

The Rise of Popular Religion

In France, I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America, I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country... Religion was the foremost of the political institutions of the United States.

-- Alexis de Tocqueville, 1832



The 2nd Great Awakening

The Inspiration for Reform

A New Religious Movement

In the 19th century, there was a great religious **revival** happening in America. Protestant churches were moving away from the old Puritan beliefs that one's life was **predestined** by God.

Predestination is the idea that God decided in advance which people would be saved in heaven. Belief in predestination led many to think that society could not be changed, because everything in life was already predetermined by God. In fact, many people felt it was a sin to want to improve the world, as that would be going against God's will.

In the 1820s and 1830s, a spirited religious movement swept the nation. Preachers began to travel from town to town, holding huge outdoor meetings called ***revivals***. The goal of these revivals was to stir religious feelings in the people. Revivals often lasted for days and attracted thousands of people. The revivals succeeded in fueling people's emotions.



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SACRAMENTAL SCENE IN A WESTERN FOREST.

Revivalist leaders stressed a new idea:
Free will was now more important than
predestination. The most successful
leader of the revivalists of the Second
Great Awakening was a man named
Charles Grandison Finney.

Finney was a Presbyterian minister and a powerful, inspirational speaker. He not only inspired those who heard him preach, but also other preachers, who spread his message across the country. It was Finney that introduced the idea that individual salvation was the first step toward improving society.

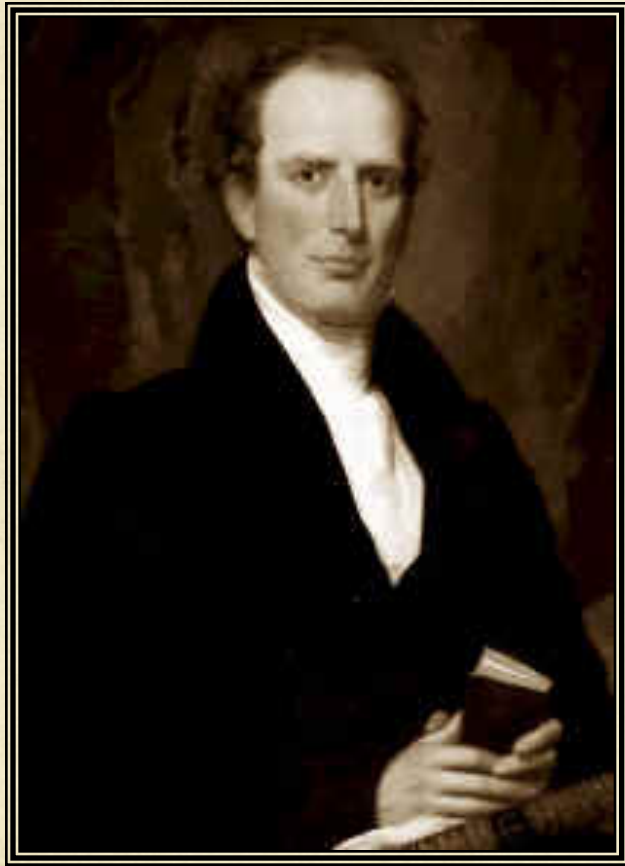
Finney taught that individuals could choose their own actions (operating on free will) to save themselves. Many people were deeply affected by this message and promised to **reform** their lives.



Finney also spoke of the good that Christians could do to transform society. He was quite ambitious in his hope. He told his followers that their goal was, “the complete reformation of the whole world.”

It was this optimistic message that attracted passionate followers across the West and North. The Second Great Awakening gave both men and women a reason to work for the improvement of society. Through the teachings of Finney and revivalists across the country, the Second Great Awakening energized the growing spirit of reform in 19th century America.

Charles Finney



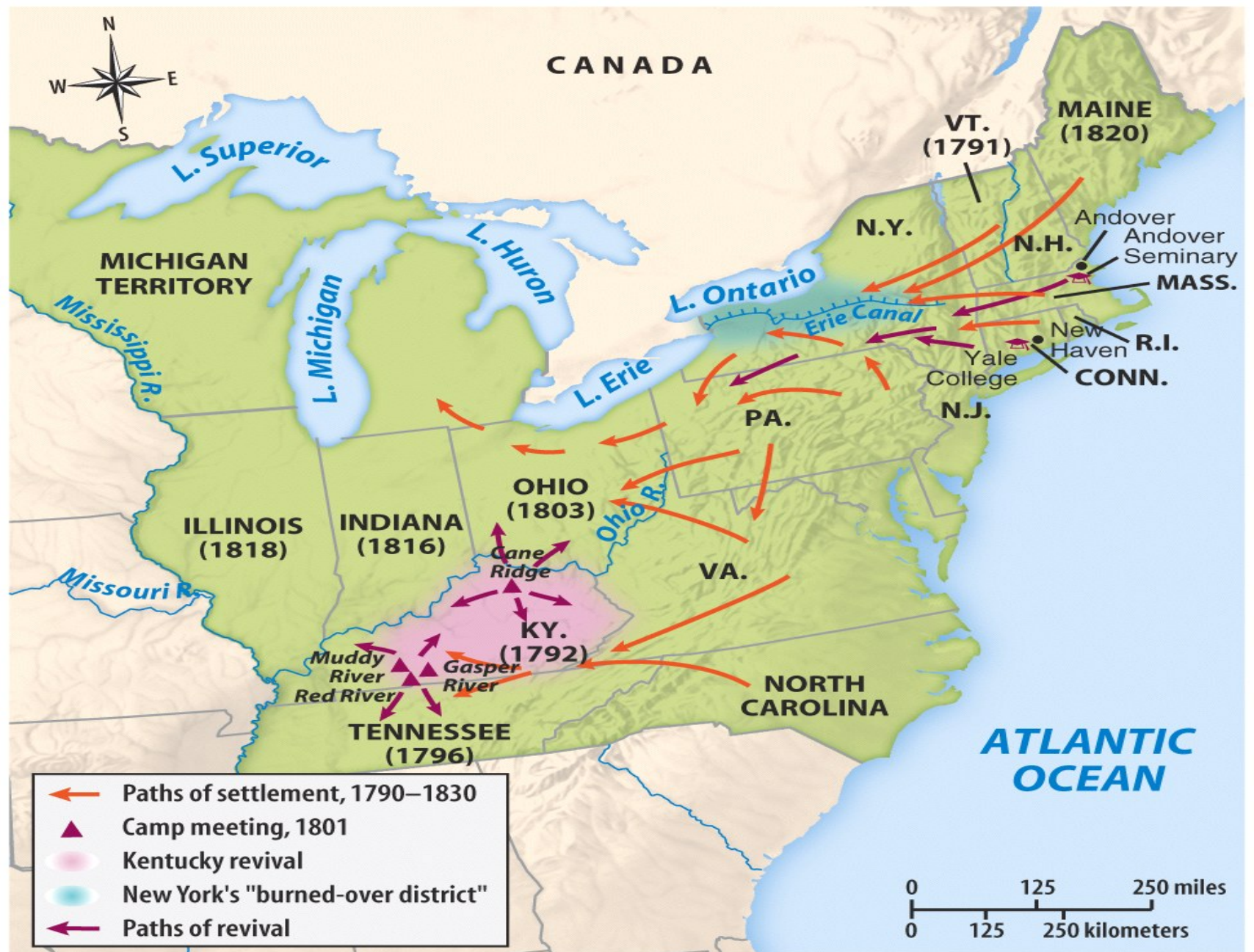
- Charles Finney conducted his own revivals in the mid 1820s and early 1830s
- He rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination
 - adopted ideas of free will and salvation to all
- Really popularized the new form of revival

Charles Finney and the Conversion Experience

- New form of revival
 - Meeting night after night to build excitement
 - Speaking bluntly
 - Praying for sinners by name
 - Encouraging women to testify in public
 - Placing those struggling with conversion on the “anxious bench” at the front of the church

Burned Over District

- Burned over district in Western NY got its name from a “wild fire of new religions”
- Gave birth to Seventh Day Adventists
 - The Millerites believed the 2nd coming of Christ would occur on October 22, 1843
 - Members sold belongings, bought white robes for the ascension into heaven
 - Believers formed new church on October 23rd
- Like the 1st, 2nd Awakening widened gaps between classes and religions



The Rise of African American Churches



- Revivalism also spread to the African American community
- The Second Great Awakening has been called the "central and defining event in the development of Afro-Christianity"

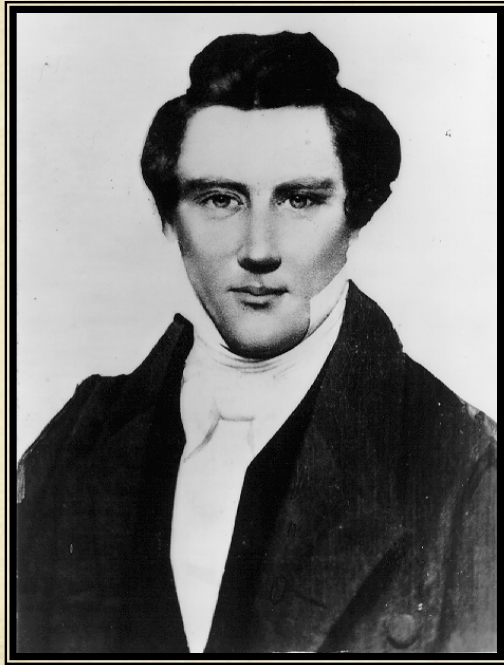
- **During these revivals Baptists and Methodists converted large numbers of blacks**

The Rise of African American Churches



- This led to the formation of all-black Methodist and Baptist churches, primarily in the North
- African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) had over 17,000 members by 1846

Other Churches Founded



- While the Protestant revivals sought to reform individual sinners, others sought to remake society at large
- Mormons – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
- Founded by Joseph Smith in western NY

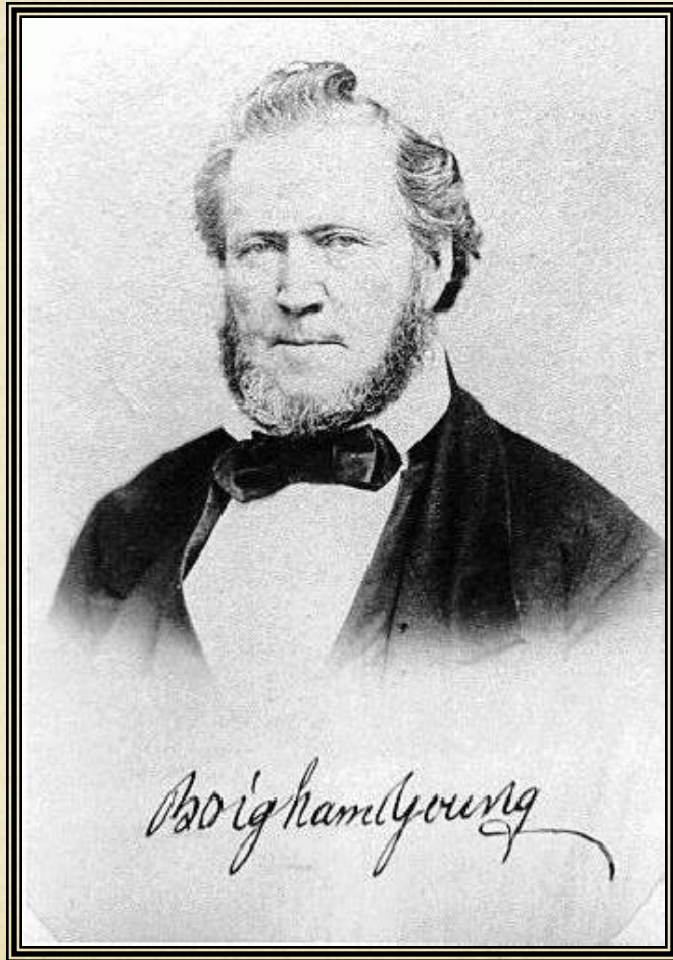
•In 1827, Smith announced that he had discovered a set of golden tablets on which was written the Book of Mormon

•Proclaiming that he had a commission from God to reestablish the true church, Smith gathered a group of devoted followers

Mormons

- Mormon culture upheld the middle-class values of hard work, self-control, thrift and material success
- He tried to create a City of Zion: Kirkland, Ohio - Independence, Missouri - then to Nauvoo, Illinois.
- His unorthodox teachings led to persecution and mob violence.
- Smith was murdered in 1844 by an anti-Mormon mob in Carthage, Illinois.
 - Church in conflict

Mormons



- **Brigham Young, Smith's successor, led the Mormons westward in 1846-1847 to Utah where they could live and worship without interference**

