

TIMOTHY DWIGHT AND THE YALE REVIVAL OF 1802

by

Seth A. Folkers

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INTRODUCTION

Yale University in the 1790s had degenerated into a hotbed of radical ideologies, a place where unruly young men were throwing away “shackles” of every sort, governmental, moral and religious, and openly embracing the ideas of the French Enlightenment. Yet by 1802 it had experienced a reviving work of the Spirit of God so great that an eyewitness could write home to his mother, “Yale College is a little temple: prayer and praise seem to be the delight of the greater part of the students.”¹ The College Church that in 1799 had only four or five undergraduate members, by August of 1802 had seen sixty-three new members added that year alone; out of a student body of 230, about a third had been converted during that revival; and thirty-five went into the ministry, impacting the nation in a profound way.²

What had brought about such a marvelous transformation? Was it that the patient “gardening”³ of Timothy Dwight, a staunch champion of biblical authority, now in his seventh year as president, had finally borne fruit? If so, what had he done right, and what can we learn from his example? What other forces, outside or within, may have contributed to this work of God? What biblical principles about revival are illustrated by these events? These are the questions we will seek to answer.

¹ Kenneth Silverman, *Timothy Dwight* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 111. This is a quote from Benjamin Silliman, then a tutor at the College. He himself was converted in that revival. He remained a committed Christian, and served there as Professor of Chemistry for decades.

² Chauncey A. Goodrich, “Narrative of Revivals of Religion in Yale College,” *American Quarterly Register* 10 (Feb. 1838): 296. Goodrich was a student converted in a revival at Yale in 1808. He later became not only a long-standing professor at the College, but a beloved and influential “religious adviser” to the students for many years. See Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Religion and Learning at Yale: the Church of Christ in the College and University, 1757-1957* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 85, 140-41. Goodrich willingly took it upon himself to research and document the official history of the Yale revivals, to most of which he was an eyewitness.

³ This terminology is borrowed from Charles E. Cuninghame, *Timothy Dwight, 1752-1857: a Biography* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), 334.

TIMOTHY DWIGHT

His Background

As the oldest son of a daughter of Jonathan Edwards, great things might have been hoped for Timothy Dwight, but they did not come by accident. His mother, a godly and intelligent woman with decided views, was in earnest about her responsibility towards her son. She taught him early, not only to read—he was easily reading the Bible at four—but to love learning. At eight years old his competency at Latin and Greek enabled him to pass the Yale entrance exam (though he was held back from entering until the ripe age of thirteen, and spent the intervening years under her tutelage voraciously devouring history and geography⁴).

Yet, it has been truly remarked that “Great boys rarely make great men.” Genius itself has contributed little to the benefit of mankind. It was not so much genius, but *discipline*, that characterized Dwight: for example, during his years as a Yale upperclassman he would arise an hour before prayers⁵ to parse one hundred lines of Homer by candlelight. He was appointed a tutor (an important faculty position in those days) at Yale after receiving his Master’s degree at nineteen, and devoted fourteen hours a day to teaching and studying. As a teacher, he was remarkably gifted,⁶ and well-loved and respected by his pupils—not only was his knowledge extraordinarily broad and deep, but he had diligently developed his skills of communication.

So assiduous was Dwight in his academic pursuits that he utterly neglected the physical needs of his body, and destroyed his health by the age of twenty-two. Death seemed imminent. He was forced to leave his collegiate duties and return home, where he applied himself with such characteristic diligence to the recovery of his health that in two

⁴ See Cuningham, 16-19.

⁵ Prayers began at 5:30 a.m. in the winter and 4:30 a.m. in the summer.

⁶ Many students and firsthand observers would later testify to his exceptional ability as a teacher, and an influencer of young men. See “Memoir of the Life of the Author” in Timothy Dwight, *Theology: Explained and Defended, in a Series of Sermons* (New Haven: T. Dwight and Son, 1839), 1:46; Benjamin Silliman, *A Sketch of the Life and Character of President Dwight* (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith and Co., 1817), 22-24; S. G. Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime, or Men and Things I Have Seen* (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1856), 353.

years he was able to return to Yale as tutor, and thereafter made exercise and proper nourishment the subjects of his diligent care, just as much as his educational endeavors.⁷ Most importantly, this trial turned his mind to eternity, and a testimony of personal conversion was the result.⁸

Dwight's marriage followed shortly thereafter, and then a commission as chaplain in the Revolutionary Army; but after only a year's service, the death of his father called him home to assume the care of his mother and many siblings, in addition to his own fledgling family. He worked hard and persevered faithfully through very trying circumstances, both financially and socially,⁹ and earned the respect of the entire community, so much so that he was elected to the state legislature. Although a promising career in politics was open to him, that was not his calling. He had already been filling various pulpits, and with his family reestablished he accepted a pastorate in Greenfield Hill, CT in 1783.

While back in Northampton, Dwight had started a successful school that even drew away students from Yale.¹⁰ In Greenfield Hill, to supplement his insufficient income, he founded an academy that became renowned throughout the nation. When the death of Ezra Stiles necessitated a new president for Yale in 1795, Dwight was the clear choice.

His Presidency

Dwight faced a daunting task. One man expressed the view of many others at that time when he said that the college was then in a state of "lamentable declension."¹¹ It had

⁷ His eyesight, however, had been severely damaged beyond repair. For the rest of his life he had to depend almost entirely on others to read to him.

⁸ Cuninghame, 49.

⁹ His father's conscience had not allowed him to break his oath of allegiance to the British government, though he was sympathetic to the Revolutionary cause: thus he was appreciated by neither Patriots nor Tories. He died in the attempt to establish a new settlement along the Mississippi river in Louisiana. As a result, the Dwight family experienced not only social rejection, but even physical harm from "Patriots."

¹⁰ In fact, he had been recommended for the office of president at Yale in 1777, but he was still quite young, and Dr. Ezra Stiles was chosen. Stiles came to regard Dwight as a hated and dangerous rival. They also were at odds in their approach to church membership and conversion, in that Stiles was an "Old Light" and Dwight a "New Light" Congregationalist (like his grandfather, Jonathan Edwards). See Cuninghame, 95-97.

¹¹ Gardiner Spring, *An Oration* (New York: Dodge and Sayre, 1817), 23. The extent of this declension is questioned by recent scholars, such as Edmund S. Morgan, "Ezra Stiles and Timothy Dwight," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, vol. 72 (Oct. 1957 - Dec. 1960): 101-117, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25080517> (accessed March 6, 2015). It is indeed an important consideration that many such statements were made by those eulogizing Dwight (such as this by Gardiner Spring), who would

only 110 students, one professor and three tutors,¹² and discipline was lax. Most significant was what Lyman Beecher later recalled as the “most ungodly state” of the college, full of “intemperance, profanity, gambling and licentiousness.”¹³ Rampant unbelief, and a fascination with such opponents of the Bible as Voltaire, Paine and Rousseau, characterized this school, as indeed most all colleges in America at that time. Christianity skulked in the shadows and infidelity reigned supreme among the students.

Truly, Dwight had been raised up for “such a time as this.” The story, related particularly by Lyman Beecher, of how Dwight immediately challenged the students to an open discussion of the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture is well-known. While he was still at Greenfield Hill, the Fairfield Association of clergymen, of which he was a part, had pushed for a statewide resolution establishing a yearly message supporting the authority of Scripture. Dwight’s *Discourse on the Genuineness and Authenticity of the New Testament*, delivered in 1793, had earned him wide reputation as a champion of Scriptural authority. His “strategy . . . rested upon the conviction that atheistical philosophy could never stand against truth.”¹⁴ Chauncey Goodrich, historian of the Yale revivals, writes:

The accession of Dr. Dwight to the presidency, at this critical period, was a signal blessing to the institution. His commanding talents, his fervid eloquence, his powerful reasonings in behalf of Christianity, both in the lecture-room and the chapel, checked the tendency to skepticism which had begun to prevail in college, and gave dignity to the cause of spiritual religion, which had been regarded by too many with contempt and derision.¹⁵

be most disposed to exalt his accomplishments by also denigrating his predecessor. These recent scholars do not deny that Dwight advanced the college to heights far beyond what it had previously known, but they tend to view the administration of Ezra Stiles more favorably than Dwight’s eulogizers did. Morgan believes that the college’s particularly low estate in 1795 was a temporary fluctuation in a regular cycle of ups and downs (115-16). Nevertheless, the chorus of praise for Dwight’s administration by his contemporaries is quite strong, and the school was undisputably transformed under his expert leadership into one of the leading educational institutions in the nation (see Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Religion and Learning at Yale: the Church of Christ in the College and University, 1757-1957* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958], 54-56, 82).

¹² Charles Roy Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut* (1942; reprint, [Hamden, CT?]: Archon Books, 1968), 7.

¹³ Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1863), 43. The full accuracy of Beecher’s remembrances has been strongly challenged, even being labeled the “Beecher myth.” This will be dealt with somewhat more in the next section.

¹⁴ Cuningham, 123.

¹⁵ Chauncey A. Goodrich, 294.

Dwight's effectiveness rested not merely upon his extensive knowledge, extraordinary eloquence and doughty logic, although these were powerful tools. Nor should his commanding presence and winsome manner, often alluded to, be given over much credit, though certainly very valuable.¹⁶ Dwight had an intense concern and love for the students, and, while holding high aspirations for them academically, his "highest aim" (according to one who was tutor and professor under him), "beyond all comparison," was "to see them pious and virtuous, and the hopeful heirs of immortal life."¹⁷

He immediately began to take every opportunity to pour himself into the lives of the students, functioning as Professor of Divinity and of Belles-Lettres and Oratory, and as tutor of the senior class, in addition to his presidential responsibilities.¹⁸ He was the regular chapel preacher, pursuing a regular four-year rotation of messages on theology in his morning messages. Beecher called him a "revival preacher."¹⁹ One of his critics notes that "his constant interaction with students and his control over their theological instruction made him an omnipresent influence on campus."²⁰ At some times more than others, but gradually increasing, this benign influence began to be seen.

The influence of Dwight was not limited to Yale. A younger contemporary tells us, "He was unquestionably, at that time, the most conspicuous man in New England, filling a larger space in the public eye, and exerting a greater influence than any other individual. No man, since his time, has held an equal ascendancy, during his day and generation, in New England—except perhaps Daniel Webster."²¹

¹⁶ S. G. Goodrich describes his "full, round, manly form," his "noble aspect," his "manner somewhat authoritative and emphatic"; and says, "his voice was one of the finest I ever heard from the pulpit—clear, hearty, sympathetic—and entering into the soul like the middle notes of an organ" (348-49). Lyman Beecher (p. 44), a junior when Dwight came, tells of the "sweetest" smile with which Dwight always met him, then exclaims, "Oh, how I loved him!"

¹⁷ Silliman, 18-19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁹ Beecher, 69. He was well-known and much-sought-after as a preacher, always equal to, and even surpassing, that which the occasion demanded (Silliman, 20). See also "Memoirs," 52-53, concerning his power in preaching.

²⁰ Layne Johnson, "Yale College as 'a little temple': Timothy Dwight, the Revival of 1802, and an Evolving Relationship between Liberalism and Religion," Yale Department of History, Yale Senior Essay (April 2, 2012), 8, <http://history.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Johnson%2C%20Layne%20senior%20essay%202012.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2015). He also writes that this "gave [Dwight] the opportunity to mold constantly both the educational and spiritual lives of students" (20)—an opportunity he used to the fullest.

²¹ S. G. Goodrich, 348.

THE YALE REVIVAL OF 1802

Dwight's Influence

The degree of the influence rightly attributed to Dwight in the revival of 1802, and in the Second Great Awakening in general, has been hotly contested in recent years. Edmund Morgan opened the case, arguing that historians have unwisely given too much credence to Lyman Beecher's senile recollections of his student days, particularly since the perspective of a student is not the best judge of a president's performance. He claims that "the revival spread from other churches to the college and not vice versa."²² A Yale senior, Layne Johnson, in a paper selected for publication on the Yale Department of History website, insists that the Second Great Awakening was "spawned through the grass-roots efforts of local ministers, not fiery traveling preachers or a hierarchical clergy [such as Dwight]."²³ Indeed, a study of the facts does seem to bear out both of those statements, as far as they go, indicating that some historians have perhaps given too much credit to Dwight.²⁴

It is a striking fact, however, that Dwight's contemporaries—including those closest to the happenings—perceived him as having a great influence on the revivals, both in his leadership and his preaching, not only at Yale but throughout New England. Interestingly, Silverman, who references Morgan's work and is quite unsympathetic toward Dwight, concludes, "But whether the revivals in fact traveled to Yale or from it, nearly everyone in Dwight's time felt that he generated them."²⁵ Johnson himself quotes five separate men, including Lyman Beecher (originator of what he calls the "Beecher myth"²⁶), who all gave similar testimony concerning Dwight (all of the other four *before* Beecher's *Autobiography* was published). In fact, these men were only representative, for Johnson writes that "these five men . . . represent a *sampling* of those at Yale whose feelings

²² Morgan, 109.

²³ Johnson, 11.

²⁴ Johnson (p. 4, note 14) lists several of these, although he is clearly misinterpreting Keller, and may be doing the same to others.

²⁵ Silverman, 112.

²⁶ Johnson, 4.

towards Dwight and strong religious connections led them to praise him with fervency.”²⁶ He believes that they were *biased* because of how much Dwight had influenced *them*. Silliman, for example “had joined the College Church under Dwight ... during the Revival.”²⁸ However, since Dwight’s actual influence is the issue at question here, is not the presence of such a large number of “biased” reporters rather significant?

Another separate testimony is that of S. G. Goodrich, who did not attend Yale, but recalled in his *Recollections of a Lifetime* that in his youth he was brought up to look upon Dr. Dwight as “second only to St. Paul.”²⁹ Writing in 1854, he tells us,

His name is still honored: many of his works still live. ... but [during his lifetime] he was regarded with a species of idolatry by those around him. Even the pupils of the college under his presidential charge—those who are not usually inclined to hero-worship—almost adored him. To this day, those who had the good fortune to receive their education under his auspices, look back upon it as a great era in their lives.³⁰

Indeed, all one must do is to read some of the messages which Dwight preached at Yale in his theological series to realize the truth of one student’s statement: “It was morally impossible to sit four years under such preaching, so convincing in argument, so solemn and earnest in appeal, and so eloquent in delivery, without being instructed and profited, at least in some degree.”³¹ This writer was himself stirred by the messages he read (on the nature and duration of the punishment of the wicked),³² such that he thought he could hardly have endured it if he were not sure of his eternal salvation. Small wonder, with such messages as these, that many were converted—one wonders how any heart could be so hard as not to flee to Christ for salvation! “How forcible are right words!” Such were Dwight’s. They were compassionate, yet unsparing, appealing with power

²⁷ Johnson, 18, emphasis added. These five include Lyman Beecher; Benjamin Silliman (already mentioned); Roger Minot Sherman, student under Stiles and tutor under Dwight, and later Judge of the Supreme Court in CT, who credits Dwight with restoring the character of the school and turning back the infidelity so prevalent there and throughout the state (16); Gardiner Spring, a freshman in 1802, fully joins in this chorus (see Spring, 28); so does Heman Humphrey, from the same class (although not there as a freshman), a Revival historian. Morgan also mentions another, Matthew Dutton.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹ S. G. Goodrich, 349.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 353.

³¹ Heman Humphrey, *Revival Sketches and Manual* (New York: American Tract Society, 1859), 198.

³² Timothy Dwight, *Theology: Explained and Defended, in a Series of Sermons* (London: William Baynes and Son, 1822), 5:456-82.

both to the mind and the emotion with their fine argumentation and soul-stirring depiction. J. Edwin Orr, respected historian of revival, while noting other factors, attributed great influence to the preaching of Dwight.³³

Nor was Dwight lacking the spiritual power that comes only through prayer. He was known for his prayers, in which humility and spirituality stood forth prominently.³⁴ While his private prayers he kept very private, the nature of his public prayers would seem to indicate a man who spent much time with the Lord in secret. The writer of his “Memoirs” eulogizes, “Entirely free from form, from tiresome repetition, and from lukewarmness, and under the influence of the deepest abasement and prostration of soul, his heart appeared to be melted, and ‘his lips to be touched as with a live coal from off the altar,’ when he was engaged in this sublime and delightful duty.”³⁵ Chauncey Goodrich attributed the visible beginning of revival at Yale a few years later, in 1807, to Dr. Dwight’s burdened cry in the evening prayers,³⁶ after which a message preached by him the next day was “the instrumental cause of the revival which followed” (in which Goodrich himself—a freshman at the time—united with the church³⁷).

Finally, Dwight’s theology had a significant impact on revival far beyond the walls of Yale College: he was very influential in the shift from viewing revival as something surprising and unpredictable, to something that could be sought and prepared for.³⁸ While

³³ J. Edwin Orr, *Campus Aflame*, ed. Richard Owen Roberts (Wheaton: International Awakening Press, 1994), 39-40.

³⁴ Silliman, 21

³⁵ “Memoirs,” 52. Also see Chauncey A. Goodrich, 297, who records the words of one student, that “President Dwight was always remarkable for humility of manner in prayer.”

³⁶ Chauncey A. Goodrich, 297-98. He writes, “It seemed as if the subduing power of the gospel was doubly upon him. There was such an apparent coming down—such an obviously holy prostration of soul, as indicated that the Spirit of God was with him. He spake as if ‘dust and ashes’ were addressing the Eternal on his throne. The burden of his prayer was, ‘an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God in the dispensations of his grace.’ And yet he made that solemn truth the foundation of one of the most appropriate arguments ever presented to a throne of mercy for a revival of religion. Never did a minister plead more fervently for his people—never a father more importunately for his children, than he did for his pupils before him. Nor were the wants of the churches, nor the influence of a revival in the college upon the Redeemer’s kingdom in the land—in the world, forgotten.” This calls to mind the revival principle that **“Repentance from wicked ways and faith in the promises of God, expressed in beseeching prayer, are keys to obtaining revival.”**

³⁷ Gabriel, 85. This was probably a sign of his recent conversion, though possibly he had already been saved but not committed.

³⁸ Keith J. Hardman, *The Spiritual Awakeners: American Revivalists from Solomon Stoddard to D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 128.

still a staunch Calvinist, he represented a shift (termed “Neo-Edwardean”³⁹) in emphasizing the responsibility of man alongside the sovereignty of God. Hardman highlights the importance of this: “Dwight prepared the way for free will by trying to break the logjam of human inability behind which Calvinism had been stultified. In effect, he enhanced the possible role of man’s choice in salvation.... [This new emphasis] would come to fruition in the teachings of Charles Grandison Finney and Nathaniel W. Taylor.”⁴⁰

While we cannot and will not know this side of eternity the degree to which Dwight was responsible, from the human standpoint, for the revivals at Yale and beyond, without a doubt Timothy Dwight was a man raised up and mightily used by God for the furtherance of his kingdom.⁴¹

Other Influences

Notwithstanding all that has been said concerning the impact made by Timothy Dwight, we recognize that he was only one small vessel used by God in His great work. As in Israel of old God raised up leaders in answer to the prayers of His people, so also the people of God were calling out to Him for a reviving work, and experienced it in a mighty way, some time before it reached Yale College.

The alarm over the state of Christianity was widespread if not universal among American churches in the final decades of the 1700s. Concerning the Congregationalists, Keller writes, “Not only the rise of infidelity and of the more polite forms of heterodoxy [i.e., Unitarianism and Universalism], but also an all too prevalent indifference to religion alarmed the Congregational leaders.”⁴² One of these leaders, Ammi Robbins, an older minister, exhorted in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, “If God’s people really de-

³⁹ Keller, 33-34. Although Dwight was not a friend of the Baptist denomination, Lyman Beecher recalls (p. 69) that they studied Andrew Fuller’s theology at Yale, along with Jonathan Edwards and Bellamy. Since Fuller was a contemporary of Dwight, this is especially interesting. Fuller is well-known for leading the British Baptists into a more balanced “Calvinism.”

⁴⁰ Hardman, 127.

⁴¹ As the author of the hymn, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord,” this was no doubt the earnest desire of Timothy Dwight’s heart.

⁴² Keller, 22. Cf. Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *A History of American Christianity* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1897), 219.

sire he should grant them a gracious visit, they must humbly *ask* for it.”⁴³

This they did. “In 1794 and 1795 there was state-wide consideration of a proposal ... for concerts of prayer for revivals.”⁴⁴ Many of the county associations began regular (e.g., monthly) days of special prayer. Nor were other denominations lax in this endeavor. The Stonington Baptist Association of CT “rejoice[d],” in a letter sent out in 1798, that “many of our brethren of different denominations have united in a concert of prayer”⁴⁵ The Methodists also called for prayer in 1795.

Surely God would not ignore the cry of His people (“God responds predictably when men respond to Him,” says Dr. Rick Flanders). In 1797 the first of many revivals came, in local churches all over the state. (The Baptists seem to have been the first to taste of it.⁴⁶) These revivals were “quiet and subdued, unaccompanied by exuberance and physical manifestations.”⁴⁷ “There was an insistence on calm, austere behavior.”⁴⁸ They met in houses or churches. Among the Congregationalists the only itinerant minister was Asahel Nettleton (a graduate of Yale under Dwight); the settled ministers were in charge, and invited co-laborers as they saw fit. Strikingly, these revivals seemed to be largely unaffected by contemporary “political, economic, and military developments,” occurring both during times of economic trouble and of great prosperity, during the War of 1812 and the during the peace that followed.⁴⁹ Individual churches saw hundreds of new converts added to their number.

By 1801 the number of undergraduate members of the church at Yale had increased

⁴³ Keller, 50, quoting the *Conn. Evang. Mag.*, I, 340.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 191. The continuation of the quote is as follows: “... and meet at stated seasons, to offer up their fervant [*sic*] supplications, that God would avert his judgments; prevent the spread of error and iniquity—and pour out his spirit in plentiful effusions on our guilty land.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 196. G. Adolf Koch, in his interesting book, *Republican Religion: the American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (1933; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), points out the ironic fact that it was not the Federalist Congregationalists (who viewed the Republicanism of Jefferson as diametrically opposed to Christianity) and Episcopalians that turned the tide of Infidelity in the nation, but the Republican Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians (p. 275.). The Baptists were a significant force in CT in those days. Even in 1795, before the commencement of the revivals, they numbered sixty churches and about 3500 members (Keller, p. 11)—are there that many sound Baptist churches in CT today?

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

from only a handful in 1799 to about twenty (probably due in large part to the influence of the revivals in their home churches⁵⁰). But Yale had not yet been touched by the revival, and this was a real burden and grief to some of the students. Chauncey Goodrich records the testimony of Dr. Noah Porter, a saved student at Yale during that time:

The grace which some of them had witnessed, and of which they all were informed, in churches abroad, they longed to see in the college. That God would pour out his Spirit upon it, was an object of their distinct and earnest desire, and their fervent and united prayers. For many months they were accustomed to meet weekly ‘in an upper room,’ and ‘with one accord,’ ‘for prayer and supplication’ for this object. Those meetings are still remembered by survivors who attended them, as seasons of unwonted tenderness of heart, freedom of communication, and wrestling with God.⁵¹

In March of 1802 the first “indications of a gracious answer to their prayers, began to appear.” In the final ten days of the college term there were “not less than fifty . . . serious inquirers.” All were amazed, both those who had been praying and those who did not understand what was transpiring. “The reigning impression was, ‘Surely God is in this place.’”⁵²

Although it was thought that the dispersion of the student body to their homes in the midst of this revival might bring an end to it, the reverse seems to have been true. They gladdened the hearts of family and churches with the news of it, enlisted their prayers for the college, and many were much helped by the careful direction of godly parents and pastors. When they again reconvened for classes, the revival continued. By the time it ended, about one third of the student body were hopefully converted, with almost half that number answering a call to the ministry.⁵³

⁵⁰ Orr (p. 42) brings out some statistics concerning the influence of godly homes even upon those who were converted in the revival of 1802. Out of the sixty-three who joined the church, fifty-five had “pious parents.” Later revivals at Yale told a similar story.

⁵¹ Chauncey A. Goodrich, 295.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 296. Some observations by Goodrich concerning what followed are helpful. He notes that, due to the usual student turnover, the effects of the revival upon the College itself rather quickly began to fade. In fact, he reports that the College Church was down to a mere fifteen undergrad students by 1807-08. He stated it as his opinion that this could be attributed to the fact that “there was less systematic effort, at that time, to promote revivals of religion, than has since existed in our churches. *They seem to have been regarded rather as a blessing to be waited for, than a work to be commenced, first in the hearts of God’s people, and then among the impenitent around them, through the faithful labors of awakened Christians, in absolute reliance, of course on the Spirit of God to produce the desired result.* The very magnitude of the blessing so recently experienced, may have led to a kind of despair of its speedy recurrence, which checked

CONCLUSION

The results of these widespread revivals cannot be measured—they were marvelous! Every aspect of American life was touched. In their immediate results, they spawned a new fervor for missions, at home and abroad;⁵⁴ infidelity and immorality were subdued; and a wide variety of social ills were corrected. The Great Awakening in CT had a strong influence far beyond its borders.⁵⁵

The revivals at Yale College beginning in 1802 placed it at the forefront of the Second Great Awakening. During the generations that followed, graduates of Yale like Asahel Nettleton and Lyman Beecher became leaders of the revival in New England. Silverman informs us that in those days “anyone hoping to found a college or seminary, particularly in the Western territories, sought out Dwight, who turned Yale into a placement bureau for Dwight-trained ministers and teachers.”⁵⁶ Dwight himself helped in the founding of numerous social agencies, including the American Bible Society, and students at Yale were founding members of the first foreign missions board in America.

The effect of *revived* Yale-trained ministers upon the state of CT can also be seen in the resistance of the Congregational churches of that state to the Unitarianism which swept through MA and took control of Harvard in 1805. Up to 1830, there was only *one* Congregational church in CT that succumbed.⁵⁷ Yale remained a bastion of Orthodoxy throughout the presidencies of Dwight (1795-1817) and Day (1817-1846).⁵⁸

prayer and repressed effort” (p. 297, emphasis added). Here again we find evidence of the biblical principle that “God responds predictably when men respond to Him”; and a reminder that “Believers are in need of regular revival by God” (both of these are principles taught by Dr. Rick Flanders in his course, “History of Revival,” taught at Baptist College of Ministry in Menomonee Falls, WI).

⁵⁴ In this also the Baptists were the leaders (Keller, 201).

⁵⁵ Settlers poured out of CT into the frontier in those days. Fascinatingly, de Tocqueville wrote that in 1830 one eighth of the members of Congress were from CT, though only five out of thirty-six were delegates of that state itself (see Keller, 6).

⁵⁶ Silverman, 113.

⁵⁷ Keller, 10-11. The Congregationalists of CT had a stronger central (“closely knit,” pp. 11, 13) organization, but this was only effective because of its staunch orthodoxy. Dwight was a strong proponent of stronger centralized church government, and even achieved a union between the Presbyterians and CT Congregationalists for a time. He viewed it a safeguard against the entrance of heretical preachers. He did not foresee the evil this brings once heresy *has* wormed its way in.

⁵⁸ Dwight is accused of being anti-intellectual, intolerant and closeminded by modern “Yalies,” because of his insistence that all human learning must be subject to “religion” (Scripture!). See Gabriel, 55; Silverman, 7. Keller’s comment on p. 8 is intriguing: “Yale’s strength throughout the first half of the nineteenth century lay in science and religion, a phenomenon worthy of special note since it shows that at this time harmony between religion and science was possible.”

In this account, we see both the importance of the prayers of God's people as a whole, and the importance of one man. In answer to those prayers, God used Timothy Dwight to foster an atmosphere, by his preaching and prayers, and his loving concern over his students, that was conducive to revival, and that solidified, strengthened and spread its work. Yet, his work could by no means have been accomplished without the work done in the homes and local churches of his students.

How encouraging it is to read these accounts, and see biblical principles of revival illustrated and carried out in the midst of what was a dark time in the history of our nation. Truly we can see the fact that God *does* respond when His people earnestly seek Him—in fact, He is ready to answer “speedily” (Luke 18:8). We can see the importance of humble, faith-filled prayer. If only we will follow their example of earnestly, importunately seeking God for revival, what blessings He will bestow upon *us*!

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