. The assumption grows that he is more really present in this world than his priests have let on and more readily available to all. He has left the temple and entered the world around it. God's spirit, sensing man's need, makes itself known to man in new ways, appearing unbidden in visions and speaking through even the most humble people. In an awakening, the gap between this world and the next disappears. The spiritual and physical worlds intermingle. God can be discerned as easily in a flower, a blade of grass, or a child as in a church. He can be spoken to directly, confronted personally, and his spirit takes up its dwelling in all of creation. God is all in all.

By the same token, the spiritual power of evil also becomes more immanent. The distraught see God and the devil locked in conflict for men's souls; both are at arm's length, seeking to possess men with their power. The most frightening, and heartening, of spiritual possibilities seem imminent. Then logic yields to intuition

as a source of knowledge or truth; self-discipline yields to impulse, science to magic, formal worship to vision. Man having lost control of himself and his world, other forces seek to control him and it. Anything is possible.

In this crisis the new-light prophets and their apostles offer a vision of God as a guardian spirit, capable of helping those who seek it, ready to define new rules of conduct to bring back order and tranquillity. But they also preach that, if God's new rules are not adhered to, some terrible catastrophe—the end of the world itself—will surely follow. Part of the American culture core has been its myth that we are a "covenanted people" (successors to the apostate Jewish nation as God's chosen people). As such, God has a special interest in helping, and a special reason for punishing, us. This covenant applies both to individuals and to the nation as a whole. But if each does his or her part to adhere to the new rules, then God promises, according to his prophets, a glorious new day of peace, fraternity, and perfection—a time in which all human needs will be met, both physical and spiritual. Thus the experience of hearing, yielding to, and experiencing this call is one of ecstatic release from the burden of guilt and fear.

The revivalism of an awakening is the ritual process by which this transformation or regeneration takes places both individually and en masse. All revitalization movements are replete with symbols of death and rebirth—death to the old Adam, the old errors, the old sins, the old ways, and rebirth into bodily rejuvenation and spiritual renewal. A revival meeting is at once a funeral service and a christening. In many cases this rebirth includes the healing of old bodily ailments, and faith healing has been a constant feature of revivalism. In extreme perfectionist cults the claim has been made that the converted will never die.

Wallace points out, however, that successful prophets never "lose their sense of personal identity." They bear God's message but are not God incarnate. To revitalize their society, their message must spread beyond them geographically and chronologically. This means that they must skillfully argue down the old-light opposition and skillfully keep their followers from total civil suppression. They must learn to distinguish between what is God's and what is Caesar's. In addition, they must be able to organize their followers

and routinize their charisma. The spontaneous, ecstatic experience of a revival meeting during an awakening must be canalized, ritualized, linked to regular services. The followers who hang on the revivalist's words and long to be in his presence must learn to sublimate that feeling in regular church services under anointed apostles, and these in turn must create means to raise up successors from the gifted laity. In each of our awakenings the successful new-light prophets have achieved this important organizational transition. When the Puritan movement died, the evangelistic spirit within it was reborn in Congregationalism and Presbyterianism and was later revitalized by the Baptists, Methodists, Campbellites, Disciples of Christ, and by Progressive, Liberal Protestants.

Finally, in the last phase of a revitalization movement, the prophets succeed in winning over that large group of undecided folk who, though they have not themselves experienced the ecstasy of conversion, have been sufficiently impressed with the doctrines and behavior of the new lights to see the relevance of their new guidelines and to accept their practices. Even many of the former old lights are won over to the new consensus in this final stage. Now control of the old religious institutions passes to the new leadership. From the thesis and antithesis of the revival generation a new synthesis emerges. But the old light never quite dies, and the process is never finished.

As the new lights become dominant and the mazes are cleared, there is considerable revision of the institutional structure, often through political action. Familial patterns change, sex roles alter, schools reform their curriculums and teaching methods, courts revise their interpretations, governments enact new laws and reorganize their recruitment of civil servants. It frequently happens that the spiritual fervor released by this unblocking of the mazes, this renewal of the covenant, produces an uncontrollable effort to reform the most basic aspects of the older social order: the relations of sons to fathers or husbands to wives, new concepts of property rights, new economic practices. It was through following the new guidelines of our revitalization movements that Americans abandoned allegiance to the king, abolished human slavery, regulated business enterprise, empowered labor unions, and is now

trying to equalize the rights of women, blacks, Indians, and other minorities.

More often than not this reunited sense of national millenarian purpose has led Americans into war in the effort to speed up the fulfillment of their manifest destiny. It might be more accurately said that our periods of great awakening have produced wars rather than resulted from them. All our wars, like Cromwell's against Charles I, have been understood as holy crusades against error within and evil without. Cromwell first destroyed the monarchy and its Cavaliers and then tried to eradicate the Celtic Catholics in Ireland. The colonists, after the First Awakening, first defeated the French and Indians and then threw off the corrupt king and Parliament. The Americans, after the Second Awakening, first eliminated the Indians and Mexicans and British from the West and then attacked those who would secede from the covenant in order to uphold black slavery. At the height of their Third Awakening, Americans stopped attacking big business and turned against "the Hun" to save the world for democracy; the war against Naziism was simply a continuation of that effort. From our Fourth Great Awakening we may expect a similar crusade, unless the new light of this revitalization drastically alters the millenarian concept of manifest destiny (as it fortunately shows signs of doing).

Wallace concludes his essay on "Revitalization Movements" by noting their drive toward "extensive cultural changes" and their implementation of "an enthusiastic embarkation on some organized program" of reform, which generally includes "projects of further social, political, and economic reform." This being so, our effort in the following pages cannot help being a rather cursory summary of the whole of American history, so closely intertwined are revivalism and awakenings with our culture.