

# The Evangelist/Revivalist Movement

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The period of 1880-1900 has been called “the Era of the Evangelist,” but we consider that far too narrow. We see the “Era of the Evangelist” extending from the 1880s to the 1950s. Fundamental Baptists were a major part of this era and have been greatly influenced by it. Evangelistic crusades were often called “revivals.”

Evangelists criss-crossed America, Great Britain, and other Western nations and beyond, conducting multi-week crusades that saw thousands upon thousands of professions of faith in Christ.

There were hundreds of full-time evangelists during this era. The following 16 give a pretty good window into those times.

- Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)
- Samuel Porter Jones (1847-1906)
- Benjamin Fay Mills (1857-1916)
- John Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)
- Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928)
- William A. (Billy) Sunday (1862-1935)
- Reuben (“Uncle Bud”) Robinson (1860-1942)
- Rodney “Gipsy” Smith (1860-1947)
- Burke Culpepper (1880-1948)
- Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952)
- William Bell (W.B.) Riley (1861-1957)
- Mordecai Ham (1877-1961)
- Bob Jones, Sr. (1883-1968)
- John R. Rice (1895-1980)
- Hyman Jedidiah Appelman (1902-1983)
- Monroe Parker (1909-1994)
- Lewis Sperry Chafer’s *True Evangelism*, 1911

## Lessons from that Era

**Evangelism was a priority.** It was emphasized. God’s people were being stirred up about this important business. This stirring is necessary. Paul instructed Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him (2 Ti. 1:6). Everything in the Christian life and family and church has to be

stirred up. We have to stir up abiding in Christ, yielding to the Holy Spirit, walking in the light, holiness, Bible study, prayer, separation from the world, evangelism, godly family relations, child discipline, the holy priesthood, the “one another” ministry in the body, everything. We stir it up by preaching and teaching on it, by repeating it, by emphasizing it, by modeling it, by whispering it and by shouting it. It has well been said, “Nothing can be maintained without a campaign.” Every leader of the church and home must be a campaigner for all of the things that are emphasized in Scripture. This is the essence of spiritual revival. It is something that God’s people are to *walk in*, live in, not something they experience from time to time in a special meeting.

**Prayer was a priority.** This will be seen throughout the accounts. They illustrate the saying, “Little prayer, little power; some prayer, some power; much prayer, much power.” Prayer is emphasized throughout Scripture, and whenever and wherever God’s people engage in it in a Scriptural manner they find increased blessing.

**The preaching was forthright,** plain, direct, hard-hitting. There was no beating around the bush about the wickedness of sin and the awfulness of hell. God was proclaimed as holy Judge as well as compassionate Saviour.

“America needs a tidal-wave of the old-time religion. American needs to be taken down to God’s bathhouse and the hose turned on her. And the time isn’t far distant when the wheels of God’s judgment are going to go sweeping through this old God-hating world” (Billy Sunday).

**There was a huge emphasis on singing and hymn writing.** The music was a major part of the evangelistic campaigns. The prominent evangelists had their own song leaders and choristers who would train and lead the great choirs and conduct the song service. The song services would be a half hour to an hour long. It was a spectacular era of hymn writing, as we have seen in “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.” Prominent evangelistic song leaders such as Ira Sankey, Homer Rodeheaver, and Charles Alexander spurred hymn singing far and wide by their popular hymnbooks. The godly effect of the evangelistic campaign music was spread across the communities.

“Boys and men on the street whistle Gospel songs. The echoes of Tabernacle music may be heard long after Mr. Sunday has gone from a community in ten thousand kitchens and in the shops and factories and stores of the community. ... The campaign music carries the campaign message farther than the voice of any man could ever penetrate” (William Ellis, *Billy Sunday the Man and His Message*)

There was a holiness that characterized the music of that era. The music breathed of a heavenly world rather than of this world. This was not merely because the time was different. The world’s music was jazzy and sensual even in Fanny Crosby’s day, but the hymns did not partake of that spirit. Some of the revivalist tunes were lively, but they didn’t fit the dance halls and gambling dens of that day. They were spiritual rather than worldly. For a sample of how the hymns sounded, see the following samples from Homer Rodeheaver, Charles Alexander, and Ira Sankey, three of the most prominent evangelistic song leaders:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAgun-X58kE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZamoSNDsiQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbcWklq12nk>

**All of the prominent evangelists of that era were interdenominational.** For example, Sam Jones “usually sought and obtained the united support of the majority of evangelical ministers before he would consent to come to any city ... in the cities of the South he could count upon almost unanimous support from the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Disciples who made up almost 90 percent of the churchgoing population. ... Like Moody, and in keeping with the general religious spirit of his age, Jones went out of his way to play down denominational differences. ‘Theology,’ he said, ‘is a good thing. It is a good thing to stuff with sawdust, like the skin of a fish, and put in a museum as a relic of antiquity.’ ‘If I had a creed I would sell it to a museum.’ ‘Orthodoxies are what has ruined this world.’ Like almost all professional revivalists he asked, ‘Wouldn’t it be a good idea to have a ... Church universal?’” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 300).

It is true that the “evangelical denominations” of that day were not modernistic. They didn’t hold to documentary theories of the Pentateuch; they didn’t question the virgin birth, deity, miracles, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ; they didn’t reject Christ’s vicarious, substitutionary atonement. They all held to “the great fundamentals of the faith.” And the Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox churches were not included in interdenominational Fundamentalism, because they weren’t considered “evangelical.”

But the denominational differences then were real and serious, and it is unscriptural to overlook such doctrinal differences for any reason whatsoever.

False doctrines such as a limited atonement, sovereign reprobation, infant baptism, holding out faithful, and a second work of grace are not small errors, and they should never be ignored for the sake of a bigger tent of ministry.

When those who are sound in doctrine unite together with those who teach error, they become guilty of that error and of its influence on those who participate in the interdenominational projects.

We deal with this the section on “Interdenominationalism” in the chapter on “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”

## **The Influence of Charles Finney**

The evangelistic campaigns of the Moody era and beyond were built on principles and techniques that were established by Charles Finney (1792-1875) who had crusades in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

“It has been said ‘evangelism entered modernity with him.’ It was Finney who originated many of the methods used by such famous revivalists as Moody, Chapman, and Mills, who in turn passed them on to be adapted later by men such as Billy Sunday and Billy Graham” (“Charles G. Finney--Prototype of the Modern Evangelist,” *Ministry* magazine, Nov. 1976).

Finney’s innovations included such things as a special choir and a musical chorister\*; special revival hymns and revival songbooks; interdenominational cooperation; protracted meetings; aggressive advertising; the creation of an exciting atmosphere; manipulation of emotions or “excitements”; a de-emphasis on the necessity of the work of the Spirit in conviction and regeneration (in practice); a de-emphasis on looking for such work before leading people in a profession; a de-emphasis on looking for evidence of salvation; the invitation system as a specific, organized methodology; the anxious bench and the idea that a

professor in Christ should “do something” physical, such as standing and coming forward; quick dealing with souls who respond; an emphasis on the numbers of attendees and professions; and an emphasis on weighing methods by “success.”

(\* Finney’s chorister was Thomas Hastings, author of 600 hymn texts and 1,000 hymn tunes, including that for “Rock of Ages.” Hastings wrote this tune and introduced the hymn in Finney’s six-month revival campaign in Rochester, New York, in 1830.)

Finney called these the “new measures.” He created a revivalist package specifically geared to produce “decisions.” Everything was structured for this purpose: The atmosphere, the introduction, the type of music, the type of preaching, the mechanics of the invitation.

“If not all of the ‘new measures’ were entirely original with Finney, nevertheless he did modify them and amalgamate them into a completely new approach to evangelism, an approach that later revivalists adapted to the changing times but never basically altered” (*Ministry* magazine, Nov. 1976).

Many of the things that Finney did were not against Scripture and therefore were not wrong. It is right to urge men to repent and trust Christ *today* instead of waiting for some mysterious “effectual call of God” as many Calvinists of Finney’s day wrongly taught.

It is not wrong to advertise the gospel and to get as many sinners as possible to attend gospel preaching so long as the advertising is not exalting a preacher or some other sort of carnal thing.

It is not wrong to use gospel music if it is scriptural in its message and not worldly in its sound. God’s people are commanded to sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs, and there is nothing in the New Testament that forbids such singing in the context of an evangelistic meeting, but we should not forget that when it comes to evangelism, the Bible emphasizes preaching far above singing.

It is not wrong to invite men to an “anxious room” so that they can be dealt with personally after gospel preaching. People *should* be invited to come and be helped. But everything about this must be done carefully and wisely. There should be no time limit on the dealing, no pressure whatsoever about time, which means it shouldn’t be done right in the meeting itself, with the expectation that it will be finished before the closing prayer. The dealing with souls should be thorough and should continue as long as necessary, if it is hours, days, months, or years.

It is not wrong to innovate for the sake of bringing men to Christ. He has commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature, and we should certainly plan how to do this big job. We don’t need to be “stuck in a rut.” We don’t repeat the same things that we have seen and been taught. **But every plan, every technique, must be tested carefully and prayerfully by the Word of God to make sure it is not contrary to *any* Scriptural precept.**

Though innovation itself is not wrong so long as it is not contrary to God’s Word, there is great danger for Finney-style “new measures” to produce false professions and emotional decisions that are not the product of God’s Spirit, and we are confident that this has happened to multitudes of people who have been manipulated by man-made methodology and human pragmatism. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who worked in evangelism for 17 years from 1890 to 1907, warned of “the appalling percentage of failures in the ranks of supposed converts” (*True Evangelism*, 1911). We give evidence of this throughout this book.

**We must understand that Finney’s evangelistic methodologies were built upon false doctrine.** He didn’t merely reject some form of Calvinism, he rejected the Bible. He held some

extremely serious heresies. He denied original sin, Christ's substitutionary atonement, imputed righteousness, justification by God's grace alone through faith alone without works, the new birth as a supernatural miracle, and eternal security.

Finney preached a works gospel. He taught that man is not born with a corrupt nature, but that he has the power to sin or not to sin and that he is not under the judgment of God for Adam's sin but is judged only for his own sin. Finney taught that Christ died, not as a substitutionary atonement for man's sin, not in the sinner's place, but as an example of how that God loves sinners and hates sin. If sinners understand this and turn from sin, they will be saved. Regeneration is to change one's actions, and one is kept saved by walking in perfect holiness.

“According to Finneyism, the atonement saves us *by example*. In the death of Christ, we see how much God loves us, we see how much sin cost God, and we are humbled and moved to repent and obey God's moral law. Salvation in Finneyism is nothing more nor less than obedience to the moral law of God, of which every man is naturally capable because he is a completely free moral agent” (Leon Stump, “Charles G. Finney Justification by Faith,” *Life Lines*, Oct.-Dec. 1999).

Following are shocking quotes from Finney's *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Finney was a philosopher, not a simple Bible teacher. He depended upon his human reason rather than the clear statements of God's Word. He leaned to his own understanding.

"Original sin, physical regeneration, and all their kindred and resulting dogmas, are alike subversive of the gospel, and repulsive to the human intelligence; and should be laid aside as relics of a most unreasonable and confused philosophy.” (*Lecture 42*)

“If the Psalmist [Ps. 51:5] really intended to affirm, that the substance of his body was sinful from its conception, then he not only arrays himself against God's own definition of sin, but he also affirms sheer nonsense. The substance of an unborn child sinful! It is impossible!” (*Lecture 23*)

“[Psalm 58:3, ‘The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies’] must mean like the text last examined, that the wicked are estranged and go astray from the commencement of their moral agency. If it means more than this, it is not and cannot be true.” (*Lecture 36*)

“[Ephesians 2:3, ‘By nature the children of wrath, even as others’] Upon this text I remark that it cannot, consistently with natural justice, be understood to mean, that we are exposed to the wrath of God on account of our nature. It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma, that a holy God is angry with any creature for possessing a nature with which he was sent into being without his knowledge or consent. The Bible represents God as angry with men for their wicked deeds, and not for their nature.” (*Lecture 33*)

“[Christ dying as our substitute] assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement ... It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one; but the promise and oath of God that Christ shall have a seed to serve him does.” (*Lecture 32*)

“The fact is, when Dr. Woods and others insist that Regeneration is the work or a work of God, they tell the truth but not the whole truth. For it is also the work of man and of the subject.” (Lecture 39)

“But if Christ owed personal obedience to the moral law, then his obedience could no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us. He was bound for himself to love God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself. He did no more than this. He could do no more. It was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey in our behalf. This doctrine of the imputation of Christ's obedience to the moral law to us, is based upon the absurd assumptions, (1.) That the moral law is founded in the arbitrary will of God, and (2.) That of course, Christ, as God, owed no obedience to it; both of which assumptions are absurd. But if these assumptions are given up, what becomes of the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, as a ground of a forensic justification? "It vanishes into thin air.” (Lecture 56)

“This doctrine of an imputed obedience for righteousness, or of that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a false assumption. Christ's obedience could do no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us. It is naturally impossible for him to obey in our behalf as a proxy.” (Lecture 36)

“[The doctrine of substitutionary atonement] assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement ... It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one.” (Lecture 26)

“But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd. ... As has already been said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification, or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification [that Christ died in the place of sinners]. They hold to the legal maxim that what a man does by another he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours, on the ground that he obeyed for us.” (Lecture 36)

“God works or draws, and the sinner yields or turns, or which is the same thing, changes his heart, or, in other words, is born again. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins. God calls on him, ‘Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead that Christ may give thee light.’ God calls; the sinner hears and answers, Here am I. God says, Arise from the dead. The sinner puts forth his activity, and God draws him into life; or rather God draws, and the sinner comes forth to life.” (Lecture 39)

“We have seen that the subject is active in regeneration, that regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love or benevolence; or, in other words, in turning from the supreme choice of self-gratification, to the supreme love of God and the equal love of his neighbour. Of course the subject of regeneration must be an agent in the work.” (Lecture 39)

“But again, to the question, can man be justified while sin remains in him? Surely he cannot, either upon legal or gospel principles, unless the law be repealed. That he cannot

be justified by the law, while there is a particle of sin in him, is too plain to need proof. But can he be pardoned and accepted, and then justified, in the gospel sense, while sin, any degree of sin, remains in him? Certainly not.” (Lecture 15)

“Whenever he sins, he must, for the time being, cease to be holy. This is self-evident. Whenever he sins, he must be condemned; he must incur the penalty of the law of God ... If it be said that the precept is still binding upon him, but that with respect to the Christian, the penalty is forever set aside, or abrogated, I reply, that to abrogate the penalty is to repeal the precept, for a precept without penalty is no law. It is only counsel or advice. The Christian, therefore, is justified no longer than he obeys, and must be condemned when he disobeys...” (Lecture 2, original edition)

“By sanctification’s being a condition of justification, the following things are intended. (1.) That present, full, and entire consecration of heart and life to God and his service is an unalterable condition of present pardon of past sin, and of present acceptance with God. (2.) That the penitent soul remains justified no longer than this full hearted consecration continues.” (Lecture 53)

“We shall see that perseverance in obedience to the end of life is also a condition of justification.” (Lecture 53)

**Finney also had a major role in turning the churches from Christ’s Great Commission to social reform.** “In the nineteenth century, the evangelical movement became increasingly identified with political causes--from abolition of slavery and child labor legislation to women’s rights and the prohibition of alcohol. In a desperate effort at regaining this institutional power and the glory of ‘Christian America’ (a vision that is always powerful in the imagination, but, after the disintegration of Puritan New England, elusive), the turn-of-the century Protestant establishment launched moral campaigns to ‘Americanize’ immigrants, enforce moral instruction and ‘character education.’ Evangelists pitched their American gospel in terms of its practical usefulness to the individual and the nation” (Michael Horton, “The Disturbing Legacy of Charles Finney,” monergism.com).

This program continued to gain steam in the days of Billy Sunday before World War II, as we will see. His message focused on Christianizing America. He advertised his campaigns as “civic clean-ups.” He preached against dancing, card playing, gambling, theater-going, commercial dishonesty, drinking, not just for the sanctification of individual believers and churches, but for the conversion of America. Sunday’s preaching and campaigning was a major force in the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919, prohibiting the manufacture, transportation, and sell of intoxicating liquor. He invited his hearers to become better Americans and to make America a better country. He said, “Do you want God’s blessing on you, your home, your church, your nation, on New York? If you do, raise your hands. ... How many of you men and women will jump to your feet and come down and say, Bill, here’s my hand for God, for home, for my native land, to live and conquer for Christ? ... Come on down and take my hand against booze, for Jesus Christ, for your flag” (“Era of the Evangelist,” Christianity.com, Apr. 28, 2010; William McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 434).

The program of social reform toward the Christianization of America has continue up to this day among many fundamentalists. Prominent examples are Carl McIntire’s American Council of Christian Churches and Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority.

## Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)

Dwight Lyman Moody was the most prominent evangelist of the past 150 years. It has been estimated that he preached to 100 million people, and that was before radio and television.

His biography, including an examination of his evangelism methods and fruit, is in *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists* “D.L. Moody,” the chapter “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”

## Sam Jones (1847-1906)

Samuel Porter Jones was a Methodist evangelist. His paternal grandfather and great-grandfather were Methodist preachers. After serving in the Union Army during the American Civil War, Jones became a lawyer and “a notorious alcoholic.” Following a dramatic conversion to Christ, he was ordained a Methodist preacher in Georgia and was a circuit rider in a territory of five counties.

He built a “tabernacle” in Nashville, Tennessee, where he held evangelistic meetings each September.

It is estimated that he preached to three million people. “Jones was overwhelmed with more invitations than he could accept in the largest cities in the nation. ... Although he passed the peak of his career by the middle of the 1890s, he continued to return year after year to the cities of his earlier triumph. He conducted eighteen revivals in Nashville alone. And between visits to larger cities he preached in almost every city with a population of over 10,000 in the South” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 299).

As with nearly all of the evangelists of that era, Jones’ ministry was interdenominational. “He usually sought and obtained the united support of the majority of evangelical ministers before he would consent to come to any city ... in the cities of the South he could count upon almost unanimous support from the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Disciples who made up almost 90 percent of the churchgoing population. ... Like Moody, and in keeping with the general religious spirit of his age, Jones went out of his way to play down denominational differences. ‘Theology,’ he said, ‘is a good thing. It is a good thing to stuff with sawdust, like the skin of a fish, and put in a museum as a relic of antiquity.’ ‘If I had a creed I would sell it to a museum.’ ‘Orthodoxies are what has ruined this world.’ Like almost all professional revivalists he asked, ‘Wouldn’t it be a good idea to have a ... Church universal?’” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 300).

Jones was very bold in his preaching against sin. In San Antonio, Texas, he shouted, “The only difference between San Antonio and hell is that in San Antonio there is a river running down the middle of it.”

But his gospel was not clear. It was more a gospel of reformation than regeneration.

“Conversion, as he defined it, was not so much a change in belief nor the acquisition of grace through faith, but rather a change in moral conduct, a resolution, as he put it, to ‘Quit your meanness and fight for decency.’ ‘Conversion scripturally means simply two things,’ he explained: ‘1. I have quit the wrong. 2. I have taken hold of the right.’ ... He preached so constantly on the theme that ‘heaven is just the other side of where a man has done his best’ that in one volume of his sermons the publisher felt it necessary to add a footnote early in the book stating, ‘Mr. Jones would insist that divine grace is a circumstance not to be left out.’ But the fact was that Jones did leave it out most of the



time. ... Or as he put it in another sermon, 'It is my business to preach reformation; God's business to preach regeneration.' 'You convert yourself, and when you convert yourself, God regenerates you'" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 290).

This means that his "converts" would have been confused about the very essence of the gospel.

Consider his invitations:

"More often Jones simply cleared the front rows of the tabernacle and held an 'after meeting' service. One call for 'mourners' was described in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*: Jones had just given an hour and one-half sermon entitled 'Escape for Thy Life' to an audience of men only. At its conclusion he asked all those to rise who would say, '**By the grace of God I will lead a better life and serve God and do right.**' Almost one-third of the 6000 men present stood up. 'And now while we sing a hymn a minute,' said Jones, '**every man and boy that says here is my hand to serve God and do right,** stay a few minutes and give me your hand and let us settle it here this afternoon. While we stand and sing, come, and give me your hand.' Excell led the choir in 'That Old Time Religion,' as Jones held out his right hand. 'The vast audience seemed to surge toward the man who had so profoundly moved it. Men almost fell over each other in their determination to grasp the evangelist's hand.' ... According to the reporter, this 'extraordinary reception' continued for thirty-five minutes until 'fully 2000 of the 6000 men who had heard the sermon had come forward **to give the pledge to lead a better life.**' ... But in most instances only fifty to one hundred came forward to shake Jones's hand and take one of the front seats. Jones gave them a brief exhortation to live up to their pledge and then the pastors and personal workers of the cooperating churches circulated among them answering questions and persuading them to sign decision cards. ... Jones had no qualms about publicizing the estimated numbers of his converts and **was perfectly sincere in considering a resolve to lead a better life adequate proof of conversion**" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, pp. 304, 305).

Pledging to live a better life and shaking the preacher's hand is a works gospel.

The song, "Old Time Religion," that was sung for the invitation, is basically meaningless. It has zero gospel message. Here is the entire message of the song: "Give me that old time religion, it's good enough for me. It was good for Paul and Silas ... It was good for the Hebrew children ... It was good for our mothers ... Makes me love ev'ry body." What does that mean? Nothing.

We don't know what Jones preached that day, but we know that typically he preached a lot of stories and not much Scripture, and the Scriptures that were preached were often taken out of context and misinterpreted.

In light of such an environment, it is evident that large numbers of Jones' converts were not born again biblically.

By the end of his career, Jones claimed that 500,000 had been converted out of a total audience of 25 million, but it is obvious that the term "conversion" had no clear biblical definition and the massive numbers meant really nothing when examined by the Word of God.

## B. Fay Mills (1857-1916)

Benjamin Fay Mills grew up in the home of a Presbyterian pastor (Thornton Mills) and began preaching revival meetings in 1887 at age 30.

In 1892, Mills was assisted by J. Wilbur Chapman in crusades in Cincinnati and Minneapolis.

Mills devised the Mills District Combination Plan of Evangelism whereby a city was divided into four or five sections, with each section having its own committee (finance, advertising, music, canvassing, ushers) and meeting hall. After Mills and his teams held meetings in each of the districts, he moved to a central location and preached a final week or two. He wanted reporters at every service and complete reports printed in the local papers. Cooperating churches were required to cancel all of their own services during the campaign.

He conducted a Midweek Sabbath sometime during the meetings. "On one Wednesday in each revival all the stores and offices in the city were personally asked to close up for the day in order to direct attention to the revival. In Cincinnati three thousand business establishments cooperated. In St. Paul five hundred closed."

This is a window into those times in America. It was a time when most of the business in a major city would agree to shut down in the middle of the week for a prayer/preaching meeting.

Mills was one of the pioneers of the use of **the decision card**. It read, "I have an honest desire henceforth to lead a Christian life." It contained the name and address of the individual and "church or pastor preferred." The completed cards were divided among the cooperating churches.

The cards that expressed preference for non-cooperating churches were given to those churches, no matter how heretical. Cards were given to Catholic, Unitarian, Universalist, Jewish, Quaker, Swedenborgian, and Christian Science. "The Roman Catholic Archbishop, John Ireland, sustained none of the cost or labor of the St. Paul [Minnesota] revival; yet he received more cards than any of the cooperating ministers" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 336).

Thus Mills had the strange idea that it was pleasing to God to hand seekers over to the care of spiritual wolves. This predated Billy Graham's ecumenical evangelism by half a century.

"All professional evangelists adopted the card system after 1895, and their respective reputations came to rest more and more upon their statistical record and less upon their preaching ability or personal character. The pressure to indicate and boast about convert statistics was great, and the card system was soon being flagrantly abused" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 335).

Thus, the emphasis on numbers began in the last half of the 19th century. It was taken to new heights in the 20th century.

Mills claimed that he spoke to five million people and had 200,000 converts.

In the 1890s, Mills turned to the social gospel through the influence of George Herron, and adopted the heresies of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. He wrote, "God is the Father of us all. Universal brotherhood implies universal Fatherhood and a man will never be right with any other man until he comes to see in him a brother ... and in a certain sense the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ with all the possibilities that dwelt in Christ" (Mills, *God's World*, 1894).

In 1899, Mills became the pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California. In 1915 he said, "The Bible ceased to be to me the exclusively inspired Word of God" (Mills "My Practical Evolution," *The Advance*, Chicago, June 24, 1915).

## **John Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)**

J. Wilbur Chapman was a Presbyterian evangelist.

He grew up in a Christian home. His mother died when he was 13.

In 1875, at age 17, Chapman made a public confession of faith in Christ at a Methodist afternoon Sunday School. He acknowledged a teacher named Mrs. Binkley as a major influence. But he continued to struggle with doubts about his salvation until he attended a D.L. Moody crusade in Chicago three years later and Moody himself helped him to find assurance through Christ's promise in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." This reminds us that assurance comes by the Holy Spirit through the promises of Scripture. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Ro. 10:17). We cannot give a soul assurance. We can point him to God's promises, but it is the Holy Spirit alone who can give witness that that individual belongs to Christ. See Romans 8:14-16, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

After graduating from Lane Seminary in 1882 and marrying Irene Steddon, Chapman pastored Dutch Reformed churches in Schuylerville and Albany New York. In April 1886, their first child, Bertha Irene, was born, but the mother died a month later.

This left the 27-year-old evangelist confused and discouraged and in a crisis of faith. At the Northfield conference in Chicago that summer, he heard F.B. Meyer speak on surrender. He said, "If you are not willing to give up everything for Christ, are you willing to be made willing?" Chapman said, "That remark changed my whole ministry; it seemed like a new star in the sky of my life" (Ed Reese, *The Life and Ministry of John Wilber Chapman*).

Two years later, Chapman married Agnes Strain, and they had four children.

From 1890 to 1892, Chapman pastored Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. One of the members was John Wanamaker, a department store magnate who was one of America's wealthiest men. Hundreds were converted and brought into the church through Chapman's ministry, and the source of the spiritual power was prayer. When he first arrived, a group began meeting on Sunday Morning to pray for the new pastor, and this prayer meeting eventually grew to 1,000.

In 1892, Chapman entered full-time evangelism. He assisted B. Fay Mills at crusades in Cincinnati and Minneapolis. In 1893, he joined Moody's evangelistic outreach to the Chicago World's Fair. (See "D.L. Moody" in the chapter on "Interdenominational Fundamentalism.") After that Chapman had evangelistic revivals in several cities in the Northeast. In 1895, Moody called Chapman "the greatest evangelist in the country." Here we see the dawn of the "great man" syndrome, whereas in Scripture none are great except Christ.

Chapman served as vice-president of Moody Bible Institute.

In 1893, he hired Billy Sunday as his “advance man” to prepare communities for his evangelistic campaigns, and Sunday worked in that capacity until he began his own crusades in 1896.

From 1896 to 1899, Chapman was again senior pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church, and it continued to enjoy explosive growth under his leadership. Sunday School attendance reached 6,000 in 1898, making it “the world’s largest.” Again, we can see that the boasting about numbers began in the 19th century. Bethany became the largest Presbyterian church in North America, growing from 1,500 members to 3,500. There were over 16,000 professions of faith under Chapman’s pastorate. Some of those joined other churches, but still, it appears obvious that a great number of the professions were not of the caliber that we see in Acts 2:41-42.

In 1901, Chapman became General Secretary of the Presbyterian Committee on Evangelism, supervising 51 evangelists in 470 cities.

In 1903, he published *Present Day Evangelism* (260 pages, New York: Baker and Taylor Co.). The book shows that Chapman’s ministry had real biblical substance. He was after something solid and lasting. The book emphasizes the following: the necessity of intercessory prayer, the necessity of every believer being an evangelist, the necessity of following up on seekers and trying to make them active church members, the necessity of parents reaching their own children for Christ, the necessity of holy living, and the necessity of the right kind of pastors.

Chapman warned that worldliness in the churches would corrupt the character of any new converts. He said, “[T]he new members will always strike the level of the older members of the Church. If the Church is worldly they will become worldly, if it is given to questionable amusements they will follow in the same path, but if it is spiritual they will just as truly become spiritual.”

The book ends with the following poem, which captures the spirit of evangelistic/missionary zeal that percolated throughout the revivalism era.

I dare not idle stand,  
While upon every hand  
The whitening fields proclaim the harvest near;  
A gleaner I would be,  
Gathering, dear Lord, for thee,  
Lest I with empty hand at last appear.

I dare not idle stand,  
While on the shifting sand,  
The ocean casts bright treasures at my feet;  
Beneath some shell’s rough side  
The tinted pearl may hide,  
And I with precious gift my Lord may meet.

I dare not idle stand,  
While over all the land  
Poor, wandering souls need humble help like mine;  
Brighter than brightest gem  
In monarch’s diadem,

Each soul a star in Jesus' crown may shine.  
I dare not idle stand,  
But at my Lord's command,  
Labor for him throughout my life's short day;  
Evening will come at last,  
Day's labor all be passed,  
And rest eternal my brief toil repay.

From 1907-1910, Chapman conducted evangelistic campaigns with song leader Charles Alexander in America, Canada, Australia, Asia, and elsewhere. Not a lazy man, Chapman often preached three to five sermons a day. Alexander had been dismissed by R.A. Torrey in 1908 because of "his penchant for publicity and money-making" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 377).

Chapman devised the Chapman Simultaneous Evangelistic Campaign whereby he divided a city in sections and assigned evangelists to each section, while he conducted meetings in a large centrally located auditorium. All of the meetings were held simultaneously. He took a group of co-evangelists and singers from city to city. He used "the Mill's system of committees, publicity, choirs, ushers, prayer meetings, and canvassing" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 379). In 1908, Chapman divided Philadelphia into 42 districts under the ministry of 21 teams of evangelist-singers. They conducted meetings simultaneously in half of the city for three weeks, then shifted into the other 21 districts for three weeks. More than 400 churches cooperated of "almost every denomination," including Baptist, Quaker, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Moravian, and Mennonite (McLoughlin). Total attendance for the six week revival was 1,470,000, with 8,000 reported conversions.

In 1909, Chapman conducted a campaign in Boston, which was his most successful one. There were 30 evangelist-singer teams. He divided the city into 27 districts. More than 160 churches cooperated, including the Salvation Army. There were two services daily in most of the districts, plus special meetings for children, men, mothers, elderly, youth, parents, drunkards, actors, university students, businessmen, office workers, shop girls, and prostitutes. There were special day promotions, including Good Cheer Day, Flower Day, and Education Day. Chapman/Alexander held four large meetings after the district meetings concluded. The attendance in these was 10,000 per night, with 10,000 turned away. A total of 994 services were held during the three weeks. The total attendance was 764,000 and total decisions were about 7,000. Chapman's co-evangelists included W.B. Riley, W.E. Biederwolf, L.W. Munhall, James M. Gray, and Homer Rodeheaver.

Chapman invited the converts to "go to the church of your choice."

From 1909-1918, Chapman and Alexander held worldwide revival tours. In 1909, they visited Australia, Korea, Manila, Hong Kong, Canton, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Yokohama. In 1911, they visited Wales and Ireland. In 1912-13, they were in Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania. In that campaign, some 2,800 young people declared their intent to enter Christian work and a Bible Institute was founded in Adelaide, Australia, to train them. In 1913-14, campaigns were held in England and Scotland. In one day in Edinburgh, 18,000 heard Chapman in three services. The Chapman/Alexander team also campaigned in Hawaii, Fiji, and the Philippines.

Chapman was heavily involved in summer Bible conferences, including Winona Lake in Indiana, which he helped found in 1896. He also helped found Bible conferences at Montreat, North Carolina, and at Stony Brook on Long Island.

Chapman wrote several hymns, including “One Day” and “Our Great Saviour” (also called “Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners”), both of which were published in 1910.

**“One Day”**

One day when heaven was filled with His praises,  
One day when sin was as black as could be,  
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin,  
Dwelt amongst men, my example is He.

*Chorus:*

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;  
Buried, He carried my sins far away,  
Rising, He justified freely forever;  
One day He's coming, Oh, glorious day!

Chapman's sermon from Psalm 45:8 motivated Henry Barralough to write the lovely hymn “Ivory Palaces” (1915). Barralough was Chapman's pianist at the time.

**“Ivory Palaces”**

My Lord has garments so wondrous fine,  
And myrrh their texture fills;  
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine  
With joy my being thrills.

His life had also its sorrows sore,  
For aloes had a part;  
And when I think of the cross He bore,  
My eyes with teardrops start.

His garments, too, were in cassia dipped,  
With healing in a touch;  
In paths of sin had my feet e'er slipped—  
He's saved me from its clutch.

In garments glorious He will come,  
To open wide the door;  
And I shall enter my heav'nly home,  
To dwell forevermore.

*Refrain:*

Out of the ivory palaces,  
Into a world of woe,  
Only His great eternal love  
Made my Savior go.

Chapman was outspoken against theological liberalism. In 1909, he issued a call for all missionaries who doubted the inerrancy of Scripture to be recalled. Amen! In 1914, when war

broke out in Europe, he said “the moral collapse of the German people was the bitter fruit of destructive Biblical criticism” (Ford Ottman, *J. Wilbur Chapman: A Biography*).

### **R.A. Torrey (1856-1928)**

Reuben Archer Torrey was a prominent evangelist, as well as a Bible teacher, Bible conference speaker, head of Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola), pastor of Moody Church, and editor of *The Fundamentals*.

Between 1902-08, Torrey conducted large evangelistic campaigns in America, England, Canada, China, Japan, Australia, and India. His song leader was Charles Alexander.

We give his biography in *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists* “R.A. Torrey,” the chapter “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”

### **Billy Sunday (1862-1935)**

William A. “Billy” Sunday was the most popular and famous evangelist of his day. For the decade of the 1910s and into the early 1920s, he garnered great national media attention. He preached 300 city-wide meetings and claimed to have preached to 100 million people (before radio) and to have had 1 million converts.

#### **His Early Life**

Billy Sunday was born in a log house in Ames, Iowa, and his father died in the Civil War before he was born. He and an older brother were raised for a time in an orphanage, then by a grandfather.

Beginning in 1883, Sunday played professional baseball for eight seasons for the National League at the dawn of the era of professional sports. He played for the Chicago White Stockings, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and the Philadelphia Athletics. “He struck out his first 13 times at bat, but became a huge asset to the team. He was a champion sprinter, boasting a career record of 92 stolen bases, which was topped only by Ty Cobb with 96” (“Billy Sunday,” [u-s-history.com](http://u-s-history.com)).

In 1883, he was converted in Chicago when he stopped to listen to a group of gospel singers from the Pacific Garden Mission and accepted their invitation to attend a service. After several visits, and the personal ministry of Mrs. George Clark, the wife of the mission’s founder, he “went forward and publicly accepted Christ as my Saviour.” He was dramatically changed. He gave up drinking, betting, and the theater, and refused to play baseball on Sundays. He joined a Presbyterian church and taught Sunday School.

In 1888, he married Helen “Nell” Thompson.

He took Bible classes at the Chicago YMCA and began preaching at various YMCAs as he traveled with the baseball teams.

In 1891, he answered God’s call to full-time Christian work and gave up a lucrative baseball contract “that would have earned him \$500 a month for the season for a job that paid only \$83 a month all year round” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 404).

#### **Sunday’s Evangelistic Career**

Between 1883 and 1885, Sunday was an assistant to evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, whom we have considered in a separate study.

In 1886, Sunday held his first independent revival meeting. From then to 1907, most of the towns where he preached in Iowa and Illinois didn't have electricity. He called it the "kerosene circuit."

A newspaper in 1903 described him as follows: "[He is] young, talented, well-educated, eloquent, humorous, with powers of ridicule and denunciation developed to perfection with a fearlessness and bravery seldom equalled ... a delivery that is most surprising and almost bewildering in its rapidity, with its boundless energy and enthusiasm" (*Jefferson Bee*, Iowa, Dec. 17, 1903).

Sunday was criticized by some for his common, plain speech. In his sermon "A Plain Talk to Men," for example, he said, "Many think a Christian has to be a sort of dish-rag proposition, a wishy-washy, sissified sort of a galoot that lets everybody make a doormat out of him. Let me tell you, the manliest man is the man who will acknowledge Jesus Christ."

Sunday argued, "I want to preach the gospel so plainly that men can come from the factories and not have to bring a dictionary," and, "I don't use much high-falutin' language. I learned a long time ago to put the cookies and jam on the lowest shelf."

He preached heaven sweet and hell hot. His theology was simple: "With Christ you are saved, without him you are lost. ... You are going to live forever in heaven or you are going to live forever in hell. There's no other place--just the two. It is for you to decide."

He preached against sin with boldness and plainness.

"I'm against liquor. I'll kick it as long as I have a foot. I'll fight it as long as I have a fist. I'll butt it as long as I have a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to Glory and it goes home to perdition."

"America needs a tidal-wave of the old-time religion. America needs to be taken down to God's bathhouse and the hose turned on her. And the time isn't far distant when the wheels of God's judgment are going to go sweeping through this old God-hating world" (Billy Sunday).

"If the church was down on her face in prayer they would be more concerned with the fellow outside. The church has degenerated into a third-rate amusement joint."

"What would you think of the fire department of Des Moines if it slept while the town burned? You would condemn them and I will condemn you if you sleep and let men and women go to hell."

"You cannot pray 'Thy kingdom come' and then go and do the things that make the devil laugh."

"Temptation is the devil looking through the keyhole. Yielding is opening the door and inviting him in."

"You can go to hell just as fast from the church door as from the grog shop or bawdy house."

"A lady came to me and said, 'Mr. Sunday, I know I have a bad temper, but I am over with it in a minute.' So is the shotgun, but it blows everything to pieces."

"Bad temper. I say you abuse your wife, you go cussing around if supper isn't ready on time; cussing because the coffee isn't hot; you dig your fork into a hunk of beefsteak and



put it on your plate and then you say: "Where did you get this, in the harness shop? Take it out and make a hinge for the door.' Then you go to your store, or office, and smile and everybody thinks you are an angel about to sprout wings and fly to the imperial realm above. Bad temper! You growl at your children; you snap and snarl around the house until they have to go to the neighbors to see a smile. They never get a kind word - no wonder so many of them go to the Devil quick."

"Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile."

"Some ministers say, 'If you don't repent, you'll die and go to a place, the name of which I can't pronounce.' I can. You'll go to hell!"

"I have more respect for the devil than some preachers I have met: the devil believes the Bible is the Word of God."

"Whiskey is all right in its place--but its place is in hell."

"They take a woman and put her on the stage with clothes enough to make a pair of leggings for a hummingbird."

"You Methodists can talk about infant baptism and the Presbyterians can howl about perseverance and half of your members will persevere in hell, and Baptists can howl about water and half of your members are going where you can't get a drop."

"Lord save us from off-handed, flabby-cheeked, brittle-boned, weak-kneed, thin-skinned, pliable, plastic, spineless, effeminate, ossified three-karat Christianity."

Sunday was known for his spectacular preaching displays, pounding the pulpit, standing on chairs, throwing things, sliding, jumping, falling, staggering, whirling, doing handsprings, jumping on top of the pulpit and waving an American flag. One newspaper said, "Sunday was a whirling dervish that pranced and cavorted and strode and bounded and pounded all over his platform and left them thrilled and bewildered as they have never been before." Another newspaper had the following description in 1915:

"He wildly tore across the stage, thrashing his arms, kicking, bellowing. He jumped on a chair, then on the pulpit, bent backward like the foil of a fencer's sword, and bobbed back and forth. The thousands in the frenzied crowd gasped. Leaping down, he began to shadowbox the Devil, then threw himself prostrate on the floor. He roared at the crowd, 'If you want to live in sin, all right, live in sin, and go to hell in the end'" (Roger Brunson, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big-time American Evangelism*).

"As thousands of enthralled worshipers watched, Sunday would run, jump, hurl unseen baseballs, smash imaginary home runs, slide for home plate, and shout in umpire-like fashion 'you're out,' thus announcing God's judgment on the unsaved. ... One reporter estimated that as he preached Sunday traveled a mile during each sermon and more than 100 miles in every campaign" (Robert Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

He held the Bible as infallibly inspired and had no sympathy with theological liberalism. "Infidelity is rampant and rank unbelief is preached from many a pulpit ... there are lots of preachers who don't know Jesus. They know about him, but they don't know him. ... the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man is the worst rot that ever was dug out of hell and every minister who preaches it is a liar" (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, pp. 410, 411).



He said, "Nowadays we think we are too smart to believe in the Virgin birth of Jesus and too well educated to believe in the Resurrection. That's why people are going to the devil in multitudes." He called evolution a "bastard theory." He said, "This is not a world of chance. God don't wind it up and then throw away the key and let her rip till she runs down. Nothing comes by chance."

### Sunday's Large Campaigns

Beginning in 1909, Sunday had massive meetings until the early 1920s. His first large meeting was in 1909 in Spokane, Washington. This was his first campaign in a city of 100,000 people.

In his heyday in the 1910s, Sunday traveled with a corps of more than 20 assistants. He had an advance agent, a chorister, a research assistant, a publicity manager, a private secretary, a personal masseur, a cook, a housekeeper, and a man to supervise the construction of the revival tabernacles.

Sunday pioneered the construction of massive wooden buildings that he called "tabernacles." They had been used previously by some evangelists, but it was Billy Sunday who took tabernacle preaching to a new level.

Sawdust was used as covering for the dirt floors to dampen the sound and minimize the dust. The saying "hitting the sawdust trail" referred to responding to evangelistic invitations.

The tabernacle in Joplin, Missouri, in 1909, was 175 by 140 feet, and seated 6,500 plus 500 in the choir. It was erected in four days by a crew of 50 men. It included a rudimentary sound amplification system and a heavily sound-proofed nursery room in one corner.

In Philadelphia in 1915, three million people attended the meetings held by Sunday and his co-evangelists, and there were more than 41,000 professions of faith.

In Baltimore in 1916, the tabernacle seated 15,000, with standing room for 5,000. On the last day, 24,000 packed into the building four separate times, so that Sunday preached to about 96,000 people that one day. Twenty-three thousand professed faith in Christ, including five professional baseball players on the last night.

In Detroit in 1916, there were 1 million attendees and 25,000 "converts," according to the local newspapers. The massive tabernacle held a choir of 5,000. "Dime-store king S.S. Kresge moved out of his palatial home so Sunday could use it as his battlefield headquarters. Automaker Henry M. Leland gave him a new \$8,000 Cadillac as a 'personal thanks offering.' After a visit with Sunday, Henry Ford said that if Michigan voted for prohibition, the breweries could be converted to produce denatured alcohol as auto fuel for his cars. The ex-governor, Detroit police chief and some pro baseball players appeared with him at the revivals. And, merchant J. L. Hudson was a regular at the sermons" (David Stewart, "Billy Sunday: Courageous Man of God," nd.).

The tabernacle built on Broadway for his New York crusade in 1917 seated 20,000, but it wasn't large enough. 40,000 were turned away in some services. The ten-week crusade had 100,000 professions. He dined with Theodore Roosevelt, former U.S. president, in the home of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In the Plaza Hotel, he preached to 1,000 millionaires, 221 of whom made professions. The Episcopal churches supported the crusade ("Episcopal Clergy to Aid Billy Sunday; Please Active Support," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1916). The entire freewill offering of \$125,000 was donated by Sunday to the Red Cross and other WWI charities (Robert Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

The tabernacle in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1918, was 224 by 183 feet, and was equipped with electric lighting, plumbing, and heating. It had 4,500 seats for the public, 1,000 seats for the choir, and standing room for 2,000. It took three weeks to build, and total of 18,000 attended Sunday's first three sermons on May 25.

In 1918, Sunday built a 16,000-seat tabernacle in Chicago by Lake Michigan. He filled the building multiple times each day. There was daily coverage in the *Chicago Tribune*. The offering of \$54,000 was donated by Sunday to the Pacific Garden Mission. In the 1920s, Chicago was known for mobsters, whiskey bootleggers, jazz, and moral filth. Sunday's Chicago campaign has been mocked in modern pop culture. There even is a "Billy Sunday Bar" in Chicago. The 1922 song "Chicago (That Toddling Town)" boasted that Chicago was "the town that Billy Sunday couldn't shut down." Paying "homage to the partying and excess of the roaring '20s," the song was made famous by Frank Sinatra in the 1957 movie *The Joker Is Wild*, about a 1920s Chicago night-club entertainer. Sinatra's most famous song was "I Did It My Way," which boasts of a life lived without God. "I faced it all and I stood tall, and did it my way. ... And may I say, not in a shy way--oh, no, oh, no, not me--I did it my way. For what is a man, what has he got? If not himself, then he has not, to say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels. ... Yes, it was my way." Sinatra died in 1998 and has had opportunity to reflect on that philosophy before the one in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Ac. 17:28), before whom we are accountable for all things. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ec. 12:14).

In 1920, Sunday had a 7,000-seat tabernacle built for the Winona Lake Bible Conference grounds. It was used for the annual conferences, evangelistic crusades, and other events and stood until 1992.

Sunday's meetings got major newspaper coverage wherever he went. Some printed his sermons in their entirety plus testimonials of the converts. For example, in Richmond, Indiana, in 1922, the *Palladium*, the city's most prominent newspaper, published a daily two-page supplement focused on the Sunday meetings every day of the six-week campaign. The paper assigned a team of reporters to attend the meetings "with a direct telephone line from the Tabernacle to the *Palladium* office in order that there be no delay." Reporters in the various towns tried to outdo one another in describing Sunday's colorful phrases and preaching antics. Some of the old newspaper reports can be found today online. Not all of the coverage was positive by any means, but it was all advertising for Sunday's campaigns and message.

Sunday was a friend of Bob Jones, Sr., and was a regular speaker at Bob Jones University. Homer Rodeheaver was also associated with Bob Jones University in the 1940s. An auditorium there is named for him.

Sunday organized **prayer meetings** that preceded his campaigns and continued during the campaigns. For example, in Richmond, Indiana, in 1909, the city was divided into 10 sections, “each with their own superintendent responsible for prayer meetings.” In Philadelphia, in 1915, the evangelistic crusade was preceded for months by prayer meetings attended by 100,000 people.

### **Sunday’s Music**

From 1910-1929, Sunday’s song leader was **HOMER RODEHEAVER** (1880-1955). He was called “Rody” and he never married.

He grew up in a log cabin in Tennessee and studied law at Ohio Wesleyan University, where he learned to play the trombone. After surrendering to the ministry, he worked from 1904-1910 with evangelist W.E. Biederwolf.

He was a dynamic choir director and song leader after the fashion of Ira Sankey. A “genial, extroverted personality,” Rodeheaver was a master at preparing the crowd for Sunday’s preaching.

“When the evangelist himself is ready to preach, the crowd has been worked up into a glow and fervor that make it receptive to his message” (William Ellis, *Billy Sunday the Man and His Message*).

Will Rogers said, “Rody is the fellow that can make you sing whether you want to or not. I think he has more terrible voices in what was supposed to be unison than any man in the world. Everyone sings for Rody.”

Once Rodeheaver met John D. Rockefeller, Sr., America’s richest man, on a golf course, and they sang together the hymn, “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to God, Dear Lord” (“Homer A. Rodeheaver Dies,” *Warsaw Times-Union*, Dec. 19, 1955).

Rodeheaver introduced new revivalist songs such as “Brighten the Corner” and “Since Jesus Came into My Heart.” He kept everything pepped up, instructing the choirs to “go at it like selling goods” and encouraged the two accompanying pianists to “hustle along with a swing.” Compared with Sankey and Alexander, there was even “less emphasis on doctrinal hymns.” He used a huge variety of music, from “Brighten the Corner” to Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus.”

Rodeheaver led with his trombone. “He often led congregational singing with his trombone, switching from playing to directing halfway through the song and then allowing the trombone to hang on his arm at the elbow.” (On a visit to the Holy Land, Rodeheaver played “Brighten the Corner” on his trombone as he floated in the hyper-salty water of the Dead Sea.)

Rodeheaver trained and led the massive choirs (from 500 to 2,000) composed of local volunteers. He also used ensembles and soloists.

There was enthusiastic crowd participation.

There was antiphonal singing, with the choir singing one line of a hymn and the last ten rows of people in the rear of the tabernacle singing the answering line.

The people were invited to choose their favorite hymns.

The choir sometimes listened while the audience sang.

The massive, well-prepared choirs and the enthusiastic singing of the huge audiences must have been something to hear. A common remark was “I never expect to hear such singing again till I get to Heaven.” In the 1970s, we heard something like this at Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The exuberant singing of the crowds numbering in the

thousands, with the large, well-trained choir, and the orchestra, was glorious, and I have not heard anything like it since.

The godly effect of the evangelistic campaign music was spread across the communities.

“Boys and men on the street whistle Gospel songs. The echoes of Tabernacle music may be heard long after Mr. Sunday has gone from a community in ten thousand kitchens and in the shops and factories and stores of the community. ... The campaign music carries the campaign message farther than the voice of any man could ever penetrate” (Ellis, *Billy Sunday the Man and His Message*).

Rodeheaver was one of the first to record gospel songs, recording more than 500 in his lifetime. The first recordings on cylinders and discs were for Victor in 1913 and then for Edison in 1914. He started his own music publishing company in 1920 and a record label in 1922 called Rainbow, the first record company devoted solely to gospel music. He founded the Rodeheaver School of Music, which was an annual two-week seminar designed to “stimulate laymen to develop their musical abilities for their local churches.” It was held during the Winona Lake Bible Conferences. He also founded Rainbow Ranch, a boy’s orphanage, in Palatka, Florida.

Rodeheaver singing “The Unclouded Day” can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAgun-X58kE>

### **Sunday’s Moral Reform**

Sunday’s preaching was focused on moral reform. He advertised his campaigns as “civic clean-ups.” He preached against dancing, card playing, gambling, theater-going, commercial dishonesty, but especially against drinking. He made war against “the damnable liquor traffic.” He said, “Whiskey and beer are all right in their place, but their place is in hell.”

“In one of his sermons for men, Sunday talked about three of his Chicago teammates, Mike Kelly, Ned Williamson, and Frank Flint, star players who drank themselves into illness and early death. At the end of the sermon, Sunday asked, ‘Did they win the game of life or did I?’” (Wendy Knickerbocker, “Billy Sunday,” Society for American Baseball Research).

Sunday’s preaching and campaigning was a major force in the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919, prohibiting the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquor.

Consider his famous pledge:

“And I want to take a pledge and this audience to join me in pledge—that you will never rest until this old God-hating, Christ-hating, whiskey soaked, Sabbath-breaking, blaspheming, infidel, bootlegging old world is bound to the cross of Jesus Christ by the golden chains of love.”

What does that mean? There is no such pledge in the New Testament Epistles. It’s a social gospel. A pledge to not rest until this world is reformed is not the Commission that Christ gave His disciples after His resurrection (Matthew 28:18-20). It’s not what we see the apostles doing in the book of Acts.

Such a pledge is not the gospel, and it is not salvation. Christ is going to deal with this world’s sin and idolatry, but it won’t be by the golden chains of love; it will be by a rod of iron.

## Sunday's Popularity

In 1914, Sunday was ranked number eight in a nationwide poll of “the greatest man in America.” In 1917, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., said, “Mr. Sunday is a rallying center around whom all people interested in good things may gather” (*Boston Herald*, Jan. 19, 1917). Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson publicly expressed their regard for Sunday. He visited Wilson in the White House and the governors of some of the states where he preached. In 1918, during World War I, he prayed for the opening session of the U.S. Congress and was interrupted three times by applause! John LeLand, president of the Cadillac Motor company, called Sunday “this great plumed knight clothed in the armor of God” (*Boston Herald*, Jan. 12, 1919).

He had financial backing from some of America's richest men, including John Wanamaker (department stores), John D. Rockefeller (oil), Jr., S.S. Kresge (departments stores), Frank Munsey (newspapers), J. Ogden Armour (meatpacking), and John Studebaker (automobiles), George W. Perkins (insurance, steel, banking), Henry C. Frick (coke, steel), Elbert H. Gary (founder of U.S. Steel), and Josephus Daniels (newspapers).

## Billy Sunday the Millionaire

The Bible says, “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Co. 9:13-14), and, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Ti. 5:18).

The apostle wrote that, but he also wrote the following:

“Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. ... for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void” (1 Co. 9:12, 15).

“And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*. ... But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we” (2 Co. 11:9-12).

“Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?” (2 Co. 12:17-18).

Paul was very careful with money so as not to give just cause for anyone to discredit his ministry.

Billy Sunday did not follow this example.

He was probably the first evangelist millionaire. “Homer Rodeheaver believed him to be a millionaire by 1920, claiming that Dun and Bradstreet estimated his wealth at \$1.5 million that year. ... He reveled in fashionable clothes, stylish cars, a rural retreat in the Hood River country of Oregon, and all the other amenities of life his income made possible” (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

A million dollars in 1920 is equal to \$13 million today (dollartimes.com).

This amassing of great wealth was widely criticized and was a hindrance to Sunday's ministry. Even a sympathetic biographer observed,

“There was something fundamentally immoral about asking people to make sacrificial monetary contributions at spiritual revival meetings and then walking away with a large part of the take for personal use. It was especially unpalatable when the evangelist and his wife already had money in several banks, owned their own house plus recreational property, and held the second deeds of trust on numerous farms” (Lyle Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*).

### **Sunday's Conversion Statistics**

As already noted, Sunday claimed to have preached to 100 million people (before radio) and to have had 1 million converts.

There was a lot of good fruit. There were life-changing conversions, drunkards saved, wayward children restored, the moral improvement of communities. There was a lot of prayer, and those prayers were answered.

An example was Al Saunders, who was connected with the liquor business in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and attended a Sunday crusade just to cause trouble but was converted instead. He had told people that he would run Sunday out of town. He publicly testified of faith in Christ before his old friends and left the liquor trade. Later he traveled to Sunday's home in Trenton, New Jersey, and apologized to him in person for trying to harm his ministry.

At the same time, a large percentage of the professions were not biblical conversions.

We have seen that Billy Sunday's messages were focused on reformation and social change, and the gospel was not always clear.

Then consider Sunday's altar calls:

**“Sunday's altar call was painless, nothing like Jesus' narrow gate.** Sunday would ask, ‘Do you want God's blessing on you, your home, your church, your nation, on New York? If you do, raise your hands. ... How many of you men and women will jump to your feet and come down and say, Bill, here's my hand for God, for home, for my native land, to live and conquer for Christ?’ Shaking Billy's hand signified getting right with God. In spite of Sunday's many converts (he claimed one million professions in over 300 revivals), it has been questioned how many actually became church members or were sure about the meaning of their conversion” (“Era of the Evangelist,” Christianity.com, Apr. 28, 2010).

**“Sunday's invitations to come forward after his sermons were often so loosely phrased as to lack any real religious content.** ‘Do you believe it's right and manly to be a Christian? Then come on down. If you don't, stay where you are.’ Or, ‘I want the inspiration of taking the hand of every fellow who says I'm with you for Jesus Christ and for truth. Come on. You've been mighty fine tonight.’ Or, ‘Come on down and take my hand against booze, for Jesus Christ, for your flag’” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 434).

Sunday considered the Philadelphia campaign of 1915 to be his most successful, but a year later, one of the cooperating pastors said that of the 41,000 converts, only 12,000 joined a church and only 5,000 of these were confessions for the first time. Of those 5,000 “many did not stick and those who are still in the churches are of a wandering disposition and not very

loyal to their pastors.” Of the 7,000 who were revived, most had slipped back into the world (*Watchman-Examiner*, June 15, 1916).

Of Sunday’s New York City crusade, which had 98,000 professions, one of the most avid supporters said that “the meetings were a failure when counted in terms of the additions to the church life” (*Watchman-Examiner*, Jan. 3, 1918). Ten years later, “only 200 church members could be traced to the Sunday meetings” (*Literary Digest*, Oct. 8, 1927).

There was often a decline in church membership in the years following the Sunday campaigns.

“Statistical analysis covering the five years before a revival and the five years afterward show that the immediate increase was usually counterbalanced by a precipitous decline thereafter. Wanamaker’s Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, for example, had 3549 members the year before Sunday’s revival, 3796 at the end of the revival year, and only 1945 members five years later. Cortland Myers’ Tremont Temple in Boston had 2507 members the year before the revival, 3046 the year after, and only 2783 five years later. The First Methodist church of the Rev. H.I. Rasmus in Spokane reported 1500 members the year before Sunday came, 1800 the year after the revival, and 701 members five years later” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, pp. 430, 431).

Obviously, the churches themselves were not being built up in the faith by these campaigns. The focus simply wasn’t on the New Testament church.

R.A. Torrey (1856-1928), one of the most prominent evangelists in the heyday of America’s revivals, said that he believed that only 10% of those who professed to be believers in his day were really converted (William Ashbrook, *Evangelicalism The New Neutralism*, p. 118).

Not only were a great many of Sunday’s conversions a sham when analyzed from a biblical perspective, but the moral reforms were short-lived.

Sunday’s massive revival campaigns across America in the 1910s were followed by the Roaring Twenties.

The 18th Amendment in 1919, prohibiting the manufacture, transportation, and sell of intoxicating liquor, was repealed in 1933, two years before Sunday died.

Sunday’s crusades were a flash in the pan as America continued to rush pell mell toward hell. Nonetheless, she was warned.

### **Sunday’s Last Years**

By the 1920s, Sunday’s popularity was waning. He was mostly limited to preaching meetings in the Southern states where he was still popular and his straight-forward preaching was still acceptable, but even there the meetings weren’t very large.

His final city-wide meeting was held in 1930.

America was changing dramatically, always for the worse, always down, always moving away from her biblical heritage.

Sunday saw the Great Depression as a judgment from God and a kindness from God to bring America to repentance. In 1930, a year after the Wall Street crash, Sunday told a crowd in Hutchinson, Kansas,

**“What’s hurting us is too much prosperity. ... Too much wealth, too much materialism, too much prosperity. ... One reason of our ... modernism, our falling faith in God, and falling interest in religion is because we are too prosperous, too wealthy. Let me tell you,**



**if America does not turn away from material things and turn our eyes to God, America will sink to the depths of Hell.”**

From then until his death in 1935, Sunday preached one-church revivals. In 1930, he turned 68 and his health was declining.

The difference between his meetings in the 1910s and those of the 1930s was shocking. For example, when he preached in Detroit in 1916, the crowds were at least 1 million, with 25,000 or more professions, and the last night's offering was \$50,000. When he returned to Detroit in 1934, the crowds were very small, the number of converts minuscule, and the offering was \$2,000. When no one heeded his call to come to the altar, Sunday said “This town is as different from the Detroit I knew 18 years ago as sickness is from health.”

Sunday's income dropped dramatically, and he put great pressure in his small meetings for offerings. “At times in the 1920s, as his popularity declined and his income shrank, the revivalist's calls for contributions grew so unseemly that even such longtime associates as Homer Rodeheaver regarded them as inappropriate and detrimental to his boss's effectiveness” (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

Billy Sunday's final meeting was a Sunday meeting on October 27, 1935, at the First Methodist Church, Mishawaka, Indiana. There were 44 professions.

He died of a heart attack on November 6 at age 72.

His memorial service was held a few days later at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. As he lay in state, his casket was viewed by more than 3,000. Some 3,500 attended the memorial service. The sermon, preached by Harry Ironside, was titled “Billy Sunday's Spiritual History-- Without Christ; In Christ; For Christ; With Christ.”

### **Sunday's Reprobate Children**

Billy and Nell Sunday are a loud warning about the lack of biblical wisdom in raising children. All three of their boys were moral reprobates.

At the end of his life, Sunday lamented, “The great tragedy of my life is that though I have led thousands to Christ, my own sons are not saved.”

Billy Sunday's boys cannot blame their unbelief and reprobation on their father. They had the Bible; they knew the truth; they could have been converted through repentance and faith in Christ (as opposed to a nominal “profession”) and could have surrendered to God's will. They made their choices.

At the same time, the Word of God teaches us the solemn truth that children are the Lord's (“behold, all souls are mine,” Eze. 18:4) and they are loaned to parents by Him that they might be raised for Him as a godly seed (Mal. 2:15). Parents are responsible to train up their children in the way they should go (Pr. 22:6). The fathers are to be the spiritual heads of the home (Eph. 6:4), and the mothers are to be the keepers of the home (Tit. 2:4-5).

Billy Sunday was on the road most of the time. His son George wrote in the 1920s, “Our dad ... is rather neglectful of his boys, doesn't come and see us very often, but we understand” (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

When a father is called to preach and be away from the family a considerable amount of time, he must make sure that his family is taken care of spiritually and his children are not neglected. That obligation cannot be given to anyone else. It is “ye fathers” to whom God gives the responsibility to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). He

must make sure that the children are brought up right. He doesn't do everything, but he oversees everything. The "buck stops" with the father.

Billy Sunday was on the road most of the time and left this great task to nannies and public school teachers.

Instead of raising the children in godly discipline and wisdom, Sunday spoiled them. The Sundays were "overly indulgent, spoiling their offspring, especially the boys to the point of damaging their character" (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*). The boys were "spoiled, irresponsible, and dependent upon their parents to bail them out of their difficulties."

Further, the mother left the home to work full-time in the evangelistic business.

A major key in raising a godly seed for the Lord is the presence of a godly mother who is the "guide of the house" (1 Ti. 5:14). The husband is the head, but the wife is the guide. This is the Greek *oikodespoteo*, which is a combination of *oiko* (house) and *despotes* (ruler). It is a strong word, meaning master of the house, governor, manager. This was the role that Joseph had under Potiphar. "... he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand" (Ge. 39:4). The wife governs the household affairs under her husband's authority and oversight. This is the exalted biblical role of a wife. She is the household governor. She orders it. She focuses her attention on it. The work of a wife and mother is very large and important. Elsewhere, the wife/mother is called the "keeper at home" (Tit. 2:4). This is the Greek *oikouros*, which is a combination of *oikos* (home) and *ouros* (a keeper). It means "one who guards the house, one who stays at home, domestically inclined." "One who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care" (*Complete Word Study Bible*). We see this in the Proverbs 31 woman who "looketh well to the ways of her household" (Pr. 31:27). What "keepers at home" means is that the chief responsibility of the Christian wife and mother is her home and she should focus her attention on this and not do *anything* that would cause her to neglect it. No one can take the place of a wife and mother, and if she neglects her duty toward the husband or children, great harm results. The godly wife does everything she can to make the home what God wants it to be. It's a very big job. She must concentrate her attention on developing a sober, discreet mind by a serious relationship with the Word of God and a testing mindset (Tit. 2:4). She must develop and pursue chastity and goodness (Tit. 2:5). She must study how to love her husband, how to be obedient to him, how to help him, how to encourage him (Tit. 2:4). She must study how to love her children, how to understand them, how to discipline them, how to educate them, how to teach them to go in God's will (Tit. 2:4). She is a friend, a lover, a nurse, a chef, an organizer, an educator, a disciplinarian, an evangelist, a discipler. She must be a Bible student and a student of life. She must understand nutrition, diet, and healthcare. She must know how to honor her husband and how to reach the hearts of her children. She must be the teacher of her children. She needs a good education in general and a good Bible education in particular.

Many evangelists and traveling preachers have raised their children for Christ by taking their responsibility seriously, by making sure that the mother was present as the keeper of the home in obedience to God's Word, by staying in effectual communication with the children, by overseeing everything and making certain that things were OK, and by intervening whenever there were signs of trouble. John R. Rice did this. (See "John R. Rice" in the chapter "Southern Fundamental Baptists.")

Billy Sunday knew the importance of motherhood. In a sermon by that title he said, "Being a king, emperor, or president is mighty small potatoes compared to being a mother. Commanding an army is little more than sweeping a street compared with training a boy or

girl. The mother of Moses did more for the world than all the kings that Egypt ever had. Oh, you wait until you reach the mountains of eternity, then read the mothers' names in God's Hall of Fame." He also said, "If every cradle was rocked by a good Christian mother, the devil would bank his fires and hell would be for rent."

But Nell Sunday (also called Ma) traveled with Billy as his business manager, beginning in 1908, when the boys were 15 (George), 7 (William), and 1 (Paul). Nell "managed the campaign organization and energized the Sunday publicity machine." "For the next twenty-seven years, she acted as ex officio chief of staff, helped promote evangelistic work among women, assisted with public relations, and served as general factotum" (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

A "factotum" is "a person having many diverse activities or responsibilities" and "who serves in a wide range of capacities." That Nell Sunday was a "factotum" wasn't the problem. It was that she was a factotum in matters that caused her to neglect the home. A mother can be a "factotum" *and* be a keeper and guide of the home. In fact, every "keeper of the home" mother is a factotum! That is a good description of the Proverbs 31 woman.

Nell also wrote a newspaper advice column called "Mrs. Billy Sunday's Column." She was a forceful, bossy woman. Once while being introduced at Grace Theological Seminary by Alva McClain, the president, she said, "You sit down now so I can talk to these young people about the Lord" (Roger Bruns, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and the Big-Time American Evangelism*, p. 300).

All of the Sunday boys turned out to be drunkards with wretched family lives (nine marriages between them). The ex-wives extorted large sums of money from Billy and Nell "to keep them silent about their sons' infidelities." All of the Sunday boys died before age 40: George, of suicide after being arrested for drunkenness and auto theft; Billy Jr., in a drunken car crash; Paul, in an airplane crash.

In the 1940s, Ma Sunday was pushing for women working during the war. In a newspaper column entitled "Having Faith in Women," her unscriptural feminist thinking was showing when she said, "... at last, the doors of the Doll House have been opened and women have been invited to come into the great world outside."

It appears that she did regret her role in her sons' downfall.

"Yet there is evidence that she, too, felt more than a little responsibility for the mistakes of her sons. Grady Wilson, an associate of Billy Graham, recalled an evening in Atlanta early in the young evangelist's ministry when Graham and several members of his team went out for a snack. Ma Sunday happened to be in the city, and they invited her to join them. According to Wilson, with tears running down her cheeks, she admonished her young friends, 'Boys, whatever you do, don't neglect your family. I did. I traveled with Pa all over the country, and I sacrificed my children. Mrs. Danielle Cochrane Brown recalled that when she was a child, the Sundays frequently visited in her home. One of the things she remembered most vividly from those occasions was Ma Sunday's words, 'Take care of your little boys. Take care of your little boys'" (Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*).

The only Sunday child that turned out right for the Lord was the first child, Helen, who was grown by the time her mother abandoned the home to be a business manager.

## “Uncle Bud” Robinson (1860-1942)

Reuben A. (“Uncle Bud”) Robinson was a famous Holiness evangelist.

He was born in a one-room log cabin in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee to a poor hillbilly family, number 8 of 13 children. It was the year that Abraham Lincoln was elected to the White House and the eve of the American Civil War. Robinson’s father had once been prosperous, but he was ruined by his addiction to alcohol. By the time Bud was born, he was a moonshiner. He died when Bud was 12, and four years later his mother moved the family to Texas. It took six days to travel the 100 miles by foot, wagon, and rail. “Bud worked on a farm and joined the wild town life; he gambled at cards, attended horse races, danced, and drank. He was known as ‘a tough one’ among the Texas boys.”

After arriving in Texas, Bud’s mother was saved and she began praying for her hard-living son. In 1880, at age 20, he attended a Methodist tent meeting and went forward to receive Christ. He said the evangelist “preached on heaven until I wanted to go there, then he preached on hell until I was sure I was going there. Next he preached on Jesus and His crucifixion until I was ready to shoot the first fella that said a word against Jesus Christ.” After resisting the Spirit’s conviction, he surrendered to Christ. He said, “Jesus came down and put His clean arm around my dirty neck and then He put His other arm around the Father’s neck and He drew us together and introduced us and we have been well acquainted ever since.”

Robinson immediately threw away his gun and his playing cards. That night he was called to preach, but he first had to learn how to read, as he had not attended one day of school to that time. He was helped by a Sunday School teacher who gave him a five cent New Testament. With some help, he learned to read the Bible, starting with the Gospel of Matthew.

He was soon licensed to preach and traveled from place to place on a pony. In the first four years he had 300 conversions but received a total of only \$16.

He had a speech impediment. “He stuttered so badly and had such a lisp until he could hardly be understood. As time went on, he lost his stuttering but never his lisp.” It was said that when God first called him to preach, he “stuttered so badly that he could hardly tell his name.”

It was said that he was “just himself, totally unaffected, always sweet-tempered, a friend to everybody.” He was known for his humor and “homespun wit.”

At a meeting in 1939, he began his message by saying, “You know, I’ve been reading the papers, and they are full of war news. It looks like Hitler of Germany, Mussolini of Italy, and Tojo of Japan, are going to start a world war, try to lick the world, and knock God off the throne. But I had a talk with the Father, and He tells me He doesn’t intend to VACATE!!!” (C.T. Corbett, *Bud Robinson Stories and Sketches*).

For one year in 1891 and 1892, Robinson attended Southwestern University as a special student in a “prep school.” This was his only formal education, but he read a lot, had an excellent memory, and could quote 20% of the Bible by heart.

At Southwestern he met “a cultured young school teacher” named Sallie Harper and they were married in 1893. He considered her one of his three greatest assets, the other two being salvation and the call to preach. He called her “Miss Sally.”

He was affiliated with the Methodists, then the Salvation Army, and finally the Church of the Nazarene, but his ministry was interdenominational. He preached to churches representing 72 denominations.

It is estimated that he traveled over two million miles, preached 33,000 sermons, and saw more than 100,000 conversions.

His 14 books sold more than 500,000 copies. The first one was his autobiography called *Sunshine and Smiles*. He wrote a column for the *Pentecostal Herald* called "The Bud Robinson Corner" and one for the *Herald of Holiness* called "Good Samaritan Chat." He personally obtained 53,000 subscriptions to the *Herald of Holiness*.

During a meeting in California in 1919, he was struck by an automobile and thrown into the air. He "was taken to a hospital in which was considered a dying condition. Immediately the faithful brethren began to pray for their 'Brother beloved' ... not only were prayers arising all over the nation, but money began to come in to meet the mounting hospital and medical bills. About \$600 a month was needed, and as every bill came due, there was enough finance to meet the demand" (C.T. Corbett, *Bud Robinson*). Five months later he was back on the road with his evangelistic campaigns.

Each morning he prayed, "O Lord, give me a backbone as big as a sawlog and ribs like sleepers under the church floor; put iron shoes on me and galvanized breeches and hang a wagon load of determination in the gable-end of my soul, and help me to sign the contract to fight the devil as long as I have a vision and bite him as long as I have a tooth, and then gum him till I die. Amen."

Following are a couple of Uncle Bud Robinson's adventures. These were recorded by C.T. Corbett, who traveled at times with Robinson and knew him well.

Some place in the east, a youth came up to Uncle Bud on a busy street corner.

"Say, Mister, would you give me a dime for a bite to eat?" asked the lad.

"No, son, I'll not do that but I'll take you in and get you a meal."

As they sat together, Uncle Bud told the boy the story of Jesus and His love for young fellows like him. They parted and each went his way.

Some years later at a western camp meeting, Uncle Bud left his room and was walking across the grounds to the tabernacle. A car stopped and a fine appearing young couple with a little boy got out. The three of them hurriedly approached the evangelist.

With joy the young man shouted, "I want to see you, Brother Robinson." "Sure enough and what for?" Uncle Bud returned.

"Do you remember me?"

"No, I guess I don't."

"Possibly about ten years ago now, I asked you for a dime to get a bite to eat and you took me in a restaurant and bought me a meal."

"Yes, I remember that now."

"Well, here is that boy you helped, and this is my wife and son. We are all on the Lord's side 100% and I'm pastor of one of the holiness churches out here. Those words you told me about Jesus never got away from me."

"Glory be to Jesus," shouted old Bud, "Take that, ol' devil. And to think that I only invested \$2 in this fine lad. Praise God forever, let's go to the meetin'."

One day Uncle Bud was sitting in the doorway of his tent between camp meeting services. Being a possessor of the "common-touch" any one could approach him. He loved company. A young couple stopped to talk to him.

"Uncle Bud, would you perform a marriage ceremony for young folk who want to get married?" the young lady asked.

"Well, now let's see, sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. Angel-girl, do you have Jesus in your heart and do you know that He saves you now?"

"I surely do, Uncle Bud," she answered without hesitation.

"That's fine. Son-boy, how about you, do you have Jesus in your heart?" "Naw, I ain't a Christian," he replied as he raised a tobacco-stained hand.

"Move along, young folk, I'm not going to tie one of God's little lambs to one of the devil's billy-goats. Move on, move on."

By reading his writings one can easily note there was a feeling of warm companionship between Bud Robinson and his mother. In the early 1920s he made a trip to "dear ol' Texas" to see her. Together, they sang, prayed and shouted in happy fellowship. She was well up in years and all knew she would not be long for this world.

Some months later, as she lay on her death bed, and being asked by those present, if she thought it best to send for her preacher boy. She replied, "No, children, don't you know Buddie is in a meeting and if he leaves it to watch me go to heaven a dozen souls might be lost."

That night, true to her prediction, as Buddie preached in an Oklahoma campaign a dozen men came to the altar of prayer. Shortly after the service was over, Bud Robinson received word that his mother had been translated.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter on the evangelistic/revivalist movement, Robinson preached an "entire sanctification" message, which is false doctrine.

### **"Gypsy" Smith (1860-1947)**

The British evangelist Rodney "Gypsy" Smith was born a tent in Epping Forest, six miles northeast of London. He was the fourth child of six.

He received no education as the gypsy family traveled from place to place in their horse-drawn wagon called a vardo. His father, Cornelius, sold horses, weaved baskets, made tin ware, and played a violin in drinking pubs while Rodney would dance and collect money. His mother Mary (called Polly) sold the wares made by Cornelius and engaged in some fortune telling, as gypsies were won't to do. Rodney said, "I had no education and no knowledge of 'gorgio' [non-gypsy] civilisation, and I grew up wild as the birds, frolicsome as the lambs, and as difficult to catch as the rabbits. All the grasses and flowers and trees of the field and all living things were my friends and companions."

When Rodney was five, his mother, Polly, died of smallpox. It is a frightful, disfiguring disease, with a fatality rate of about 30%, higher among babies. It is a highly-contagious, airborne-transmitted virus. It starts like a flu, with fever, muscle pain, fatigue, headache, back pain, nausea, vomiting, followed by lesions in the mouth, tongue, and throat, then a rash that begins on the forehead and face and spreads quickly to the whole body, turning into ugly

fluid-filled pox sores that scab over and leave deep, pitted scars. “In 18th-century Europe, it is estimated 400,000 people per year died from the disease, and one-third of the cases resulted in blindness” (“Smallpox,” WHO Factsheet). In the 20th century, it killed up to 300 million people (Koprowski, *Microbe Hunters, Then and Now*). As recently as 1967, there were 15 million cases annually. The first smallpox vaccine was invented by Edward Jenner in 1796, and through an unprecedented global vaccination effort beginning in the 1960s, naturally occurring smallpox has been eradicated.

During her terrible sickness, Polly told her husband that when she tried to pray “it seems as though a black hand comes before me and shows me all that I have done, and something whispers, There is no mercy for you!” Before that, his father had heard the gospel during three months in jail (on false charges, it was said), and though he wasn’t saved yet, he tried to explain salvation to his wife. Rodney describes what happened:

“After my father had told her all he knew of the Gospel she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Then he went outside, stood behind the wagon, and wept bitterly. When he went back again to see her she looked calmly into his face, and said with a smile: ‘I want you to promise me one thing. Will you be a good father to my children?’ He promised her that he would; at that moment he would have promised her anything. Again he went outside and wept, and while he was weeping he heard her sing -

“I have a Father in the promised land.

My God calls me, I must go

To meet Him in the promised land.”

“My father went back to her and said: ‘Polly, my dear, where did you learn that song?’ She said: ‘Cornelius, I heard it when I was a little girl. One Sunday my father’s tents were pitched on a village green, and seeing the young people and others going into a little school or church or chapel--I do not know which it was--I followed them in and they sang those words.’ It must have been twenty years or so since my mother had heard the lines. Although she had forgotten them all these years, they came back to her in her moments of intense seeking after God and His salvation. She could not read the Bible; she had never been taught about God and His Son, but these words came back to her in her dying moments and she sang them again and again. Turning to my father, she said, ‘I am not afraid to die now. I feel that it will be all right. I feel assured that God will take care of my children’” (*Gypsy Smith: His Life and Work*).

He continues,

“My mother had lived in a religious darkness that was all but unbroken during her whole life, but a ray of light had crept into her soul when she was a little girl, by the singing of this hymn. That was a part of the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. No minister ever looked near our gypsy-tent, no missionary, and no Christian worker. To me it is plain that it was the Holy Ghost who brought these things to her remembrance--as plain as the sun that shines, or the flowers that bloom, or the birds that sing. That little child’s song, heard by my mother as she wandered into that little chapel that Sunday afternoon, was brought back to her by the Spirit of God and became a ladder by which she climbed from her ignorance and superstition to the light of God and

the many mansions. And my mother is there, and although I cannot recall her face, I shall know it some day.

“One day I went to visit her grave in Norton churchyard. As may be imagined, that quiet spot in the lonely churchyard was sacred to my father and to us, and we came more often to that place than we should have done had it not been that there in the cold earth lay hidden from us a treasure that gold could not buy back. I shall never forget my first visit to that hallowed spot. Our tent was pitched three miles off. My sister Tilly and I--very little things we were--wandered off one day in search of mother's grave. It was early in the morning when we started. We wandered through fields, jumped two or three ditches, and those we could not jump we waded through. The spire of Norton church was our guiding star. We set our course by it. When we reached the churchyard we went to some little cottages that stood beside it, knocked at the doors and asked the people if they could tell us, which was mother's grave. We did not think it necessary to say who mother was or who we were. There was but one mother in the world for us. The good people were very kind to us. They wept quiet, gentle tears for the poor gipsy children, because they knew at once from our faces and our clothes that we were gipsies, and they knew what manner of death our mother had died. The grave was pointed out to us. When we found it, Tilly and I stood over it weeping for a long time, and then we gathered primrose and violet roots and planted them on the top. And we stood there long into the afternoon. The women from the cottages gave us food, and then it started to our memory that it was late, and that father would be wondering where we were. So I said, 'Tilly, we must go home,' and we both got on our knees beside the grave and kissed it. Then we turned our backs upon it and walked away. When we reached the gates that led out of the churchyard we looked back again, and I said to Tilly, 'I wonder whether we can do anything for mother?' I suddenly remembered that I had with me a gold-headed scarf-pin, which some one had given me. It was the only thing of any value that I ever had as a child. Rushing back to the grave, upon the impulse and inspiration of the moment, I stuck the scarf-pin into the ground as far as I could, and hurrying back to Tilly, I said, 'There, I have given my gold pin to my mother!' It was all I had to give. Then we went home to the tents and wagons. Father had missed us and had become very anxious. When he saw us he was glad and also very angry, intending, no doubt, to punish us for going away without telling him, and for staying away too long. He asked us where we had been. We said we had gone to mother's grave, without a word he turned away and wept bitterly.”

Rodney's father, Cornelius, was saved some time after his wife's death. Her passing was a great blow to him. He became miserable in his sin and wanted deliverance. He tried to stop sinning and to do right, but he found it impossible. One day he entered a beer-house with his brothers, Bartholomew and Woodlock, and the lady proprietor lent them a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*. None of them could read, but when they had a young man read it to them, Bartholomew exclaimed, “That is what I want, my burden removed. If God does not save me I shall die!” They all had the same desire. They attended gospel meetings and during the singing of “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood” and its refrain, “I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me,” Cornelius and Bartholomew were converted. Cornelius exclaimed that his burden was gone and “he felt so light that if the room had been full of eggs he could have walked through and not have broken one of them.”



The next day, Cornelius preached to the gypsies camped nearby and sang the part of “There Is a Foundation” that he had learned, and the oldest brother, Woodlock, and Cornelius’s two oldest children were saved.

Cornelius and his brothers formed an evangelistic team called “The Converted Gypsies.”

Soon after Cornelius’s conversion, Christmas came, and the six children asked their father, “What are we going to have tomorrow?” The father sadly replied, “I do not know, my boy.” The cupboard was bare and the purse was empty. The father would no longer play the fiddle in his accustomed saloons. Falling on his knees, he prayed, then told his children, “I do not know what we will have for Christmas dinner, but we shall sing.” And sing, they did...

Then we'll trust in the Lord,  
And He will provide;  
Yes, we'll trust in the Lord,  
And He will provide.

A knock sounded on the side of the van. “It is I,” said Mr. Sykes, the town missionary. “I have come to tell you that the Lord will provide. God is good, is He not?” Then he told them that three legs of mutton and other groceries awaited them and their relatives in the town. It took a wheelbarrow to bring home the load of groceries and the grateful gypsies never knew whom God used to answer their prayers (Ed Reese, *The Life and Ministry of Gipsy Smith*).

Rodney was saved at age 16 and taught himself to read. “He got a Bible, English dictionary and Bible dictionary and carried them everywhere causing people to laugh. ‘Never you mind,’ he would say, ‘One day I’ll be able to read them,’ adding, ‘and I’m going to preach too. God has called me to preach.’” (Ed Reese, *Rodney “Gypsy” Smith Evangelist*).

Later he said, “I didn’t go through your colleges and seminaries. They wouldn’t have me, but I have been to the feet of Jesus were the only true scholarship is learned.” He also said, “The way to Jesus is not by Cambridge and Oxford, Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Socrates, Plato, Shakespeare or the poets--it is over an old fashioned hill called Calvary.”

He loved to sing hymns and was known as “the singing gypsy boy.”

He began his preaching ministry at age 17 with the Salvation Army at the invitation of William Booth. It was said that he had 23,000 “decisions” during his six years in the Salvation Army.

It was also at age 17 that he married Annie Pennock, a girl he had won to the Lord. They had three children, two boys and a girl. The oldest, Albany, was an evangelist for 40 years and was known as “Gipsy Smith, Jr.” Albany’s son George was a Presbyterian pastor. Rodney’s second son, Alfred, was a Wesleyan pastor for 43 years. The daughter, Zillah, assisted her father in evangelistic campaigns, singing solos. She accompanied him on his six-month campaign in South Africa in 1904. She married a banker.

In 1882, Rodney began an independent ministry. He founded the Gypsy Gospel Wagon Mission to gypsies.

Doors were gradually open for large campaigns. He made about 45 trips to North America on ship and twice traveled around the world on preaching tours. His meetings drew massive crowds, as many as 15,000 in one service. He saw large numbers of converts. At Luton,

England, in 1899, there were 1,100; in Birmingham, 1,500; at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1900, 1,200. In 1904, during his six-month campaign in South Africa, 300,000 attended services and there were 18,000 “decisions.” In the Paris Opera House in 1909, 150 were converted “from the cream of Parisian society.” In a series of 50 meetings at Tremont Temple in Boston in 1906, the attendance was 116,000 and decisions totaled 2,290. In 1924, the nightly attendance at an eight-day meeting in Royal Albert Hall in London averaged 10,000.

Photos from Gypsy Smith’s ministry years can be seen at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GPzLCU4zhA>

During the Boston meeting, Smith met President Grover Cleveland, and Fanny Crosby sang one of her hymns.

In 1906, 116,000 attended his 50 meetings at the Tremont Temple in Boston and there were about 2,300 decisions.

In 1909, he spoke at the Paris Opera House to “the cream of French society” and had 150 converts.

During World War I (1914 to 1917), he made frequent trips to France to preach to the English troops, often visiting the front lines of that terrible conflict. For this he was made a member of the Order of the British Empire by King George VI.

In 1926, he preached in Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania and had 80,000 decisions.

In 1929, at age 69, he preached large meetings across America. There were tens of thousands at his meetings in Los Angeles, California, San Antonio, Texas, Atlanta, Georgia, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and other places, with 27,500 decisions. In Winston-Salem, 15,000 attended the final meeting.

In 1934, at age 75, he preached to 3,500 people in an open air meeting near the spot where his mother died. The North Methodist Mission was started out of that meeting. The next year, 10,000 attended an open air meeting in Epping Forest near the place of his birth.

He did not puff himself or allow others to puff him. “On January 1, 1896, he made his fifth trip to America and held a great campaign in the Peoples Temple in Boston. This was the city’s largest Protestant Church, with Pastor James Body Brady. Gypsy saw a sign outside the church, Gypsy Smith, the Greatest Evangelist in the World. He made them take it down” (Reese, *Rodney “Gypsy” Smith Evangelist*).

Gypsy Smith told of how an old farmer prayed for him,

“An old man, a farmer, prayed for me and said, ‘Lord, bless thy young servant. You are going to use him all over the world. Keep him low, Lord, don’t let him get heady, conceited. Keep him low; keep him low.’ And in the most exalted moments of my life, on five continents, before the leaders of the world, I’ve heard that old man pray, ‘Keep him low.’ And you know, you’ve got to keep there if you are going to be used. You can’t think yourself somebody when you are nobody. The thing to do is just to lie in the hands of Omnipotence and be used for His glory.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGSFowR5yYk>

He loved to sing and would sometimes sing during his preaching. One of these was his own song, “Not Dreaming.”

The world says I'm dreaming, but I know 'tis Jesus  
Who saves me from bondage and sin's guilty stain;  
He is my Lover, my Saviour, my Master.

'Tis He who has freed me from guilt and its pain.  
Let me dream on if I am dreaming;  
Let me dream on, my sins are gone;  
Night turns to dawn, love's light is beaming,  
So if I'm dreaming, let me dream on.  
My home in the Glory is fairer than morning,  
And Jesus my Saviour will welcome me there;  
No, I'm not dreaming! I'm awake, it is dawning,  
His Smile and His love I'll eternally share.  
The singing of Gypsy Smith can be heard at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlBrt0pmcKs>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYJ1vI6kRsI>

In 1937, Gypsy Smith's wife, Annie, died at age 79. A year later, the evangelist married Mary Alice Shaw. He was 78 and she was 27. "This, of course, brought some criticism. But it was a good marriage, for she helped him in his meetings, sang, did secretarial work, and later nursed him when his health failed."

From 1939 to 1945, he preached in the United States and Canada.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter on "The Evangelistic/Revivalist Movement," it is impossible to know how many people were actually born again under Gypsy Smith's ministry. The number of "decisions" were massive, but what did they represent? The Methodist doctrine of "backsliding," "falling away," and "losing salvation" muddied the waters. People didn't have a clear understanding of eternal justification and adoption and the everlasting consolation in Christ. We have no doubt that many were saved through Methodist ministries, but a great many also had a false understanding of the gospel, thinking that their works had something to do with "holding out faithful."

But Gypsy Smith's emphasis on the Christ-filled life and full surrender to Christ was biblical and powerful.

"God's program is that the whole of life should be permeated with Christ."

"If a man's religion does not get into every detail of his life he may profess to be a saint, but he's a fraud. Religion ought to permeate life and make it beautiful--as lovely as a breath of perfume from the garden of the Lord."

"If young converts wish to maintain their religious life strong, fresh, and secure, they must throw the whole of themselves into it; they must hold nothing back."

Gypsy Smith continued to preach until age 87. He died of a heart attack on the *Queen Mary*, traveling from England to America. He was headed to Florida for some sunshine.

## **Burke Culpepper (1880-1948)**

Burke Culpepper, the son of a Methodist circuit-rider, began preaching at age eight and was called "The Boy Preacher." At 19, he was licensed to preach by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

He was called "The Sam Jones of today" and "the Billy Sunday of the South." He preached in every state in America, but spent most of his time in the South.

He was called “an unbridled cyclone” for his strenuous preaching style, “racing up and down the platform and even into the aisles of the church.” “He even acted out the story of Christ’s trial and crucifixion, playing all the parts himself, to the delight of his audience” (McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 391).

He was an outspoken fundamentalist, pre-tribulationist, and prohibitionist. He said, “I’d rather give my children tablets of bi-chloride of mercury than to have them go to school to some of these state universities” (McLoughlin).

### **Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952)**

Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, was an evangelist in his earlier career. He began in 1889 as a singer and choir director for Arthur T. Reed in Ohio. Between 1890 and 1896, they conducted 58 revival meetings that lasted from several days to several weeks.

From 1897 to 1907, Chafer and his wife Ella traveled as an evangelistic team and conducted dozens of meetings, with Lewis preaching and his wife singing and playing the organ. He preached in Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist churches, and held trans-denominational meetings supported by a variety of churches in an area. “He traveled widely throughout the East and the South” (*An Uncommon Union: Dallas Theological Seminary*).

For a complete biography, see *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists*, “Lewis Sperry Chafer,” the chapter “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”

### **W.B. Riley (1861-1957)**

William Bell (W.B.) Riley was the pastor of First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota, from 1897 to 1947. His goal was to “make First Baptist a center of evangelism.”

During some years of his pastorate, Riley traveled four months on evangelistic crusades.

For the biography of Riley see *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists* “William Bell Riley,” the chapter “Northern Fundamental Baptists.”

### **Mordecai Ham (1877-1961)**

Mordecai Fowler Ham, Jr., was one of the prolific evangelists of the first half of the 20th century.

His big meetings continued into the early 1940s, so he was one of the last of the prominent city-wide revivalists. From 1901 to 1941, he had 289 city-wide meetings in 22 states, with 303,000 converts. His most prosperous field was the state of Texas, where he had more than 75 meetings. The final campaign there was in Fort Worth in 1940, and there were 3,900 professions. In total there were more than 61,000 professions of faith in his Texas meetings. In Tennessee, there were 55,000.

The son of Tobias and Ollie Ham, Mordecai was descended from eight generations of Baptist preachers, including his grandfather and namesake, Mordecai F. Ham, Sr. He grew up on a farm in southern Kentucky, near the Tennessee state line.

He didn't know exactly when he was converted, saying that "from the time I was eight years old, I never thought of myself as anything but a Christian." At age 16, he was Sunday School superintendent of his family's Baptist church in Greenwood, Kentucky.

From age nine, he felt called to preach, but as he reached manhood he decided to make a fortune first. He studied law and engaged in business. He thought he could make his mark as a salesman. After the death of his grandfather in 1899, his call to preach was renewed. He said, "Seeing him die did more than anything else to convince me of the reality of Christian experience." He left business and determined to enter full-time ministry. To prepare himself, he devoted eight months to studying the Bible and 27 other books, "including manuals on Old and New Testament history, the works of Josephus, various writings about Baptist history and polity, a couple of titles about the second coming of Christ and one called *The Mistakes of Ingersoll*, a book that dealt with the most famous infidel of the day" ("Mordecai Ham: The Southern Revivalist," *Baptist Bible Tribune*, Oct. 25, 2011).

His first sermon was on "The Lordship of Christ." He was ordained at Burton Memorial Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

In July 1900, he married Bessie Simmons, and in September 1901 he began getting calls to preach.

Beginning with his first evangelistic meetings in 1901, he would try to win the most prominent sinner in the community.

"A typical story is that of Ham seeking out the most notorious sinner in a Southern town. Ham was directed to a certain cornfield. The infidel saw the feared preacher approaching and went into hiding. The evangelist began to hunt his prey and, hearing suspicious sounds under a cornshock, hauled him out. 'What are you going to do with me?' the atheist quavered. Ham retorted, 'I'm going to ask God to kill you! You don't believe God exists. If there is no God, then my prayers can't hurt you. But if there is a God, you deserve to die because you are making atheists out of your children and grandchildren.' As the infidel begged him not to pray that way, Ham said, 'Very well then, I shall ask God to save you.' He was saved, and before the meeting was over, all of that infidel's family was baptized--forty of them!" (Ed Reese, *Mordecai Ham, Baptist Evangelist*).

"While Ham was holding a meeting at Mount Zion, Kentucky, he ran into the type of opposition that was to follow him most of his career. On the second night of the meeting the moonshine crowd surrounded the church and threw rocks at the preachers. The leader threatened Ham with a long knife. Ham said, 'Put up that knife, you coward. Now I'm going to ask the Lord either to convert you and your crowd or kill you.' The bully died the next morning before Ham could get to his bedside. On the same day a neighborhood sawmill blew up and killed three others of the crowd. That night he announced he wanted everything that was stolen to be returned before God killed the rest of the tormentors. Everything was returned. Eighty were saved in his revival" (Reese, *Mordecai Ham*).

"A close observer wrote concerning him, 'He exalts Christ and fights sin with all his might. There is no middle ground in his campaigns. It is impossible to evaluate his ministry. Under his preaching I have seen murderers saved, drunkards converted, homes reunited, and men and women dedicate their lives for special service'" (Reese).

Mordecai Ham was a plain-spoken preacher, no beating around the bush, always to the point, “often bluntly so.” His motto was “Love all men, fear no man.” He said that he had been challenged by a statement made by his grandfather on his deathbed. Someone asked him, “If you have your life to live over again, what would you change?” He replied, “I would be plainer.” His grandson determined to follow that counsel. Mordecai’s direct preaching got him into a lot of trouble, not only with the liquor crowd and local sinners, but also with pastors who were offended by his preaching against lukewarmness and liberalism.

In 1903, the *Baptist Standard* newspaper in Texas said, “Brother Ham is a young man and has been preaching but a short time. He has distinct elements of power. In the first place he preaches certainties and not doubts. ... He believes the great truths of the Bible up to the hilt, and he preaches with directness and great aggressiveness.”

Ham said, “There are a lot of Christians who are halfway fellows. They stand at the door, holding on to the Church with one hand while they play with the toys of the world with the other. They are in the doorway and we can’t bring sinners in. And, until we get some of God’s people right, we cannot hope to get sinners regenerated. Now they always accuse me of carrying around a sledge hammer with which to pound the church members. Yes, sir, I do pound them, every time I come down, I knock one of the halfway fellows out of the doorway, and every time I knock one out I get a sinner in.”

In December 1905, just five years after their marriage, his wife, Bessie, died of cerebral meningitis. He was so distraught that he became sick and lost a large amount of weight. In 1908, he married the 15-year-old Annie Smith, and they had three daughters: Martha, Dorothy, and Annie. They had a happy marriage for 50 years. “The marriage was very successful and her warm and encouraging spirit enabled him to shoulder burdens that few have had.” She played the piano for his meetings and was able to continue this at times even when the girls were young because her mother lived with them. She lived with them for 40 years.

From November 1906 to March 1907, he preached a city-wide campaign in Houston, Texas, attended by 4,000, with 500 converts. This meeting was disturbed by Pentecostals who were “tongues speaking.”

Ham’s meetings not only had large numbers of converts who joined the sponsoring churches, but they also raised the moral standards of the communities. The *Baptist Standard* for March 4, 1915, said, “[T]he general tone of Christian living is lifted in the whole religious life of the city, which makes it easier for the new members to be strengthened in Christian service.”

Ham used “gospel cars” to advertise his meetings. They would travel around the city announcing the campaign and witnessing to people. In Houston, the gospel car stopped a man from committing suicide and led him to Christ. Sometimes parades were used for advertising. In one campaign in Houston, there were 2,000 vehicles, including a hearse.

In 1907, in Asheville, North Carolina, a service was interrupted by a drunk waving a gun and threatening to shoot everyone. “Ham jumped off the platform singing, ‘Tell Mother I’ll Be There,’ and by the time he reached the fellow, the Lord had knocked him down, and he was on the floor begging for mercy. He was gloriously saved as he threw down a liquor bottle, a pair of dice and a gun” (Reese).

In March 1908, Ham held meetings in the staunchly Roman Catholic New Orleans during the wicked Mardi Gras festival and 3,000 were added to participating churches. The meeting

was jointly sponsored by Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. “Thousands of Gospels of John were distributed, but the Roman Catholics instructed their people to burn them. As a result of that crusade, the state legislature passed two reform bills: one that separated saloons from grocery stores, and another that killed race-track gambling. At one point, a drunken ex-steamboat captain entered Ham’s hotel room waving a gun in his face, threatening to kill him. Ham got him down on his knees and prayed (with his eyes open). The man was saved” (Reese).

In 1911, Ham had his first meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, with J. Frank Norris. At another meeting with Norris in about 1916, Ham was assaulted and bloodied.

A meeting in July 1910 in Gonzales, Texas, was the occasion for the writing of the hymn “Saved, Saved.” “As Ham preached on the ‘Cities of Refuge,’ a murderer was sitting in the audience. He had killed four men and despaired of ever being saved. Midway through the sermon, he jumped up from his seat and shouted, ‘Saved! Saved! Saved!’ Jack Scofield was directing the choir and was so inspired that, on the next afternoon, he sat outside the hotel and composed both the words and music for the hymn, titled, ‘Saved, Saved.’ That night the tabernacle audience heard the song for the first time” (Reese).

Ham was at the forefront of the movement for prohibition, he was hated by the liquor crowd. His life was often threatened. In a meeting in Salisbury, North Carolina, he had to be escorted to and from the meetings by armed guards. Men paraded through the streets all night shouting, “Hang Ham! Hang Ham!” “As he left by train, a U.S. Marshall had to stand outside on the station platform holding two pistols pointed toward the crowd. A railroad detective sat by his berth all the way to Asheville, and got saved” (Reese).

At one time there were constant threats that his young daughter would be kidnapped.

“In San Benite, Texas, in January 1918, some military servicemen broke into the Woodman Hall and put on a dance. They were angered because Ham refused to allow his tabernacle to be used for a Red Cross rally when he heard a dance was to be part of the rally. Crazy with liquor, they marched into his tabernacle, seized him and started up the railroad tracks with a rope, a bucket of tar, and a sack of feathers. A detachment of cavalry from the nearest army base came to his rescue as the mayor wired Washington of the predicament. They were three miles down the track before they were overtaken.”

From 1927-1929, he pastored the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City. In August 1927, he was struck by an automobile and dragged for half a block. He was laid up for six weeks with a skull fracture.

In 1929, he re-entered full-time evangelism.

In 1932, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, gangster Wyatt Larimore was converted. He had more than 300 men working under him.

At the 1934 crusade in Little Rock, Arkansas, 5,000 were in attendance each night and 6,400 professed Christ. Heavyweight fighter Otto Suttan, who had a wild and wicked reputation, was converted and went on to pastor Valence Street Baptist Church in New Orleans. Billy Graham claimed that he was converted at this meeting.

That year, Ham had a campaign in Spartanburg, South Carolina, which was his largest and most prosperous, with 8,500 professions.

In 1935 Ham was honored with a D.D. degree from Bob Jones University.

In 1936, he started a weekly radio broadcast to seven southern states, and in 1940 this expanded to 50 stations on the Mutual Broadcasting Network. He closed with, "I'll meet you on the air, until I meet you in the air."

In 1947, he started the *Old Kentucky Home Revivalist* paper.

He emphasized the pre-tribulational coming of Christ and published "The Second Coming of Christ" and a commentary on Revelation.

Ham continued to preach until the end of his life. After 1941, he focused on local church meetings instead of city-wide campaigns. He preached on the radio and traveled to 600 cities, often preaching three and four times a day.

He died in November 1961 at age 84 and is buried in Louisville, Kentucky.

### **Bob Jones, Sr. (1883-1968)**

By the 1920s, when he was in his 40s, Bob Jones, Sr., was one of the most famous evangelists in America, in an age of famous evangelists. Others included Billy Sunday, Mordecai Ham, William Bell Riley, J. Wilbur Chapman, J. Frank Norris, Gypsy Smith, Sam Jones. His meetings received front-page coverage in newspapers. His crowds were huge; the number of professions was large. By 1923, at age 40, Jones had preached 12,000 sermons in 30 countries to more than 15 million people "face-to-face without amplification." He preached to crowds as large as 15,000. He had an estimated 300,000 conversions.

For the biography see *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists*, "Bob Jones," the chapter "Interdenominational Fundamentalism."

### **John R. Rice (1895-1980)**

John R. Rice, founder of *The Sword of the Lord*, was chiefly an evangelist, and even when he was pastoring, he conducted evangelistic tent meetings.

In the early decades of his ministry, pre-WWII, he would set up a big tent or knock together a wooden building and preach extended campaigns, and he would have so many converts, not mere professions, that he organized churches and called pastors.

In the 1940s, Rice held large city-wide evangelistic crusades hosted by multiple churches.

"John Rice definitely committed himself to God to bring back mass evangelism to American--city-wide campaigns such as had been conducted by Moody, Torrey, Billy Sunday and others. ... His meetings were held in a day of religious decline and disinterested ... John R. Rice was the forerunner who helped bring back large-scale mass evangelism" (*Man Sent from God*, pp. 114, 115).

For the complete biography of John R. Rice, the *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists*, chapter "Southern Fundamental Baptists."

### **Hyman Appelman (1902-1983)**

Hyman Jedidiah Appelman was a converted Jew who had large, fruitful evangelistic meetings in the 1940s and 1950s contrary to the prevailing spirit of the times.

Born in Moghilev, Russia (now Belarus), Appelman was raised by strict orthodox Jewish grandparents. He immigrated with his family to the United States in 1914. At the time, he knew Russian, Latin, German, Yiddish, Polish, Greek, and Hebrew, but no English. Upon



arriving in Chicago, he enrolled in a public school and completed the requirement for grades one to eight in two years. In four years, he obtained degrees from Northwestern University and DePaul University with high marks and was licensed to practice law by DePaul Law School in 1921 at age 19. From 1921 to 1925, he was a successful trial lawyer in Chicago.

He had everything life could offer but was empty inside. He was only mildly religious, attending synagogue only three times per year. He had no knowledge of the New Testament. In 1924, he was engaged to be married to a Jewish girl, but by the end of that year he was on the verge of a breakdown, and his family decided he needed a vacation.

Arriving in Kansas City in December, a reporter named Daly of the *Kansas City Star* witnessed to him and challenged him to read the New Testament. That night he started reading the Gospel of John in a Gideon Bible in his hotel room. The next morning, he attended a Protestant church for the first time, but he didn't understand anything. In March, he arrived in Denver, having lost more than 60 pounds from mental anguish. There he inquired for a doctor, but was referred instead to a pastor, who told him, "You don't need a doctor, my boy, you need the Lord Jesus Christ!" Finally, Appelman was ready to listen, but it was a great struggle for him to be willing to go against his father, mother, five siblings, and extended relatives. The conversation with the pastor lasted 12 hours from the early afternoon until after midnight. Finally, Appelman prayed, "Lord, I do not know, and I do not understand, but this man says and this Book says that Your Son died for my sins, and that if I ask You to, for His sake, You will forgive my sins. Lord, for Jesus' sake, do forgive my sins." The next Sunday he was baptized. Afterward he sent a telegram home, "I'm a Christian, I've been baptized, I've joined the church. I'm praying for you" (Ed Reese, *The Life and Ministry of Hyman Jedidiah Appelman*).

His father immediately telegraphed for him to return home. When he refused, the family sent his fiancé to try to convince him to give up his faith in Jesus as the Christ. Seeing that he intended to remain a Christian, she broke off their engagement. His family cast him out.

He stayed in Denver for a while and began to preach right away. His father got him to come home by sending a telegram pretending that his mother was dying. He returned immediately, but when he refused his father's pleas to return to the Jewish faith, his father said, "When your sides come together from hunger and you come crawling to my door, I will throw you a crust of bread as I would any other dog."

Afterward Appelman got a job with the railroad in New Jersey, but he backslid spiritually into the slough of despond. At one point, he was so oppressed and discouraged that he planned to swim out into a bay and drown, but God protected him and brought him out of this trial. He joined the Army, and while working at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., he met his future wife, Verna Cook. There he joined the Temple Baptist Church and remained a Baptist the rest of his life, though he wasn't scripturally baptized until he joined Central Baptist Church in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1927, while stationed in Fort Sill. In March 1930, he held a revival meeting in Lawton, Oklahoma, at a little schoolhouse. "Every unsaved person in that entire district was converted, the church was reorganized, and Appelman was called to be the pastor." In May, he was ordained to preach. "When hands were laid on him, he surrendered everything he had to the Lord."

In September, he married Verna, and they had two children, Edgar and Rebecca.

From then until April 1931, he pastored two Baptist churches, driving 190 miles each weekend.

He graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth in 1933.

From 1933 to 1942, he was an evangelist for the Texas Baptist Convention.

Upon resigning that position, he conducted evangelistic campaigns across the country. Some were single church meetings, and some were city- and county-wide crusades.

His first big meeting was a three-week campaign in January 1942, in Philadelphia, hosted by 200 churches. There were 2,700 professions of faith in Christ. In 1944, a three-week tent meeting in Los Angeles attended by crowds of 7,000 to 8,000 saw 2,000 professions. In 1948, a three-week meeting in Detroit saw 2,700 professions. In a two-week meeting in 1950, in Danville, Illinois, there were 1,000. In a three-week meeting in 1951 in Decatur, Illinois, there were 3,300. "After preaching a devastating sermon against Communism one night in Decatur, his tent burned down. This event seemed to help bring out a crowd of 6,000 for the next service." In a three-week meeting in Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1954, he had 1,700 professions. During a six-month tour of Australia in 1948, there were 9,600.

He spent 51 weeks a year on the road. "Appelman's schedule of meetings left one breathless. It was hard to find a day in 45 years when he was not preaching somewhere."

"He conducted over 25 crusades in the city of Dallas alone. Many were conducted in Fort Worth, and at least a dozen in Houston, Texas. At least fifteen revivals were held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Over 50 crusades were held in California, including Stockton and Oakland crusades. City-wide crusades were conducted in such places as Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama; Phoenix, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida; Rockford, Illinois; Evansville, Gary and Hammond, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Holland, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; Cleveland, Ohio; Portland, Oregon; Altoona, Pennsylvania; Bristol, Tennessee; El Paso, Texas; Lynchburg, Virginia; and Seattle, Washington, to name just a few" (Ed Reese, *The Life and Ministry of Hyman Jedidiah Appelman*).

Appelman made eight preaching trips around the world. He preached in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Finland, Switzerland, Russia, Sweden, Germany, France, Holland, Russia, Dominica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Japan, Israel, Syria, Taiwan, Egypt, Jordan, and Mexico.

He averaged 7,000 professions of faith per year. Pastors testified that a majority of the converts from Appelman's meetings showed fruit and the participating churches showed significant increases in membership and church attendance. Overall, he reported 345,000 decisions for Christ, with 270,000 uniting with churches, which is about 78%, though it is not known how many continued on for the Lord after baptism. This is not Pentecost fruit (Acts 2:41-42), but it is a much higher ratio of conversions to professions than most of the evangelists of that era. No preacher can guarantee that all professions will be conversions, but why count and report "conversions" unless there is good reason to believe that they *are* conversions?

"A pastor in Indianapolis tells that prayer meetings doubled the year following Appelman's meetings. A New York pastor recalls baptizing 100 Appelman converts who continued on in their service for Christ. Besides Zehr's recollections, church after church testify of the increase. Beth Haven Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, reported a week with Appelman produced 198 first-time professions, and in the two months following, Sunday School increased by nearly 300. Pastor James Stuart of the First Baptist Church of Concord, New Hampshire, sums up what most pastors say after Appelman has been to a city: "This has been

the greatest single week in the 140 years' history of this church. The Appelman meetings have drawn larger crowds, more visitors, have seen more decisions for Christ than any campaign of any kind ever held here. This morning we have more people present than in any one service at any time before” (Reese, *Life and Ministry of Hyman Jedidiah Appelman*).

In his preface to *The Saviour's Invitation and Other Evangelistic Sermons*, 1944, Appelman wrote, “These sermons were *preached*, not written, not edited, but preached in burning anxiety, in pleading earnestness, in yearning appeal for the salvation and consecration of souls. They were borne of sleepless nights and agony-filled days. ... They are the blood, the sweat, the tears, the hope, the faith of this humble preacher.”

In the 1960s, Appelman made his final world preaching tours. “In 1960 he saw 1,350 first-time decisions in a one-month ministry in Mexico City and Pachuca, Mexico. In 1962, there were 2,700 decisions in 23 days in Dominica and Trinidad. In 1969-70 (December to February) he saw 5,879 first-time decisions in the states of Madras and Kerala in India” (Reese).

Appelman preached mostly single church meetings in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1974, his 40th year of preaching, he had 48 campaigns in nineteen states. For 1975, there were 9,800 professions and 4,100 who joined churches.

He spent his last days as a member of Red Bridge Baptist Church, Kansas City. He died of heart disease on May 29, 1983, at age 81.

### **Monroe Parker (1909-1994)**

Monroe “Monk” Parker was an evangelist, in addition to his work as a Bible college teacher, Bible conference speaker, president of Pillsbury Baptist College, and General Director of World Baptist Mission.

His evangelistic campaigns extended from the 1930s to the 1950s. He also had a very extensive evangelistic ministry on radio.

For the biography, see *The History and Heritage of Fundamentalism and Fundamental Baptists*, “Monroe Parker,” chapter “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”

### **Lewis Sperry Chafer's *True Evangelism***

In 1911, Lewis Sperry Chafer published *True Evangelism, or Winning Souls by Prayer* (New York: Gospel Publishing House). (A 1919 edition is often wrongly cited as the first edition. A scan of the 1911 edition is online.) The full text of the 1919 edition is found here:

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/BookList/TrueEvangelismbyLewisSperryChafer1919.aspx>

(For the biography, see “Lewis Sperry Chafer” in the chapter “Interdenominational Fundamentalism.”)

*True Evangelism* was a warning about “false forces in evangelism.”

When he published the book, Chafer was 40 years old and had worked in evangelism for 17 years. He was the singer and choir director for evangelist Arthur T. Reed of Ohio from 1890 to 1896, and he had his own evangelistic ministry from 1897 to 1907. Chafer had worked with prominent evangelists, including J. Wilbur Chapman. Chafer had opportunity to study the evangelistic ministries of D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, and other prominent evangelists.

Chafer understood that modern evangelistic techniques had been developed specifically to get the largest possible number of “professions of faith.” Chafer argued that conversion should be tested, rather, by the “reality of a changed life afterwards.” He was a strong believer in the necessity of the Spirit’s work in enlightenment, conviction, repentance, and saving faith, and apart from that work there is no salvation. He did not believe salvation could be manipulated and produced by man-made tactics. He considered these things to be dangerous and to produce large numbers of false professions. He got this thinking directly from Scripture, as he proved in his book.

Chafer did something that very few men have done in modern times and that is to put the work of evangelism under the light of Scripture and to critique the ministry of “successful evangelists.” This was largely taboo then, and it is still taboo today, but it is scriptural and right.

Chafer’s *True Evangelism* did not name any names. It was gracious in spirit. But there was no question that Chafer was deeply disturbed by many aspects of modern evangelistic revival work. He had observed that a great many of the professions of faith were not real when tested biblically. He mentioned “**the appalling percentage of failures in the ranks of supposed converts.**”

*True Evangelism* was not a blast against evangelism. It was a call to be concerned about empty professions; a call to evaluate every methodology by the Word of God; a call for the churches to *walk in* revival rather than “have revivals,” and this requires the ongoing ministry of pastors and teachers and the effectual functioning of every member of the body; a call for churches to be engaged in evangelism all of the time. *True Evangelism* was a call not to substitute human requirements for divine ones, not to substitute physical actions for heart faith. It was a call to acknowledge the primacy of the Holy Spirit in evangelism *in practice as well as in principle*; a call to understand the necessity of using the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit; a call for intercessory prayer as the ministry of the royal priesthood and as the human element in the work of the Spirit; a call for believers to live holy lives and to walk in close fellowship with Christ so as to be effectual in intercessory prayer and fruitful in evangelism.

In the last half of the 1940s John R. Rice published articles in the *Sword of the Lord* against Chafer’s book and led a campaign to stop its publication. This was occasioned by its reprinting in 1944 by Moody Press. Rice was based in Wheaton, Illinois, at the time, just west of Chicago, and was associated with Moody. Rice called Chafer’s book “a direct attack [upon] evangelism itself, as known and practiced in America by the greatest soul-winners.” He called upon Moody Press to pull the book, but they refused. He called for a boycott against it. He gathered signatures of evangelists who were opposed to it.

Chafer was right. He was standing on biblical ground, and had John Rice heeded the warning it very well could have saved fundamental Baptists from the damnable heresy of Quick Prayerism which has been so destructive to the character of its churches.

But in the 1940s, John Rice took his stand for unquestioning loyalty to modern evangelistic techniques, regardless of how unscriptural, and the fruit has been terrible.

Refusing to join John Rice’s crusade, Harry Ironside wrote a strong defense of Chafer’s book. He said, “[I]t shows the folly of pressing men to make professions of salvation who give no evidence of a work of the Spirit of God in their souls. It points out the evil of trying to count up large numbers of converts rather than of looking to God to work in the power of the

Holy Ghost in bringing people to see their need of Christ and trusting Him as their own Savior” (quoted from Bauder and Delnay, *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism*, p. 326).

For a study of *True Evangelism*, see “Lewis Sperry Chafer’s *True Evangelism*” at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

## What Killed the Revivalist Era?

It was the age of prosperity, consumerism, and amusement that killed the revivalist era. It was the Roaring Twenties, the Model-T Ford, the Wanamaker department store, the talking movie, mass advertising, easy credit, professional baseball, Paris fashions, the working mom, the Scopes’ Monkey trial, the Twist, Amos & Andy, Howdy Doody, the Grand Ole Opry, Louis Armstrong, Bob Hope, Groucho Marx, Red Skelton, the 45-rpm record, the transistor radio, I Love Lucy, *Gone with the Wind*, Ed Sullivan, Disney, Alfred Hitchcock, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Space Invaders, Pac-Man, the Barbie Doll, Rocky, Friends, Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, the Shopping Channel, MTV, America Online, MySpace, the selfie, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, the smartphone.

More than any other one thing, revival was killed by amusement. People’s hearts and minds fell under the spell of amusement, and the interest in Bible preaching and teaching waned far behind.

Even the churches weren’t strong enough to resist the lure of the entertainment age. Too many of the members weren’t born again, having only gone through the motions of professing Christ as children. Too many of the pastors were cowards who feared the people more than they feared God. Too many of the churches didn’t produce true pilgrim disciples, didn’t call for full surrender to God’s will, didn’t practice discipline. Too many of the homes weren’t biblical homes, with the fathers as spiritual leaders and the mothers as the godly keepers. Even in the first half of the 20th century, a great number of America’s Bible-believing churches were lukewarm.

### Pop music

The phonograph (record player) was invented in 1877 by Thomas Edison and he rightly predicted, “The phonograph will undoubtedly be liberally devoted to music.” Twenty years later he observed that “people are willing to pay to be amused more than anything else.” How right he was! Modern communications technology has made this the age of amusement, and music is at the very heart of the amused culture.

By the turn of the 20th century, record companies were popularizing music recordings, and the most popular were the jazzy, sensually-addictive ones. In 1920, “Crazy Blues” by Mamie Smith sold one million copies.

Music pieces began to be written to fit the time available on a record. The result was the three-minute pop song. It was the first time in history that an individual could listen to whatever music he pleased, and the first time that an individual could immerse himself in music in isolation. It was the dawn of the age of “me.”

RCA’s 45 rpm vinyl record of 1949 was another major step in the music revolution. The 45 rpm players were small and more portable than anything that had previously existed, and some featured tall spindles that could automatically play stacks of records. It was the inexpensive, portable 45 that propelled the rock & roll revolution of the 1950s. It was the record of the rock party, the record shop, and the ubiquitous jukebox. In 1955, Bill Haley’s

“Rock Around the Clock” sold 3 million copies. When I began my personal venture into the world of rock in about 1962, the 45 was still a prominent technology of the pop culture. The popularity of 45 rpm records peaked in 1977 with 200 million sales.

### **Commercial Radio**

Successful commercial radio began in 1928 with the *Amos 'n' Andy* program, sponsored by Pepsodent toothpaste. By the next year, the program “had become a craze, the first bona fide hit serial in broadcast history.” Families across America were addicted. An estimated 40 million people (out of a population of 120 million) set aside a block of time every evening, five days a week, to gather around the radio and give their full attention to a comedy with no redeeming value other than silly entertainment. “[D]uring the height of the *Amos 'n' Andy* craze ... the 7 p.m. time slot ... began to influence the schedule of everything. Hotels, restaurants, and movie theaters would broadcast the show for their patrons. Fearing displacement, movie theaters advertised the installation of radios to broadcast *Amos 'n' Andy* at 7 p.m., before the newsreels and features” (*The Attention Merchants*, p. 90).

Sales of Pepsodent doubled in one year. 1928 marked the beginning of the merger of the entertainment industry with business. It began “a race for the conquest of time and space that continues to this day. *Amos 'n' Andy* demonstrated that an industry could, in effect, wholly ‘own’ a part of the day ... across the land” (*The Attention Merchants*, p. 92).

Commercial radio was a major step in the secularization of America and in the widespread addiction to mindless entertainment.

### **Commercial Television**

By 1956, televisions were in 72% of American homes, and the dawn of the “boob tube” had arrived. From then until the 21st century, television was the most influential technology in human history. “Once ensconced in private space, it immediately began to devour time--nearly five hours a day by the end of the decade” (Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*, p. 124).

Watching the evening news, followed by prime time programming, became a habit of millions. It was called “the prime time ritual.” *I Love Lucy*, which ran from 1951-1957, was the first television super hit, with 50 million viewers. In 1953, 71% of television viewers were glued to Lucy’s ridiculous exploits. In 1956, Lucy’s popularity was surpassed when 82% of viewers watched Elvis Presley’s first television appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. (The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Doors were also launched to popularity on *Ed Sullivan*.) Television viewers got a few minutes of entertainment, followed by a commercial, and advertisers made millions. For the programmers and advertisers, television is all about money. It is all about the manipulation of people through empty but fascinating entertainment that a great many people found impossible to ignore.

I recall when my parents got our first television. It was the late 1950s, and I was about 10. From then on, I didn’t want to go to church on Wednesday or Sunday nights. I wanted to stay home and watch *Bonanza*, *Lassie*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Rawhide*, *Dragnet*, *Gunsmoke*, *Red Skelton*, *Mister Ed*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Disneyland*, *Ed Sullivan*, *Wagon Train*, *I’ve Got a Secret*, *Alfred Hitchcock*, *Andy Griffith*, and other terribly interesting, zero value programs.

Commercial radio and television created the age of a-musement (no muse, no thought).

Children were targeted beginning with the *Howdy Doody Show* in 1947 and the *Mickey Mouse Club* in 1955. The Saturday morning cartoon rituals began in the 1960s. Toy makers, such as Mattel (the Barbie doll), made a mint by capturing the attention of children.

## **Video Games**

The first commercially successful video game was *Space Invaders*, which appeared in 1978, and users found it immediately addictive. A *Washington Post* reporter said, “I dropped in a quarter and saw 55 rectangles waving little arms and dropping laser bombs on earth, which is at the bottom of the screen. I fired back with my three laser bases, which got bombed out in about 30 seconds. ... I was still pounding on the FIRE button at the end of the game. End of quarter. Start of addiction.” That report stated, “It’s like drugs. They’ll tell you: ‘I got a \$4-a-day habit.’” In 1981, Dr. Robert Millman told *The New York Times* that video games are “LIKE SNIFFING GLUE” and are “a seductive world.”

By 1982, *Space Invaders* was the biggest money making entertainment product in the United States. It was only available in gaming arcades and was sold in little chunks of time that cost 25 cents, but it earned more than \$2 billion (8 billion quarters)! Soon, video games were earning \$5 billion a year. In the early 1980s the first personal video gaming consoles appeared. By 1982, Atari was the fastest growing company in America.

## **The Smartphone**

The internet has taken the amusement age to a previously undreamed of omnipresence and level of addiction.

The smartphone (Apple iPhone, 2007) brought 24/7 connection to the internet, and though the internet is a powerful forum for good, it is used for entertainment and sensual gratification more than any other thing: YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, selfies, browsing, gossip, voyeurism, star-following, comedy, music and video streaming, video gaming, professional sports, pornography.

Everything is designed to be addictive.

Video gaming is addictive. *EverQuest* is called “never rest” and “ever crack,” *World of Warcraft* is called World of War Crack, *Halo 3* is called Halodiction.

Social media is addictive. The goal of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, etc., is to keep users online within their forum as much as possible in order to make advertising money. Every feature is designed to be enticing and addictive. The Like button, friends, comments, a constant stream of news, photos, videos, the music, the sounds, endless scrolling, notifications, suggestions, the colors, the drama. Major social media sites study everything the user does with the objective of manipulating his life. It is called “ENGINEERED ADDICTION.”

Tristan Harris, former in-house ethicist at Google, says the social media companies are “brain hacking” you. (“*How Technology Is Hijacking Your Mind*,” May 19, 2016).

Asa Raskin, who designed the endless scroll and other popular app features, says. “We’re in the largest behavioral experiment the world has ever seen. You’re being tested on all the time. ... Behind every screen on your phone there are literally a thousand engineers to try to make it maximally addicting. IT’S AS IF THEY’RE TAKING BEHAVIORAL COCAINE AND JUST SPRINKLING IT ALL OVER YOUR INTERFACE” ((*Mind Control: The Dark Side of Your Phone*, BBC documentary).

Chris Anderson, former editor of *Wired* and currently the chief executive of a robotics and drone company, says about mobile phones, “On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, IT’S CLOSER TO CRACK COCAINE. We thought we could control it. And this is beyond

our power to control. This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain” (“A Dark Consensus about Screens,” *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 2018).

An early user of Facebook said, “I signed up on Tuesday morning and I was immediately addicted. Nothing validates your social existence like the knowledge that someone else has approved you or is asking for your permission to list them as a friend. It’s bonding and flattering at the same time” (Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*, p. 294).

As of the last few years, a majority of children 8-11 have their own smartphones, and they are immersed in the amusement culture as if it were wired into their brains or flowing into their blood stream by an IV drip. As used by the vast majority of children and youth, the smartphone is a device for main-lining the pop culture. Jesse Weinberger warns parents, *The Boogeyman Exists, and He’s in Your Child’s Back Pocket*.

The age of amusement has cast its spell upon the whole world and largely destroyed sober thinking. It is doubtless a major aspect of “the mystery of iniquity,” which is the devil’s program to put his man on the throne of the world (2 Thessalonians 2). We are rushing madly toward the day of the Lord, but few care to listen to the Word of God; they can’t awaken from the spell of a-musement.

Professing Christians are under that spell nearly as totally as the world. It is foolish. There is zero wisdom, zero eternal value, in the entertainment pop culture. The wise will reject it and use their fleeting hours to fill their minds with the eternal Word of God and to live it out before God, the Creator and Redeemer for whom we are accountable for every idle word.

“I have been a missionary for over 40 years. We have seen a drastic decline in the spiritual lives of God’s people. We had a thriving Bible institute ministry from around 1987-2000. Then the iPhone craze hit and we have seen much more interest in what is posted there than paying attention to the Word of God. I think this movement of the Facebook and iPhone era has deadened the power of the Spirit of God in the lives of the lost and the saved.”