



How Religious Awakenings Presage Radical Reforms

By Dr. Mason Gaffney

This article was first published in *GroundSwell*, a publication from Common Ground, USA. The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation has received approval from Common Ground, USA to republish this article at no cost for educational purposes.

Article citation:

Gaffney, Mason. "How Religious Awakenings Presage Radical Reforms." *GroundSwell*, Jul. 2010.

The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation's Digital Collections and Archives is an extension of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation's Engel Georgist Library. It collects, organizes, preserves, and provides free online access to researchers and the general public of Georgist literature including books, newspapers, pamphlets, scholarly articles and archival materials.

RSF is particularly proud to offer free online access to the works of the late Georgist scholar Mason Gaffney, made possible through the generosity of the Danica Foundation.

Robert Schalkenbach Foundation: <https://schalkenbach.org/>

Engel Georgist Library: <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/EngelGeorgistLibrary>

RSF Digital Collections and Archives: <https://schalkenbach.starter1ua.preservica.com/>



About CG-USA



GO

How Religious Awakenings Presage Radical Reforms

Mason Gaffney

[A paper presented at the annual meeting of the History of Economics Society, Syracuse, New York, July 2010. Reprinted in *GroundSwell*, 2010]

ABSTRACT

Religious upheavals have generally preceded waves of radical reform and reaction in U.S. history, thus serving at least as leading indicators, and perhaps as causative explanations. As these waves rise and swell, crest, crash and ebb, they carry and sweep and tumble most individuals along, forward and backward and then forward again. However inner-directed one may be, we are social beings who interact with others. However we personally may feel about religion, from true believer to cynics, others' beliefs affect us through them. It is understood that life is never so simple as to be encompassed in one sweeping generalization; and beware of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Rather, the facts of history force us to see these cycles, and acknowledge their force, as opposed to purely mechanical, materialistic interpretations of history and forecasts of future history.

I try to frame and support this hypothesis by identifying five major religious "Awakenings" in U.S. history, from 1740 onwards, that have presaged and thus presumably helped cause major changes in the dominant public mood, in social psychology, and hence in public policy. These cycles are: "The Great Awakening" from about 1740, leading to The American Revolution; Abolitionism, Feminism, and Revivalism in the north, from 1820, leading to The Civil War, Reconstruction, and land reforms; Populism after the crash of 1873, leading to The Progressive Movement in power, 1902-18; the Irish-American Catholic Awakening, leading to The New Deal, 1933-45; and the Second Catholic Awakening after Vatican II, 1960-69.

A lesson for reformers, of whatever stripe, is to work with the public mood as expressed in religious trends. A social psychology of stasis may last through most of a reformer's lifetime while his or her best efforts break like waves against adamant. Then suddenly pent-up waters break through in a rush that carries all before it. "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven". Another lesson for reformers is that we are now due for another great cataclysm: make ready, timing is everything.

PREFACE

Before there were a U.S.A. and a 1st Amendment, church and state were intertwined in western Europe, whence came most of our traditions. Kings and Cardinals vied for primacy, but joined in overawing and dominating others. Both royalists and clerics were major landowners, at the tip of "The Geocracy". They worked together to rationalize and sanctify landownership based on conquest, chicane, fraud, slavery, debt slavery, prison labor, male chauvinism, imprisonment, ethnic bias, genocide, murder by burning, drowning, torture and other barbaric acts, witch-hunting, primogeniture, entail, confiscation, exile, etc. Missionaries supported imperialists abroad, and shared in their

power and wealth, even owning slaves. Centuries of struggle against Islam shaped fanaticism especially in Spain, Austria and Russia, and less extremely in all the Crusading states.

At home, however, heretics were more dangerous than infidels. Ruling Geocrats feared and persecuted egalitarian heretics like Anabaptists, Diggers, Levelers, Lollards, Hussites and Taborites, Albigensians, Waldensians (Vaudois), Bogomils, Cathari, Donatists and Circumcellians, Humiliati, Poor Men of Lyons, Calvinists, Puritans, et al. Rome coopted successive new grassroots monastic orders into acting as Roman agents: Cluniacs, Cistercians, Benedictines, Carthusians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, et al., went through somewhat parallel evolutions from their ascetic, abnegant, pietistic origins in protest against clerical ritualism, hierarchy, luxury and wealth. Troubadors and *Minnesingers* could distract and bypass censors with tales of romance and scandal and tragedy, arts that flourish today, but fail to prepare the ground for practical reforms. Jews, carriers of the parent religion with its egalitarianism, wrapped in its own language and mysteries, made a special and important case, too complex to sum up fairly in a few words. The Crusades bred Chivalric Orders, some of which went into banking and grew too rich and powerful for their own survival.

On the good side, churches tempered the harshness of class exploitation with charity, welfare, and education. Cynically, however, one might see it as a "good cop, bad cop" act. The "education" inherently entailed self-enhancement and associated brainwashing. Churches sought a monopoly of this, as the Vatican did more recently under its 1933 Concordat with Hitler. Currently in Alabama many conservative Southern Baptist Churches are at war with Christian tax reformer Susan Pace Hamill who would make State taxes less regressive, in ways that churches could not control and cap as they can their voluntary "charity". A Federal counterpart is former President George H.W. Bush with his "thousand points of light" to displace Social Security and other Federal welfare programs.

Again on the good side, church texts (to the extent laymen can and will read them) abound with egalitarian and distributive sentiments, as in *Exodus* and *Leviticus*; as in The Prophets, especially *Amos* and *Isaiah*; and as in the Gospels of Jesus. There have been dozens of Utopian colonies with some such religious basis, from the smallest sects up to regional powers like Puritan New England, Quaker Pennsylvania, and the Mormon State of Deseret. Religious blacks have likened themselves to Hebrew slaves fleeing Pharaoh. There were, of course, currents and countercurrents, rebellions and repressions, reforms and reactions, filling many tomes. Struggles inside and among churches mirrored class struggles in politics, a series of long and fascinating stories.

I. THE GREAT AWAKENING

We begin our story here in the English colonies of North America with "The Great Awakening" in the frontiers and backwoods, from about 1740. These regions were relatively unchurched. Established eastern churches monopolized seminary training (many of today's leading universities originated as seminaries), but the demand for preachers exceeded the supply of educated ones, so nearly anyone moved by the spirit, or even by earthlier motives, could set up a church. So naturally, there was an element of protest against established churches and the society they represented, and anti-intellectualism accompanied protest.

So did a growing sense of American unity. Revivals transcended sectarian barriers. Traditional differences waned; pluralism and tolerance waxed. Revivalism came out of many churches. The colonies soon owned a common religious experience, one that prepared the way for the common identification necessary for a successful revolution.

Democracy was another byproduct. The Awakening elevated the common man and woman. Religion now extended far beyond the wealthy, as in Virginia, or the church member, as in New England. All persons, regardless of wealth, status or education, could find "religion". Sinners could put the past behind them, in an instant of

conversion. The revival made experience the definitive factor in faith, the self-authenticating religious "experience" of being "saved", or "born again", or baptized, "washed in the blood of the lamb". Evangelicals sought and welcomed newcomers and gave them status: all souls were equal in the sight of God. Anyone could be pious and spiritual, and judged by that merit. As to personal habits, the frontier produced and reveled in tobacco and whiskey.

The Awakening also fostered the idea of separating church and state. Emphasis on a personal conversion meant individuals could find salvation. A specific church or state-recognized corporate body was dispensable. Theologically, the awakening led to an emphasis on the subjective, the personal conversion, not the institutional church. Just how far this went depended on the evangelist. Jonathan Edwards, famous frontier spellbinder, was a college man himself. Yet he said he would "rather have one word, one sentence from the Word of God, behind his conversion than all the theologians of the last 1,000 years giving him an interpretation of his experience." Jonathan Edwards was actually quite intellectual, but he excelled at playing on emotions. His "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is a classic of hellfire and damnation, with no hint of his scientific interests.

The Awakening may have renewed interest in missionary work, but frontier people were at the cutting edge of conflict with Indians, and bitter about it. Some eastern geocrats supported the Indians in order to close the frontier and keep cheap labor at home. In result, bigotry against the aborigines was a dominant feeling, at odds with the sophisticated tolerance more fashionable on the eastern seaboard.

The Great Awakening played a main role leading to success in the American Revolution. Britannia Ruled the Waves, and occupied our eastern port cities, but never the hinterlands, where they lost many battles and skirmishes. After losses down south at Cowpens and Kings Mountain and Eutaw Springs they had to retreat, ultimately to the trap at Yorktown. Frontiersmen completed their victory in the Jeffersonian Revolution that unleashed westward expansion from Hamiltonian constraints.

Jefferson was a Piedmont geocrat himself, positioned to link east and west, north and south. Religiously he was a Deist, an intellectual, an avatar of The Enlightenment. But as author of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, and then the First Amendment, he confirmed the autonomy and legitimized the preaching of frontier primitives — at that time meaning Baptists and Methodists, in large part. He started the secularization of higher education by founding the University of Virginia and West Point.

History has its ironies. Jefferson and his First Amendment liberated Baptists from old mainline churches and established the separation of church and state. It was a new concept then, being vigorously contested today — by Southern Baptists.

II. THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

The Second Great Awakening, ca. 1810-60, reached its peak in "burned-over" western NY and northeastern Ohio, territory that The Erie Canal opened for a new wave of more intensified settlement. Parts of eastern New York had been radicalized already by the drawn-out "anti-rent" struggle of new settlers against possessive old Dutch "patroons", holdovers from the 17th Century Dutch dominion (Christman; Ellis). It led to a strong Women's Rights movement (Seneca Falls Convention, 1848). Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony were all active in the region. Mormonism (which left New York but flourished out west), The Church of Christ, The Disciples of Christ, and above all Abolition, leading to The Civil War. John Brown became the tip of this iceberg. Women were prominent: Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Union troops marched to The Battle Hymn of the Republic by Julia Ward Howe.

Charles Grandison Finney was the model of revivalists.

"Finney and revivalists who followed in his train preached salvation through individual reform, and in time this would become salvation through the reform of society, as in the growing temperance movement and then in the women's rights and the anti-slavery movement. ...

In the years ahead, instead of "wasting" time on religious doctrinal differences, and perhaps even on the church itself, one could throw oneself into social reforms to make for a better society." (Martin, 2005)

Irish Catholics rose in public esteem with the successes of dashing General Philip Sheridan, until at Vatican I, 1870, Catholic leaders under the embattled Pius IX, with seriously peccable timing, chose the moment to declare The Pope "infallible". This stirred up anti-Catholic fears that disqualified Sheridan, and submerged Catholic influence for a generation or more.

III. THE THIRD GREAT AWAKENING

The Third Great Awakening came on the heels of the Second, as this spent itself in the failure of Reconstruction and the excesses of robber barons in the age of rage for transcontinental railroads. The Civil War had drained the east of capital; it was no time to commit more to laying tracks and strewing scarce capital over 2,000 new miles, but victorious northern capitalists undertook to do so anyway. This folly led to the great crash of 1873, the long ensuing depression and deflation, and the Populist Revolt, whose leading spokesman was Bible-thumping William Jennings Bryan.

Religiously, prairie and southern Populism also spawned the Social Gospel movement, active missionary work, and several new denominations. This Social Gospel was more intellectual and less radically emotive than earlier "Awakenings": professionalism and science (and scientism), for better and worse, tempered grassroots populism. Progressive theology was an uneasy amalgam of The Social Gospel Movement in the dominant northeast, and fundamentalism in the south and west. The Dwight Moody Bible Institute of Chicago even still represents progressive fundamentalism in the big cities. One of its graduates, Archer Torrey of Jesus Abbey, was an outstanding Christian and Georgist missionary in Korea.

Progressivism tempered radicalism by allying with new colleges funded by Robber Barons. The Chautauqua movement extended science and culture to the masses. Imported German ideas of *Sozialekonome* swayed the new American Economic Association. Some new academic economists like R.T. Ely and J.B. Clark joined in to burnish their credentials as liberals, even while focusing their efforts on sabotaging the Single Tax, which was otherwise a pillar of Progressivism (Gaffney, 1994).

In the Civil War, Baptists had split north and south, a division never healed. Northern Baptists produced extremes like the arch robber baron John D. Rockefeller and the liberal theologian Harry Emerson Fosdick, but the more numerous Southern Baptists defended and idealized ante-bellum society and its mores: "Old times there are not forgotten". After the war they defended Jim Crow, lynchings, heroic memories of Confederate soldiers, Old Dixie culture, country folk music, and the Democratic Party (Phillips, *passim*). Bankrupt southern farmers linked arms with western ones, and with labor unions, socialists, Fenians, and a variety of native and continental radicals. These Populists then merged with more temperate professionals and urbanists to form the Progressive Movement that dominated American politics briefly but memorably, 1902-18, and echoed thereafter.

Most people, including most historians, have no inkling of how many cities and states adopted "magnetic" tax systems, featuring large Georgist elements, during this Progressive Era and in the 1920's as well. The writer has catalogued and described a few in Gaffney, 2006. These include Houston, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Newark, and New York City itself. Los Angeles, for good measure, nearly elected a Socialist Mayor, Job Harrington, in 1911. San Francisco DID elect Mayor E.R. Taylor whom George's

biographer Charles A. Barker credits with having helped, more than any other person, Henry George write *Progress and Poverty*, and whom history credits with having led San Francisco's astounding recovery from its earthquake and fire catastrophe of 1906. Even more remarkable, Vancouver B.C. led all American cities in its adoption of Georgist tax policy, and the speed of its growth (Gaffney, 2006, p.31). Donald Reeb, a Georgist scholar from SUNY Albany, has documented how both cities AND STATES depended more heavily on the property tax in the Progressive Era than ever before or afterwards (Reeb and Howe, 1994).

Some Catholics sought to join the Populist revolt. It was high time: most Catholics were blue-collar newcomers, among the most exploited Americans. Irish-Americans were boiling with resentment against "The Protestant Ascendancy", the incredibly provocative name for absentee English landlords in Ireland. Rome, however, was preoccupied with combating the *Risorgimento* in Italy and retaining the Papal States. To court English support in Italy, as well as to maintain its standing in the worldwide comity of landownership, it accepted Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland, undercutting the serious land reformer, Michael Davitt of County Mayo, in favor of the temporizing Charles Stewart Parnell.

In America, Rome reined in radical Irish-American movements. In 1867 and later the Fenians invaded Canada. Rome under Pope Pius IX (Pio Nono) disavowed them, encouraging President Andrew Johnson, who had tolerated their open organizing, to send American troops to cut them off from behind.

In 1880, before *Progress and Poverty* became a best-seller, it was George's book *The Irish Land Question* that first rocketed him to fame and popularity. It was Irish Catholic Americans who coalesced as his political base. Michael Davitt seized on the book and its analysis. Patrick Ford, Editor of *The Irish World*, publicized it and hired George to visit and report on Ireland, where the Brits raised his fame by arresting him for no particular reason. Terence Powderley, leader of the Knights of Labor with 700,000 or so members, endorsed George and in 1886 supported him when he ran for Mayor of New York, where he won most of the free Irish vote — "free" meaning independent of Tammany and the RCC hierarchy, which fused against him.

An outstanding leader was Father Edward McGlynn, the most popular priest in New York City. McGlynn founded The Anti-Poverty Society with a program parallel to that of Henry George, only more consistently radical. McGlynn defied the Hierarchy by supporting Henry George's campaign for Mayor of New York City in 1886, giving George the biggest vote he ever had. He tried to make American Catholicism virtually independent from Rome. Archbishop Michael Corrigan told him to cool it, but McGlynn did not fold (as Powderley and Ford did). McGlynn was defrocked, then refrocked, then exiled, in complex opaque maneuvering that ended with Ultra-Montanism (Roman control) triumphant over McGlynn's radical "Americanism" for the Church. Conservative American Catholics sided with Rome on this matter.

The McGlynn episode makes a fascinating story (Gaffney, 2000), not repeated here. The unhappy by-product, in Fr. Gilhooley's view, was that the American church was left "slouching toward 'theological hibernation'" (Gilhooley, p.207). The Irish ethnic political bloc was confirmed in its introverted machine politics, and split away from Georgist reform. The Church was returned to "prudent and safe men" who left their members "inert" (Curran, p.172). That did not mean, however, the end of Catholic reformism in American politics, as we will see, for in the process of suppressing McGlynn Leo published a landmark Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, reviving Thomism from the 13th Century, to be activated later in the 4th Great Awakening, that of The New Deal Era.

After 1918, Progressivism faded. Women got the vote, but proceeded to elect Warren G. Harding, Hiram Johnson and Robert LaFollette and Charles Evans Hughes won lots of votes, as TR had, but Nicholas Murray Butler and Andrew Mellon took over the GOP. Socialist Gene Debs won a million votes for U.S. President, even from a jail cell, and Communism in Russia thrilled some progressives like John Reed and Lincoln Steffens — but led to Red Scares and the Deportations Delirium of 1920 and The Immigration Act of 1924 and the long reign of J. Edgar Hoover. Clarence Darrow drove

fundamentalists underground in the Scopes Trial, but the goat was the Populist leader, The Big Kahuna himself, William Jennings Bryan. Prohibition won but could not be enforced. Gambling in stock and real estate became all the rage, eclipsing the Social Gospel and social reform. Church influence declined, over both personal behavior and social concerns.

IV. THE FOURTH GREAT AWAKENING

The 4th Great Awakening could not well come from Protestants. Old-line church members had grown too rich or secure: they lined up with wealth and power. Fundamentalists, shamed at Dayton, Tennessee, shied away from politics. The 4th Great Awakening was a Catholic Awakening, mostly Irish, the first to succeed. Ethnically it was an echo of the repressed awakening of 1880-1900.

Irish-Americans, during their period of "theological hibernation", had quietly infiltrated American culture. Finley Peter Dunne's "Mr. Dooley" commented satirically with surgical precision on real politics; A.A. McClure's *Magazine* published Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and other leading muckraking reformers of the times. More permanently, grudge-bearing Irish-Americans took over two vital institutions: the American Catholic hierarchy; and city political machines. The defeat of James G. Blaine's 1884 campaign for U.S. President revealed the great leverage of a few angry Irish NYC Catholics over national elections. The lesson was not lost. To win, one courted the Irish-American vote.

Meantime, throughout the Progressive Era, Catholic city machines and the Roman hierarchy in the north, had kept radicalism under control. Fr. (later Msgr.) John A. Ryan published *Distributive Justice* in 1916, but it followed *Rerum Novarum* and was not a new departure. Rather, the Morning Star of the new Catholic Awakening was Governor Al Smith of New York. He was originally a Tammany wheelhorse, but he broke free, reformed NYC's property tax in a most effective Georgist way, starting in 1921, just as Progressivism was declining elsewhere (Gaffney, 2006, pp. 8-18). To do that he overcame heavy pressure from the RCC hierarchy, allied with mortgage lenders like The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (Met Life) and the NY Real Estate Board (Marsh, 1953). New York City boomed as never before or since (Gaffney, 2006). Smith then went national and won the Democratic nomination for U.S. President in 1928.

Small town Protestant Americans, not free of fear and bigotry, buried him and chose Hoover, whom the Great Crash and Long Depression that he could not handle soon buried in turn. These calamities left traditional Protestant leaders looking obsolete and confused in their celluloid collars with their empty slogans and pieties clicking like broken records from frozen faces under bald heads. There ensued the 4th Great Awakening, the First Catholic Awakening. It was a breakthrough for better or worse, for long-suppressed Catholic-Americans.

FDR, the leader, was a pedigreed member of the old Hudson Valley Dutch Geocracy, but he was also a veteran New York politician: no one needed explain to him the imperative to win Catholic votes.

In 1931 Pope Pius XI unleashed a new Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (referring to the 40th year since 1891 and *Rerum Novarum*). Unlike the latter, which it parroted, it was a smash hit. There were at least two differences. One was the timing: 1891 was a year of boom and prosperity, The Mauve Decade, when laymen had all the answers, when the sweet incense of unearned increment hung heavy in the air like a pheromone, luring flighty minds that might otherwise be questioning the social compact (Thomas Beer, 1926). 1931 was the opposite, people who had thought they were rich and secure were shocked, hurting badly and seeking new answers.

A second reason was the new radio priest, Fr. Charles Coughlin of Royal Oak, MI. Coughlin had mastered the new medium of radio well before FDR whom, in fact, he taught. He picked up the ball from Pope Pius XI and ran with it. He marketed QA as few previous salesmen had ever sold such heavy essays. It was the new age of mass

marketing such as Bernays used to popularize cigarettes; Coughlin popularized Encyclicals. By the time of the 1932 elections Coughlin was the most familiar radio voice in America, people knew what an Encyclical was, and what the Pope would teach them.

Professor Raymond Moley of Columbia University, a prominent Irish Catholic layman, was the buffer between Coughlin and FDR. Coughlin helped elect FDR in 1932, and FDR let him think he would be a power in his administration. As Coughlin's star rose he became the new Catholic spokesman, replacing, he who had signed the 1921 Georgist law letting New York City exempt new homes from the property tax for 10 years (Post, 1984, p.1). Raymond Moley and Coughlin together wrote FDR's 2nd Inaugural, including "Let us drive the money changers from the temple" — vintage Coughlin.

Irish Catholic laymen like Moley, James Farley, Joseph Kennedy, Frank Murphy, and James Byrnes gained great power in the early New Deal, as did also Msgr. John A. Ryan of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), an organization whose boring name masks its hardball political function. Their best-known product was the National Recovery Act (NRA), known by its logo, The Blue Eagle. NRA was a cartelization of American industry supposedly modeled on Aquinas' ideas of merchant guilds, elaborated in *QA*. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was the farm counterpart. NRA died; AAA survives under other names.

Joseph Kennedy, savvy rum-runner questing for respectability, led the new Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Generally, FDR depended on votes from big city machines, many of them run by Irish Catholics, and wove their views into his policies. After Louis Howe died in 1936, FDR picked Boss Ed Flynn of the Bronx to become his chief strategist. Flynn urged FDR to the left, but still followed signals from *QA*. Raymond Moley had pushed business cartels, a policy inherited from Herbert Hoover. Moley wanted to limit competition and let trade associations regulate prices, wages, quality of goods, etc., on the model of medieval merchant guilds, but led by a corporate state (he admired Mussolini). That was NRA, but it didn't work: it choked off production and recovery. Note that these price controls were FLOORS, not CEILINGS like later controls. Moley's idea was to keep prices up, not down.

In 1937 came the "submerged depression", a depression within a depression. FDR, recognizing trouble, reversed field and turned to reviving competition and anti-trust policy. Moley left in anger. Coughlin, increasingly erratic, was discredited and suppressed, even by Pius XII, who had negotiated the compact with Hitler.

New adviser Ed Flynn, a left-wing Catholic, pushed the Wagner Act, empowering labor unions, modeled roughly on Aquinas' craft guilds. (Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York was a Catholic, too — not Irish, but no one's perfect). After the failure of cartelization, FDR exhumed trust-busting led by Catholic Tommy Corcoran, Jewish Ben Cohen, and vigorous Thurman Arnold, nominee of Catholic Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney of Wyoming. Now the idea was to revive free markets, lower prices and raise wages. TVA set about forcing down power rates. Several allied programs like The Rural Electrification Act had the same impetus. Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts switched from opposing to endorsing FDR's programs, belatedly giving more power to his Jewish colleague Louis Brandeis, a Wilson appointee who had labored for years in the minority to combat cartels and monopolies. Recovery commenced, when World War II struck and eclipsed domestic policy.

In Europe, the history of *QA* was unfortunately bound up with the growth of Fascism. Mussolini's "corporate state" supported and was supported by *QA*. The Lateran Treaty of 1929 sealed an alliance of Mussolini and the Vatican. More generally, most of the fascist dictators of Europe were cradle Catholics, weaned on *Rerum*, and later on its sequel, *QA*: Antonio Salazar in Portugal, Francisco Franco in Spain, Adolf Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy, Arthur Seyss-Inquart in Austria, Msgr. Jozef Tiso in Slovakia, Ante Pavelic in Croatia, Admiral Miklos Horthy in Hungary, Marshal Philippe Petain in France ... it is a long list. Many American Catholics supported the rebellion of the clerical fascist Francisco Franco in Spain, and Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, keeping America neutral for years. It took Hitler's megalomaniacal

overreaching, and finally Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, to sway America to the English side, pitting American against continental Catholics — another of history's ironies.

The spirit of The New Deal was to end abruptly. No sooner did Japan surrender than "our gallant fighting friend", Stalin's Soviet Union, became again the atheistic "Red Menace". Even during the war, FDR had dumped pro-Soviet Henry Wallace for milder Harry Truman — although Harry was strong against monopolies. American pre-war "isolationists" became interventionists, but now on the other side. Ambitious generals spoke seriously about invading Russia again (as we had in 1918-20, if you recall, when fear of Bolshevism trumped and terminated the Progressive Movement). American troops overseas (this writer was one) did not cotton to this idea, not at all! The re-orientation was too sudden, too top-down and manipulative. Chances are our Soviet counterparts felt the same way, only more so. Many Americans were happy enough, though, to remain occupying Japan and other pleasant overseas bases.

The heart of Europe, however, plus all of China and east Asia, seemed wide open to Soviet invasion and dominance. Suddenly the U.S. had to pick up the role of the powers it had just defeated. Oops, we hadn't thought about that! Americans regrouped to support the new Cold War. The postwar reaction at home gradually turned fierce. Harry Truman's surprise comeback in 1948 deferred the worst, but not for long. The new Reign of Terror of Catholic Senator Joseph McCarthy was off and running, along with the House Unamerican Activities Committee (HUAC) under unreconstructed racist John Rankin of Mississippi (Denton, *passim*), and local witch-hunters like Jack Tenney of California, and turncoat Sheridan Downey. Red-baiting Richard Nixon unseated long-time coop leader Jerry Voorhis, and prepared to defeat Helen Gahagan Douglas with the outrageous MCP slogan that "She is pink right down to her underwear". Harry Truman turned cold warrior with his Containment Policy, and hot warrior in Korea. Symbolically, flirtatious wartime skirts fell to below knee-level, using old scraps that didn't even match.

Truman turned to European Catholics as the new bulwark against Bolshevism. If they had cooperated with Hitler, all was forgiven now, we needed them badly. "New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth". The Marshall Plan poured billions into rebuilding continental Europe under new Catholic leaders of Christian Democratic parties, leaders like Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Carlo Sforza, and Luigi Einaudi (only Ludwig Erhard of the *Wirtschaftswunder* was a Protestant). Was this to be the end of Great Awakenings?

V. THE FIFTH GREAT AWAKENING

Remarkably, though, all this time there was seething underground a new Catholic liberalism, suddenly to erupt in The 2nd Catholic Awakening, and America's 5th. It began in Rome with Pope John XXIII (1958-63). It broke through in America with our election of President JFK (1960). It gained momentum in Rome and worldwide with Vatican II (1962-65). LBJ, who succeeded JFK after the assassination, and was a Texas Protestant (Disciples of Christ), continued and even magnified JFK's policies. He picked up and ran with Catholic Michael Harrington's 1962 book, *The Other America*, turning it into his "War on Poverty", part of "The Great Society". Between the time of FDR and JFK America lost five million of its six million small farms (Gaffney, 1992), weakening the stand-pat rural and small-town ethos. Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker houses grew in number and favor, more radical than the earlier meliorist settlement houses of Protestant Jane Addams in Chicago and Jewish Lillian Wald in New York. Popular Catholic Sargent Shriver headed the successful Peace Corps, with enough success to run for vice President in 1972 (although the effort by then was doomed).

Barriers between Catholics and Protestants began to leak, if not crumble. This writer never forgets the thrill of marching arm in arm and in hand with priests and nuns down main avenues in Milwaukee in 1965 in support of civil rights for blacks, and social justice for all. Suddenly the communicable human race was doubled! The 1960's were

an extraordinary time of Awakening all around. Chief Justice Earl Warren (1953-69) handed down a memorable set of new liberal opinions. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., a Southern Baptist, inspired millions and led the "Second Reconstruction" of the South, more successful and lasting than the first. King's economics was populist, Georgist, and Gandhian, a lot to swallow, but carried along in the baggage of civil rights for blacks. Cesar Chavez was organizing stoop field labor and signing up thousands of idealistic college students. More thousands joined The Peace Corps. Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* to great applause, triggering an environmental movement that even Nixon was later to join.

"Women's Lib" flourished along with "the pill" and new sexual mores, affecting people of all faiths. Popular troubadours turned from saccharine love and marriage songs to ballads of social significance from The Weavers, and social rebellion from The Beatles. Girls were burning bras and taking pills. Prudery and hats were out; bikinis and mini-skirts were in. Heels were out; pantyhose were in. College dorms both integrated and went coed, even sharing bathrooms, black and white together. *Playboy* and *Hustler* were standard reading. In 1969 500,000 people camped at Woodstock to celebrate The Age of Aquarius. The 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City sparked the Gay Revolution. Wasn't that a time?! And aren't people herdlike.

It was too good to last; inevitably the pendulum swung back, as pendula do. Survival of the RCC as an institution took priority over the liberal ideas of Vatican II, as priests and nuns drifted away. Viet Nam gloom fell to divide Catholics and shatter the dreams. The macho Texan in LBJ could not back away from a shooting war. Paranoids and jingoes popularized the "domino theory". Catholic imperialists could not give up the converts the French had made in Viet Nam. Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York became the new "American Pope", and led the charge to recover Viet Nam from godless communism. Catholic boss Richard Daley of Chicago unleashed brutal police attacks on young demonstrators, Catholic or otherwise, at the 1968 Democratic convention in his city, looking fascistic before millions of TV viewers and queering Hubert Humphrey's chances to win in November. Social conservatives of all faiths were alarmed and offended, and perhaps a little frightened, by newly liberated sexual "deviants", the boastful exhibitionism of Hugh Hefner, the universal use of contraceptives and the growing acceptance of abortion.

Pope John Paul, from 1978, led the RCC back to traditionalism. Cardinal Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, quashed "Liberation Theology" in Latin America. Richard Nixon, Lee Atwater, and Karl Rove seized the times to assuage deflated segregationists with a new "southern strategy" that broke up and won over much of the solid Democratic south, allying it at last with Spellman's and Daley's Catholics. A new rightwing fervor seized the nation, only briefly delayed by Nixon's fall at Watergate.

THE SIXTH GREAT AWAKENING: WILL THERE BE ONE?

When and whence will come the new Awakening, if ever? History tells us it may take forty years to appear, and it will most likely come out of left field, as a surprise, with a new leader, a political genius or juggler who realigns old forces. It will follow a crisis. It will involve The Bible. Established mainline churches and intellectuals will despise and resist it. The various calamities of the G.W. Bush Administration, and the inability of Obama and his team to solve the resulting problems and make jobs for Americans certainly provide the needed crisis, although it is taking time for its gravity and permanence to sink into the American psyche.

How about blacks? They are suddenly part of the Establishment, at least in part. MLK, Jr., had an inspiring socio-economic philosophy, an amalgam of George, Gandhi, and the radical Jesus, working from within the Southern Baptist Church. But since him, black leaders have settled comfortably into their own establishment, either tepid and meliorist like our current President, or fanatical and divisive like his former minister in Chicago. Barack Obama, the change agent, follows economic leads from the same old hand Larry Summers whose main qualifications seem to be family connections,

accommodating Wall Street, and power-lust. If he has any clue of how to guide us to recovery he has yet to show it.

The Southern Baptist denomination still carries the seeds of its leading role in the Populist Revolt. It is aggressively evangelistic and missionarian, with constant personal salvation crusades and altar-call ceremonies and public full-immersion baptisms of nubile girls in full public view in huge fishtanks set in the back wall above the altar. It has become the biggest American church today, sweeping from the old south up through the prairie states to form the "Bible Belt". Billy Graham became a serious religious leader, consulting with Presidents. Its growth and power leads Kevin Phillips to write that the SBC, once the Confederate state church, is now the American State Church. But it also carries the seeds of its Civil War origins as the church of slavery, and its post-bellum role as the carrier of ante-bellum tradition and resistance to Reconstruction. Even as I write there is talk, even if it is just hot air, of repealing the 14th Amendment. Southern Baptists have turned "Rightwing Christianity" from being the ridiculous oxymoron that it obviously is into a common journalistic phrase.

It has its left wing, too; but in 1979 fundamentalists seized control of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the controlling body (Phillips, pp. 156-57). It retains elements that are anti-urban, racist, nativist, xenophobic, and anti-scientific, leading a prominent Southern Baptist, Bill Moyers, to lament of the Southern Baptist Bush Administration, "the delusional is no longer marginal". These views might seem like quaint eccentricities, but they are part of a Gestalt tilted against the social gospel, public schools, social insurance, science, fair tax policy, environmental protection, consumer protections, bank regulation, anti-trust policy, intellectuals, or science. They have allied with Nixon, Reagan, the Bushes, seemingly against their own economic interests, to form the "New Republican Majority", as Gingrich and others called it.

At the fringes of this new center of American religion are once-submarginal phenomena like Jerry Falwell and his "Moral Majority", Pat Robertson's actual campaign for U.S. President, and a long list of spellbinders including Bebe Patten, Jimmy Swaggart, Paul Crouch, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Ted Haggard, Gene Scott, James Dobson, ... a long roster, with new entries annually.

And yet, working within this nest of apparently willful ignorance and reaction and chauvinism (both male and military), we find in darkest Alabama a beam of sunshine in a lady law professor and radical tax reformer, Bible-reading Methodist Susan Pace Hamill. Could she be that new force from outside the usual suspects? Why not? MLK, Jr. came from Georgia.

Stranger things have happened. Who would have thought that frontier Indian-fighters in the clay hills and swamps of South Carolina would drive proud Cornwallis to defeat at Yorktown, trapped by the weak French fleet? Who would have thought that hanging crazy John Brown in December, 1859, would lead to the Emancipation Proclamation less than four years later? Who would have thought McKinley's crushing inflationist-pacifist Bryan in 1896 and 1900 would lead to the Progressive Movement, or that the anti-Catholic vote of 1928 would lead to the Catholic New Deal, headed by a Hudson Valley Dutch Episcopalian marshalling a bunch of machine politicians turned liberal reformers guided by the ideas of a dead Pope steeped in the ideas of 13th Century Thomas Aquinas, student of old Aristotle writing before 322 B.C.? Who would have suspected a social revolution in the 1960's led by the rich spoiled son of a Catholic rum-runner? Expect to be surprised, and expect it fairly soon: the several calamities of President G.W. Bush, and the fumbling of President Obama, have opened the doors for a new alignment.

If Southern Baptists are anti-intellectual, is intellectualism the cure? Not what passes for it today, surely! R.W. Fogel (2002) sees higher education, presumably in the Chicago format, as a panacea. However, academic economics has fallen for its own kind of doctrinaire fundamentalism, peaking in Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan, for whom private property and unregulated markets were panaceas. They have dropped distribution of wealth and income, central concerns of classical economics, in favor of the new lodestar of obsessive "growth". Diminishing marginal utility of material stuff is forgotten: more GNP is always better, even when most people are getting less.

Intellectuals may sneer at the excesses of primitive preachers, but their own rationality is just another blind faith; their own independent science subject to herd manias worthy of lemmings. Even speculation in remote future values is reliable, according to Friedman acolyte Robert Lucas. Flippers and other speculators are guided by "Rational Expectations", the human equivalent of Divine Omniscience. This insight is sanctified by the annual *Riksbank* award (aka the "Nobel Prize" in economics), our own kind of holy incantation, controlled by bankers in Sweden who are not above their own predatory lending to naifs in less sophisticated new nations of the eastern Baltic.

Some historians would liken this combination of Biblical and Free Market Fundamentalisms to previous Great Awakenings, but I don't think so. Robert William Fogel's seminal study of Great Awakenings seems to take this position, and there are parallels, it is true. Paul Johnson sees the Thatcher-Reagan era as "The Recovery of Freedom". What is lacking now is the moral sentiment of Jacques Turgot, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill; the egalitarianism of Jefferson, Lincoln, Henry George, the Dutch Roosevelts and the Irish Kennedys. Someone or something will arise to combine that missing element, social justice, with the moral fervor and righteousness of faith and certainty.

Free market panaceas and banker deregulation have collapsed in shame and calamity, but nothing has arisen to replace them. Something must and will; but what, and how long must we wait? God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. Could modern Southern Baptists evolve as New York State revivalists did in the 19th Century?

"Eventually, he (Charles G. Finney) became President of Oberlin College, an institution supported by upstate New Yorkers interested in Perfectionism, and here he oversaw the training of a generation of clergymen and educators who were to spread over the West and into the South after the Civil War, ... His doctrine of reforming one's self led to the various reforms movements of the nineteenth century, ... after the 1850s. One portion ... downplayed much of traditional theological concerns in favor of a growing interest in the Social Gospel which would concern itself with the betterment of society." (Martin, 2005)

My guess is that Mexican-Americans, our new despised and feared minority, will take the lead, or at least be led: nothing pulls people together like contempt and persecution. They will ally with a variety of smaller ethnic groups along with, who can say, alienated Southern Baptists like Bill Moyers? Where is the new political genius to pull all these disparates together? This leader will appear; many are grasping for the brass ring.

In summary, what can history teach us about religion, economics, and socio-economic reform?

1. The First Great Awakening led after many years to the American and Jeffersonian Revolutions
2. The Second Great Awakening led after many years to the Civil War and Abolition
3. The Third Great Awakening led after setbacks to the Populist and then Progressive Movements
4. The Fourth Great Awakening led to The New Deal
5. The Fifth Great Awakening led to the second Reconstruction, The Great Society, Feminism, and social upheavals
6. The Sixth Great Awakening is due, and will come from some unexpected quarter.

What about Georgists? We are too few, too narcissistic, too apolitical at state and national levels, to expect any sudden call. Meantime remember the advice of George Washington in adversity: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the event is in the hands of God".

Common Ground-U.S.A. does not share name/address/phone/email information with any

**Send questions or comments about this web site to [WEBMASTER](#)
Copyright © 1997-2015 Common Ground-U.S.A.**