

# ALSOM

## THE 142 - ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HISTORY, MISSIONS, and GOVERNANCE INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES - [Module 1 - American Religious Antecedents](#)

### ORIENTATION

This course covers the origins, history, missions, and governance of the Assemblies of God (AG).

*You will never understand the Pentecostal / charismatic (P/c) movement or the AG - who we are, why we believe what we believe, why we do what we do - until you understand our origins.*

### INSTRUCTOR

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1. Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, University of Alabama in Huntsville – Accounting / Computer Science
2. Master of Divinity, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary at Evangel University – Pastoral Ministry
3. Doctor of Ministry - Biblical Preaching, Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, Birmingham, AL
4. Senior Pastor – 26 years
5. Adjunct Instructor, Southeastern University of the Assemblies of God
6. Network Christian Education Director – 8 years      6. Network Secretary–Treasurer
7. ALSOM Director

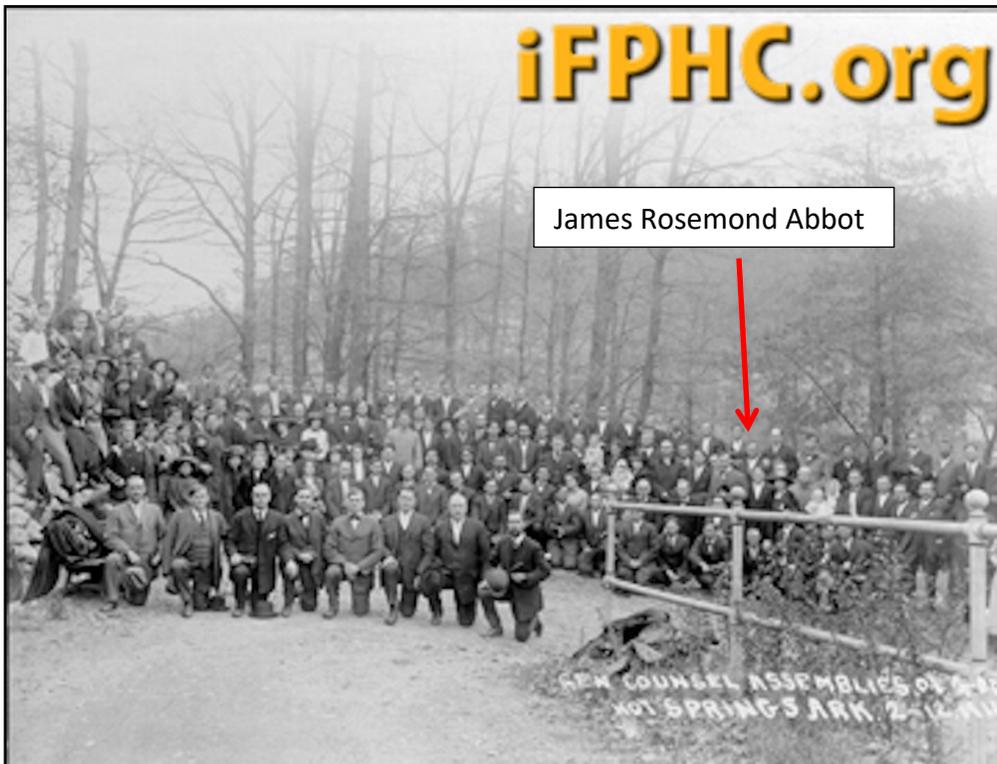
Dr. Sharp is part of a family heritage present at the founding of the Assemblies of God (AG).

He was taught AG History at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary by the three foremost historians of the Assemblies of God: Drs. William Menzies, Edith Blumhofer, and Gary McGee.

*Most of what is contained in these notes was taught to Dr. Sharp by these historians at AGTS.*

### FOUNDING COUNCIL of the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1914



### James Rosemond Abbot



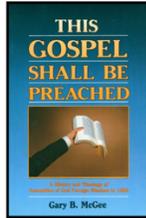
### Generations ...

1. Rev. James Rosemond Abbot
2. Wallace Abbot
3. Jean (Abbot) Sims
4. Debra (Sims) Sharp (wife of Michael Sharp)
5. Rev. Shaylon Sharp
6. Levi and Eliana Sharp

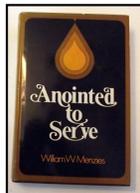
### DR. SHARP'S PROFESSORS of CHURCH HISTORY and PENTECOSTAL / AG HISTORY at AGTS ...



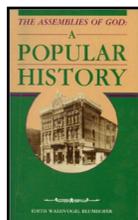
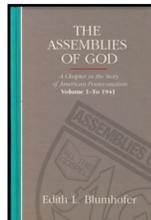
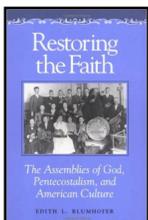
Gary McGee, PhD  
Professor, Historical Theology, AGTS  
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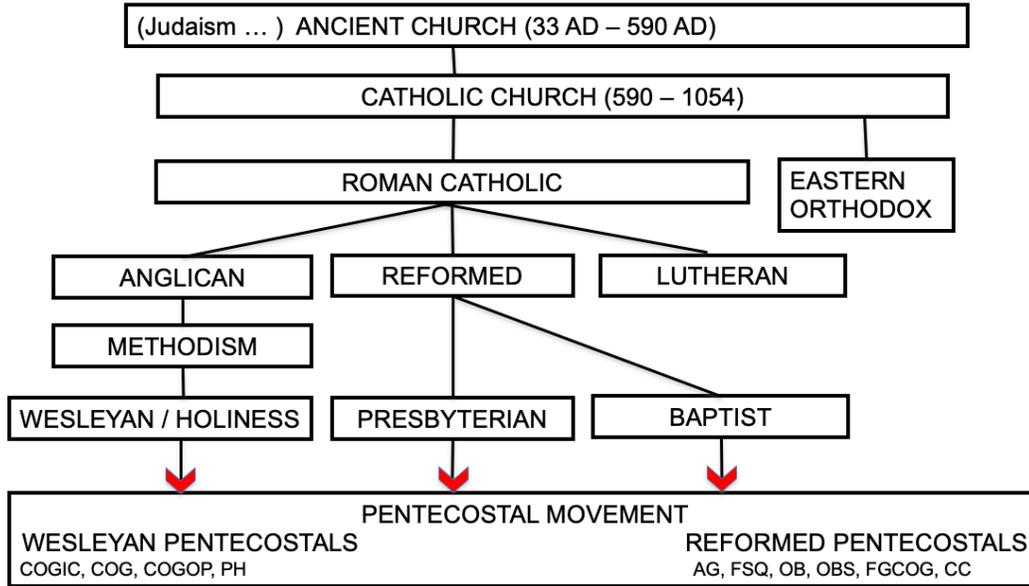


# HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT and the AG

The AG flows from several Christian traditions that preceded it for 1,900 years.

The historical and theological connections among the various Christian faith traditions and denominations are very clear. The Pentecostal movement did not simply spring suddenly into being: it resulted from a process

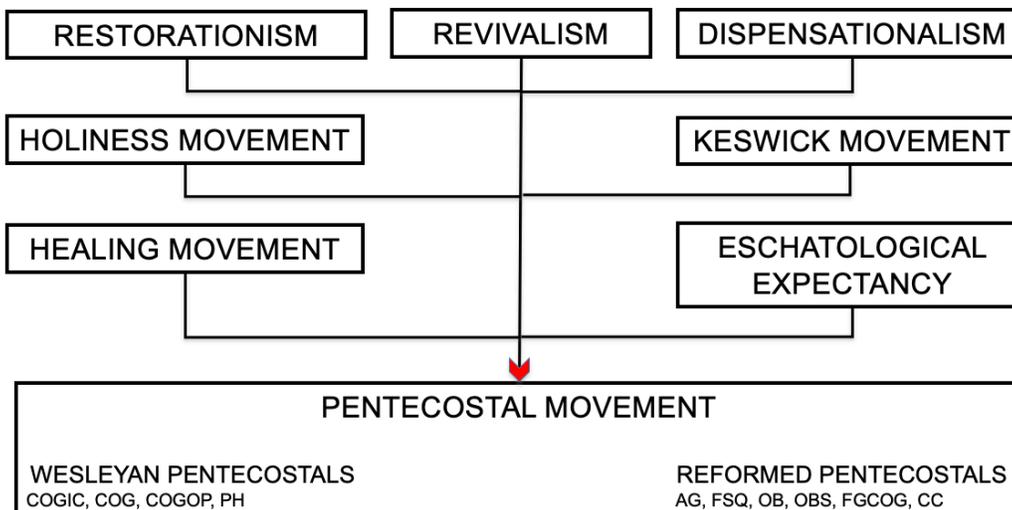
## HISTORICAL / THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS



The AG is the largest of the Pentecostal / charismatic (P/c) denominations.

The AG flows from several theological emphases and teachings that arose among churches in the 1800's directly influencing the origin and development of Pentecostalism, including the AG.

## THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ...



## ANCIENT CHURCHES and the HOLY SPIRIT

**Cessationism** – *the belief that the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit that was present in the first century Church (until 100 AD) soon ceased, either at ...*

- > Death of the last Apostle, or at the
- > Completion of the NT Canon.

**None of the Churches with the most ancient roots ever became Cessationist:**

- > Ante-Nicene Church (100-325 AD)
- > Post-Nicene Church (325-590 AD) (Augustine's change of mind)
- > Catholic Church (604-1054 AD)
  - Roman Catholic Church (RCC) (1054 to present)
  - Eastern Orthodoxy (1054 to present)
- > Others: Coptic, Arminian, Syriac, Anglican, Methodism

*These churches continuously believed in the Spirit's supernatural ministry from their beginning through today, some passionately, some quietly.*

**Cessationism** only appeared and spread after the Reformation among some of the Protestant Churches.

## REFORMATION CHURCHES and the HOLY SPIRIT

**Continuationism** – *the belief that the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit continues in the Church until Christ returns.*

In the 1500's and following, the Reformers (Luther, Calvin, ...) overreacted against superstition, relics, and the abuses of the supernatural ministry in the Roman Catholic Church by exalting the rational and liturgical aspects of Christian doctrine and practice.

This, and the influence of the Enlightenment (with its emphasis on Rationalism) eventually led subsequent generations of Protestants to claim that the supernatural ministry of the Spirit had ceased entirely.

Belief in cessationism spread in some parts of American Protestantism, even though most Protestants and Evangelicals maintained a balanced belief in the Holy Spirit's potential for miraculous ministry.

## THE CHURCH TODAY and the HOLY SPIRIT

**All ancient churches – RCC, Orthodox, etc. – remain Continuationist.** *There are large charismatic movements in all of the churches of the Great Tradition, especially in the Anglican and Catholic churches.*

A large majority of all Majority World churches of every tradition, from Catholic to Evangelicals, are Spirit-filled.

The influence of Pentecostal / charismatic scholars eventually convinced most mainline Protestant and Evangelical scholars to accept Continuationist perspective. Many have experienced the Spirit's supernatural ministry, especially when teaching at their denominations' schools abroad.

*Only a minority of Protestant / Evangelical denominations are Cessationist.*

The significant majority of Protestant / Evangelical churches – their people, pastors, and especially their scholars – are now Continuationist. Many pastors and scholars are Spirit-filled.

Continuationists in the mainline and Evangelical churches usually remain there because they love their church and there is no reason for them to leave.

**EXAMPLE:** I earned my doctorate at a well-known evangelical seminary, Beeson Divinity School (Samford University, Birmingham). The professors are Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, Reformed Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc. All were continuationist and some were "Spirit-filled." Beeson honors past martyrs and pioneers from all Christian traditions in paintings, busts, and exhibits, including Pentecostals like William Seymour, Pandita Ramabai, Haik Hovsepian Meir (martyred AG Bishop in Iran), and so forth. Numerous Pentecostal scholars have been guest lecturers at Beeson.

*Many cultural / philosophical / religious changes for 500 years enabled Pentecostalism to emerge.*

## **CULTURAL / PHILOSOPHICAL ANTECEDENTS of the PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT**

Various British/American cultural movements (some paradoxical) flowed from religious developments in the Renaissance (1300's-1600's) and Reformation (1517 - 1700's). Movements, concepts, and attitudes include ...

- **Reformation** - Martin Luther (d. 1546), John Calvin d. 1564), John Wesley (d. 1791)
- **Romanticism** - truth is discovered through passionate experience recollected in tranquility
- **Rationalism** – man can discover truth through examination and logical reasoning individually
- **Modernism** – truth must be discovered or affirmed in the natural world by examining PHYSICAL EVIDENCE
- **Individualism** – the worth of the individual is paramount. The individual must experience / discover truth for themselves (through Passionate Experience, Reason, Physical Evidence, etc.)
- **Democratization** – the individual is free to decide which groups he will associate with, free to choose leaders, the members are free to make the rules / laws of the group, ...
- **Anti-authority** - resist authority, resist accountability, resist correction; rebellion is exalted.
- **“New” – Pioneer / New World** – New beginnings, new exploration, new creation. New England, New York, New Hampshire, etc. (England, York, etc. were places in Britain)
- **Personal Freedom / Liberty** - personal preference and self-interest decides all things.
- **Entrepreneurism ...**
  - Competition, Alternatives, Options, Marketing / Advertising (newspapers, flyers, pamphlets, etc. )
- **NOTE: There are many unbiblical perspectives and attitudes in the list above.**

## **EARLY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS ANTECEDENTS of the PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT**

FIRST GREAT AWAKENING – 1730's-1740's

- Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, John Wesley
- Reformed and Anglican in leadership and nature
- There was Harvest of souls, Signs of spiritual Revival, church growth
- Spanned the Atlantic - Impacted American colonies and Great Britain

SECOND GREAT AWAKENING – 1790's-1840's

- A series of “revivals” or periodic seasons of church renewal and growth that continued for several decades.
- The frontier camp meetings themselves were sometimes accompanied by far more unusual physical manifestations than was the case in the Great Awakening in New England and elsewhere under Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley.

FRONTIER CHURCH GROWTH

- Episcopalians, Congregationalists - grew more slowly because of location in New England and prior association with Church of England (Anglican = Episcopalian) in Southern colonies. These groups required more education before releasing ministers to evangelize / plant churches.
- Presbyterians - grew more slowly because of strict education requirements for ministry was unable to keep up with population growth and swift migration to the frontiers. Doctrines of election / predestination not as frontier-friendly.
- Methodists, Baptists - grew very quickly ... lower entry bar for ministry, large pioneer families.
  - Methodists - initially lower entry bar for ministry, systematic assignment of pioneer circuit riders to preaching points on frontier which became church plants
  - Baptists - lay movement, preachers commissioned by local churches, preachers were farmers like the congregation, picked up and moved with the people to new lands
  - Methodists & Baptists founded colleges and seminaries as quickly as possible to ensure they developed an educated ministry.

The early American Methodists asked four questions about each candidate offering himself for the circuit riding ministry:

1. Is this man truly converted?
2. Does he know and keep our rules?
3. Can he preach acceptably?
4. Has he a horse? *(and, sometimes, "Has he a Bible? Has he a gun?")*

### CHURCH ATTENDANCE in AMERICA ...

1. American Revolution – 17% of population regularly attended
2. Civil War – 30% regularly attended
3. 1900's – 50% regularly attended

**Romanticism** - truth is discovered through **passionate experience** recollected in tranquility.

*This new philosophy was a reaction against Rationalism, and it deeply influenced first literature and then religion. The influence of Romanticism can be clearly seen in various movements within American religion beginning in the 1800's and continuing to this day.*

*This belief that truth is discovered through **passionate experience** recollected in tranquility influences much of what follows below, and profoundly influences Pentecostalism to this day.*

### EARLY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS ANTECEDENTS ...

#### CAMP MEETINGS – Perpetuated Second Great Awakening to the Frontier

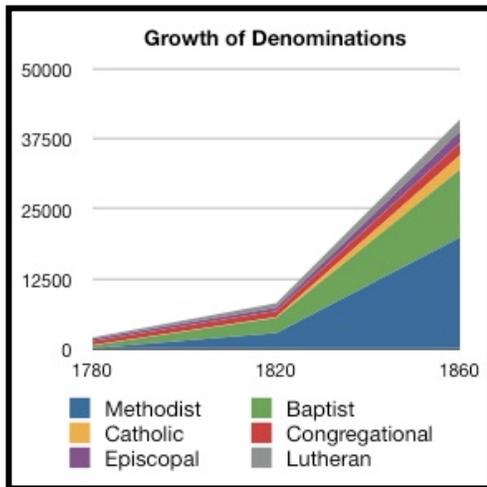
- 1800 and forward
- Often interdenominational
- Frontier isolation made the camp meetings highly anticipated events
- 1801 – Cane Ridge, Kentucky
  - Presbyterian sacramental event
  - 20,000 people (perhaps)
  - J. Barton Stone, Presbyterian minister, planned and led the meeting
  - Highly emotional services, singing, shouting, physical manifestations
  - Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist ministers and people all participated
- Camp Meetings became a frontier staple. Results ...
  - Methodists and Baptists embraced them
  - Cumberland Presbyterian Church was founded (more open to revival)
  - New Measures - had their first origins here
  - Restoration movements - originated with the "Revival" / camp meeting movement



A painting of the preaching and demonstrative response of the crowd at a frontier camp meeting.

It was reminiscent of the First Great Awakening in the 1700's. But, as a lingering part of the Second Great Awakening, it was more radical, more emotional.

## CHURCH GROWTH POST-AWAKENING



Though smaller in number than the Episcopalians and Congregationalists through the 1700's, the Methodists and Baptists grew exponentially during the expansion of the frontier and the growth of the camp meeting movement. Every new settlement quickly had a Methodist and/or Baptist meeting house.

## EDUCATED MINISTRY

Methodists and Baptists began building colleges and seminaries as soon as they could afford to so that they could have a well-trained ministry.

## OTHER 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (1800's) ANTECEDENTS that SPECIFICALLY INFLUENCED PENTECOSTALISM ...

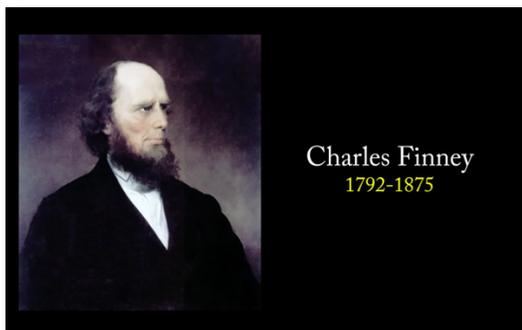
There were numerous religious and social trends that prepared the way for Pentecostalism and strongly influenced the new Movement. The two earliest religious trends were ...

- Restorationism
- Revivalism
- ...

We will examine these precursors and trace their influence ...

## THE SECOND AWAKENING and REVIVALISM

**Charles Finney** was the primary inventor / popularizer of "Revivalism" and the "new measures," the new ways of defining revival and conducting services.



### POSITIVE IMPACTS of REVIVALISM: ...

1. Moved the church away from the passivity of early 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Calvinism.
2. Emphasized prayer, work, witness, including for laity. Lay work and witness.
3. Cottage prayer meetings, door-to-door witnessing, led by laity, including by women.
4. *Later emphasis on perfection was intended to focus on spiritual formation through the person and power of the Holy*

*Spirit. Finney was seeking to correct the lack of permanence in his earlier converts.*

**Practical applications of the Bible and the Teachings of Christ on personal lives and on society that flowed from Finney's movement:**

1. Abolitionism – anti-slavery crusades; Oberlin College was founded and became an important part of the underground railway helping slaves escape to the North.
2. Temperance Movement
3. Women's work in the Church and rights in society

4. Sabbath-keeping – Christians and the state should honor the Sabbath ... Sundays should be reserved for rest and God. Eventually, “Blue laws” - outlawing commerce on Sundays - were passed across the nation.
5. Manual labor schools to train men and women in skilled crafts and trades

#### THE NEW MEASURES INVENTED by FINNEY and REVIVALISM: ...

- You may “will” to be saved when you hear the gospel. *Invented the concept of making “a decision for Christ”* whether or not you “feel” a great “conviction” of sin.
- Preacher should stir your emotions and move you to a decision
- Invented the “anxious bench” / mourners bench, the “altar” to which repentant sinners were called to come forward, kneel, and receive Christ.
- Invented the altar call - calling sinners to come forward to receive Christ.
- Taught that “revival” could be created by the “right use of the right means”
- Later Finney had an emphasis on a second work of the Holy Spirit empowering progress to moral perfection (an attempt to correct the highly emotional easy “conversions” of his earlier ministry that resulted in many “converts” falling away from Christ).
- Revivalism / Revivalist - Finney’s ministry created the concept of a “revivalist” as someone who travels to churches for extended meetings in order to use the New Measures (emotional preaching, stirring hearer’s emotions to move them to “decision”, encouraging simply making a decision for Christ as an act of your “will”, the emotional altar call, marketing / advertising the meetings, etc.).

#### NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF REVIVALISM ...

- Persuasive communication, stirring of emotions, and manipulation through fear replaced the Holy Spirit’s conviction
- “Conversions” were faster, more numerous, more superficial, resulting in less impact on society
- An emphasis on “numbers” - the number of people converted or attending became the primary standard for a successful “revival” or church.
- Careful instruction in Scripture and careful discipleship were not emphasized enough
- Human decisions and emotions were not permanent
- Lapses / backsliding were also faster, more numerous
- When “converts” lapsed, because they thought they had actually been “saved” and had truly known Christ they became resistant to the gospel, thinking they had already “tried” church.

Later in life, Finney admitted his methods produced many false conversions, shallow Christians, backsliders, and made people suspicious and resistant to future gospel witness.

Despite these and other problems that continue to this day, the New Measures gained a permanent place in populist American Christianity.

#### FINNEY and REVIVALISM’S EXTREME FORM OF ARMINIANISM ...

##### CALVINISM: John Calvin’s followers had created “Five-Point Calvinism” or “TULIP” Theology:

1. Total Depravity - humans are totally depraved and not able to exercise saving faith.
2. Unconditional Election - God chooses (elects, predestines) some people to be saved.
3. Limited Atonement - Christ’s atonement is limited to those God has predestined to be saved.
4. Irresistible Grace - Those chosen by God to be saved cannot resist God’s saving grace.
5. Perseverance of the Saints - Those chosen and truly saved will always persevere to the end.

(NOTE: to be precise, Calvinism teaches that you are first saved - regenerated by the Holy Spirit - and only

*then are you able to believe on Christ. Calvinism considers exercising saving faith “in order to” be saved to be a “work” that earns salvation, and Scripture teaches salvation is by grace through faith.)*

**ARMINIANISM:** Another Reformer, Jacob Arminius, taught that an unsaved / unregenerate person can be convicted of sin, offered the gift of saving faith by the Holy Spirit, and that the unsaved person **can** exercise saving faith when the Spirit is offering it and **THEN** is regenerated by the Spirit (saved, born again). And, Arminius taught that the warnings in Scripture against falling away mean that it **IS** possible for a genuinely born-again believer to turn away from Christ and lose their salvation. Classical Arminianism is NOT works based, but teaches complete reliance on God’s grace and the Holy Spirit in enabling us to believe and persevere.

**Finney preached an extreme form of Arminianism** emphasizing human efforts and human emotions regarding salvation, persevering, and experiencing “revival.”

“Revivalism” was (and is) a form of Pelagianism, a heresy named after an ancient church teacher (Pelagius) who first taught a works-based salvation and works-based righteousness.

#### CLASSICAL ARMINIANISM TEACHES ...

- God does not predestine people to be saved or to be lost.
- God convicts of sin, convinces of the gospel, offers the gift of faith, enables belief.
- Only when HS does these things may we say “yes”, repent, receive faith & believe.
- BUT, we retain the ability to say “NO” to God.
- AND, Christians can later harden their hearts and say “NO” to God, and stop following Jesus.
- > Only he who has the Son has Life. <
- SO, it is NOT possible to repent and believe any time WE want to.  
And we do not “lose” our salvation over one particular sin or other.

#### THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IS OFFICIALLY CLASSICALLY ARMINIAN

We are called “reformed” pentecostals because we come from the Presbyterian/Baptist line rather than the Wesleyan/Holiness line. Theologically we are Arminian, neither Calvinist nor Revivalist.)

**AND TECHNICALLY, we should be neither Revivalist nor Dispensationalist theologically.**

#### THE SECOND AWAKENING and RESTORATIONISM

The Second Awakening produced Restoration Movements and this strong Restorationist impulse in American religion: [Rediscovering and Restoring the true New Testament Church ...](#)

- J. Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell
  - The “Christian” Movement. Later became ...
  - Disciples of Christ (Christian Church)
  - Churches of Christ
  - Christian Churches
- Restorationism ... Other Restorationist Movements
  - Millerite Movement / Seventh-Day Adventism
  - Mormon Church / Church of Jesus Christ of LDS
  - Numerous Others

Stone

Campbell



**Restorationism** is the belief that the true New Testament church disappeared or withered to the point of death, but the way to restore the Church to New Testament purity and power has now been revealed.

**A restorationist church believes that it has rediscovered and is restoring the New Testament church.**

**Restorationism became a permanent, strong impulse in American religion.**

The “Christian Movement” (Christian Church / Churches of Christ / Disciples of Christ) begun by J. Barton Stone and by Alexander Campbell was one of the two largest, earliest restorationist movements.

**THE SECOND PROMINENT EARLY RESTORATIONIST MOVEMENT was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), the Mormons.**

**Joseph Smith founds Mormonism. 1805-1844.**

Smith had a Methodist / revivalist background in Palmyra, western New York.

Called the “Burned-over district” because many “revivals” and “revivalists” had disillusioned a generation. Smith was once convicted in a local court for using a “seer stone” to discern secret information, locations, etc. Around 1827, angel Moroni led him to golden tablets of reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics and seer stones with which to translate them.

In 1830, the Book of Mormon went on sale.

The book answered questions about the true Church, history, Indians’ origins, the sects, and the future.

**Smith was a dynamic personality, a “spiritual” person, a “prophet”, and a “teacher.”**

- Smith had further “revelations” and supposed healings.
- His “new revelations” and spectacular new teachings gained followers.
- He warned of the impending millennium and sent followers west to search for the revealed site of New Jerusalem.
- The Mormons moved to Ohio, Missouri, then Nauvoo, Illinois, where Smith was lynched in 1844.
- *His continuing “revelations” had clearly made the Mormons a non-Christian cult.*
- They finally settled in Utah as a new religion, a cult, a “nation” within a nation.

**Thus, the two most powerful and immediate precursors and influences enabling the Pentecostal revival were Revivalism and Restorationism.**

The influences of these two religious movements / philosophies are clearly seen in the P/c movement and in the AG, for better or worse.

**Many of our attitudes and practices in the P/c movement and in the AG we inherited from Revivalism and Restorationism.**

There were other 19<sup>th</sup> Century Antecedents (precursors) as well.

**END OF MODULE 1**

**PROCEED TO MODULE 2**