

REVIVAL AND REVIVALISM
The Making and Marring of
American Evangelicalism; 1750 - 1858
by Iain H. Murray

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Reviewed by Tony Horne

Ever since the first issue of the Banner of Truth magazine appeared in September 1955, Iain Murray has established himself as a leading figure in the evangelical and Reformed world of the latter half of the twentieth century. Almost single-handedly through the work of the Banner of Truth Trust he has forged a return to the Calvinism and theology of the Reformers and Puritans and men like Whitefield and Spurgeon. Besides the magazine which he edited for over thirty years, his writings are numerous and he is now a respected author in his own right. Indeed, any new volume from his pen immediately creates widespread interest among the Christian public.

Murray excels in biography and his published works have included biographies of Spurgeon, A.W. Pink, John Murray, Jonathan Edwards and Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones. This latest book is not the biography of one individual but rather an historical narrative of events centring around a number of prominent individuals. It is, nevertheless, written in the biographical style so typical of the author. It is a study of one particular theme, namely, the contrast between what the author implies is genuine God-sent *revival*, and the *revivalism* practised in the U.S.A. particularly during the middle period of the last century and associated principally with the name of Charles Grandison Finney.

There are those today who question the whole ethos of revival - see our review of the book by William Hamilton entitled *An Inquiry into the Scriptural Character of the Revival of 1859* (Issue No.5, Jan-March 1994) of this Journal. Certainly Murray goes out of his way to evince the genuineness and purity of revivals prior to the early 1800's but whether the book proves the case for revivals being God-given outpourings of the Holy Spirit, the reader will have to judge for himself.

Revival and Revivalism runs to over 450 pages and is an in-depth study of its subject. The bibliography is immense (approx. 290 works are cited) and footnotes abound on nearly every page. It could be said that the book is perhaps overloaded with quotations, in the same way in which a sermon can be spoilt by excessive use of Scripture references. An appendix is devoted to a consideration of revival in Britain but it is a pity that this is so short compared with the remainder of the book. Some readers will be left wishing that a fuller treatment could have been provided of the British scene - but, clearly, this was not the end the author had in mind.

All credit must be given to the author for a well researched and absorbingly interesting analysis of religious life in 18th and 19th century America.