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The Invitation: A Historical Survey

Thomas H. Olbricht

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The Invitation: A Historical Survey

Thomas H. Olbricht

The awakening of individual consciousness characterized the beginning of the modern age. Among the religiously oriented this phenomenon resulted in a growing concern of the individual for a relationship with God which he himself had experienced, and therefore emphasis was again placed on conversion. Because of this climate, the Pietistic and Evangelical revivals arose, which, as they progressed, initiated new revivalistic techniques. One such innovation was the request at the close of the sermon for those anxious about their souls to come forward—a procedure which came to be known as the invitation.

This study is concerned with the historical development of the invitation. The primary emphasis is on the eighteenth century—before the invitation was employed—and the nineteenth century, during which it was initiated and formalized.

The Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise and spread of a number of evangelical movements both in Europe and in America. Accompanying these revivals was an emphasis on Bible reading and extemporaneous preaching, but the culmination of the conversion experience was largely left to the private resources of the individual. When one did present himself before a group, it was after the fact of conversion rather than before.

The earliest religious stirring with emphasis on conversion centered in the Pietistic movement in Germany.¹ The experience of August Hermann Francke who helped found the University of Halle is typical of the movement. In 1687 when asked at Lueneburg to preach using John 20:31 as a text, Francke discovered, in preparing the sermon, that he himself lacked "true faith." After much struggle and prayer followed by a talk with the superintendent, then more prayer, suddenly Francke, while on his knees in dissolution, felt that God had given him a hearing from his Holy Throne. He now sprang up joyfully and praised God.² Due to Francke's insistence this experience was repeated by the thousands of Europeans who allied themselves with the Pietist movement. The struggle of those convicted during pietistic preaching was always culminated in private and never before an audience in a public assembly.³

In England, the "new" conversion emphasis resulted in the rapid growth of the Methodist societies. John Wesley was influenced

¹Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (Rev. ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 444-449. Also, see: Albrecht Ritschl, *Pietismus* (Bonn: 1880-1886), 3 Vols.

²Erich Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke*, Marburg: Francke-Buchhandlung, 1956, pp. 44ff.

³Confirmed by Professor Ernst Benz of the University of Marburg in an interview with the author, February 21, 1960, Cambridge, Mass.

by Puritanism, Christian Mysticism, and doubtless originated some of his own views, but his concept of conversion resulted from his contacts with the Moravians who were directly related to the Pietists through Count Zinzendorf who had studied at Halle, and whose parents were friends of Phillipp Jakob Spener.⁴ Wesley first came in contact with the Moravians on his trip to the new world for the purpose of mission work in Georgia. While in America he engaged in frequent conversations with the Moravians resulting in distress over the fact that he had not "experienced" conversion. These contacts continued in England upon Wesley's return, until in May 1738, while attending an Anglican "society" in Aldersgate Street and upon hearing Luther's preface to the *Commentary on Romans* read, Wesley experienced a new assurance. "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation. . ."⁵

While Wesley's experience took place in a public meeting, it was a private struggle and not a conversion solicited by those at the society. In the same way that Francke's conversion on the continent became the norm for the Pietists, so Wesley's conversion became the norm for the English evangelicals. The preaching of the Revival was aimed at initiating the struggle for reconciliation, but at no time did the English evangelists "invite" their auditors to commit themselves publicly at the close of the sermon. Conversion was held to be a private matter which one informed others about after the event had taken place.⁶ The preachers of the movement were concerned with audience response, but their method of evaluation was to observe facial expressions, and they were not under compulsion to count the souls which had been saved. George Whitefield, who was connected with the Wesleys, wrote about the result of his own preaching in Newport, Rhode Island, September 15, 1740: "I observed Numbers affected, and had great Reason to believe the Word of God had been sharper than a two-edged Sword in some of the Hearers' Souls."⁷ A century later in a document opposing the in-

⁴For the relationship between the Evangelical Revival in Great Britain and Continental Pietism, see: A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism*, Nashville: M. E. Smith, 1918. Also: Clifford W. Towlson, *Moravian and Methodist*, London: The Epworth Press, 1957.

⁵*The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, London: Robert Culley, Vol. I, p. 476.

⁶Kitty Trevelyman in her diary (*Diary of Kitty Trevelyman*, London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1866, pp. 174-76) gives a description of Wesley's field preaching, but does not mention an "invitation." The absence of this practice among the English Methodists is further supported by the *Autobiography* of Charles Finney. Finney went to England in 1849 and preached at a Wesleyan church. When he proposed to the minister that the auditors be invited to attend an "inquiry" meeting, he was informed that the people of England would not respond to a public call to single themselves out. *Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1876, p. 404.

⁷*A continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal. The Seventh Journal*. London: 1741.

vation (specifically, the anxious bench) John Nevin, a German Reformed minister, wrote: "Whitefield and Edwards needed no new measures to make themselves felt."⁸

A similar religious awakening occurred in the American colonies. The beginnings are usually attributed to Theodore Frelinghuysen who preached in the Raritan Valley of New Jersey. Frelinghuysen was familiar with the Puritan and Pietistic concepts in Europe, inasmuch as he was educated and ordained in Holland, which during this period was a sanctuary for Protestant refugees. From the New Jersey beachhead the evangelistic fervor spread, and in 1734 reached New England where a revival swept the town of Northampton, Massachusetts, under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards was trained in the colonies, but the New England theologians knew the views of the continental pietists as is evidenced by the extensive correspondence between Cotton Mather and Francke.⁹ The wide acceptance of Whitefield's method of preaching and concept of conversion when he arrived in New England some six years later also indicates that procedures of the European revivals were not unknown to the colonists.

The New England "Awakening" was closely related to the stirrings in Europe, but since the theological background was more strongly Calvinistic, the possibility that any minister would attempt to secure a public commitment was even more remote. In the Calvinistic view salvation is a gift which God bestows upon man in his own good time, and is not to be actively sought. In New England, the minister's home was the place where the saved brought the news of their acceptance, and the condemned sought the assistance of their pastor.¹⁰ This essentially private approach became the methodology of the "Great Awakening" as it spread to other parts of New England. Edwards himself reported: "The place of resort was now altered, it was no longer the tavern, but the minister's house; that was thronged far more than ever the tavern had been wont to be."¹¹

The new interest in conversion in the nineteenth century resulted in preaching which aimed at initiating in the individual a private struggle. Under the impulse of fervid preaching men and women repaired to the fields and woods, or to their homes in search of an

⁸J. W. Nevin, *The Anxious Bench*, Chambersburg, Pa., 1843, p. 23.

⁹Some of the Mather-Francke correspondence may be found at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹⁰Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, pp. 104f. See also: William Warren Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942, p. 283.

¹¹"Narrative of Surprising Conversions," *The Works of President Edwards*, New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1856, Vol. III, p. 241. See also: Edwards, "Thoughts on the Revival in New England 1740," *Ibid.*, p. 277ff., and Thomas Prince, *An Account of the Revival of Religion in Boston, in the Years 1740-1-2-3*, Boston: Reprint, 1823, p. 18.

assurance from God that he had reconciled them in Jesus Christ. Conversion was a private matter which one worked out with his God.

The Nineteenth Century

In America in the early part of the nineteenth century arose a practice which eventually affected the conservative evangelicals throughout the world. The precise reason for initiating the invitation is not clear, but it appears to have resulted from the desire for better organization in the sprawling and disruptive camp meetings of Kentucky. The practice arose out of the natural setting with evidently little awareness of the innovative nature of the procedure. After the technique came into vogue the preachers soon discovered the influence of the crowd upon the sinner if singled out, and the concrete manner in which the results of the preaching could be tallied and compared if public commitment was solicited. Theologically, this was a significant innovation, for it was a product of the movement away from Calvinism to Arminianism. On the frontier the Methodists who were numerically strong helped move theological thought in the Arminian direction, but the trend was also assisted by the strong democratic spirit of the frontiersman.

Due to the excitement over independence and the war which ensued, the American evangelical movement reached its low ebb during the Revolutionary period, but it did not die completely and toward the end of the eighteenth century reappeared with increased vitality and became designated by the historians as the "Second Great Awakening." From New England the revival spread to the south and to the western frontier. In its early stages the methodology remained the same as that of the preceding awakening. Edward Dromgoole described a 1790 Methodist service in which there were mourners, but they were "in different parts of the church" rather than at the front as the custom became later.¹² In 1791 Barton W. Stone, a Virginia Presbyterian, came under the influence of the popular Presbyterian evangelist, James McCready. McCready did not request a public commitment, but expected the sinner to struggle in private.¹³ Later Stone heard William Hodge, a "New Light Presbyterian" whose sermon increased his anxiety and caused him to retire to the woods with his Bible. There Stone experienced a conversion similar to that of John Wesley's: "I yielded, and sank at His feet a willing subject. I loved Him—I adored Him—I praised Him aloud in the silent night, in the echoing grove around . . ."¹⁴ Even as late as 1800, the sinner under conviction from attending the emo-

¹²The Edward Dromgoole Letters, Charleston, February 23, 1790. Printed in: William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Vol. V, p. 141.

¹³From Stone's *Autobiography*, quoted in: James M. Mathes, *Works of Elder B. W. Stone*, Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., 1859, Reprint, p. 14.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 13.

tional meetings of McCready repaired to the woods at the close of the sermon.¹⁵

At the turn of the century the invitation to the mourner's bench was instigated in the great camp meetings of Kentucky. The earliest statement suggesting this practice discovered by the author is in the Peter Cartwright *Autobiography*. Cartwright, who later became a Methodist preacher, wrote, concerning his visit to a camp meeting in Kentucky in May 1801:

To this meeting I repaired, a guilty, wretched sinner. On the Saturday evening of said meeting, I went, with weeping multitudes, and bowed before the stand, and earnestly prayed for mercy.¹⁶

McLoughlin in his book on modern revivalism pinpoints the camp meeting as the situation in which the use of the invitation arose, but does not attempt to date the specific time.¹⁷

The gathering together of those under conviction appears to have resulted from the desire to introduce some order in the sprawling camp meetings which attracted people from a radius of fifty miles. At Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1801 the crowd numbered as high as twenty-five thousand according to some estimates. Peter Cartwright stated that from 4 to 7 preachers addressed the campers concurrently from stands erected in different quarters of the grounds.¹⁸ Mourners in the early camps were scattered throughout the fields and woods. Such an indiscriminate distribution of the participants resulted in charges of immorality against the camp meetings which the leaders themselves had to admit contained an element of truth. Measures were therefore introduced to guard against such opportunities and it seems likely that the collecting of the mourners in front of the crowd was one of them.

The new procedure of having the sinners come forward when the "invitation" was extended spread rapidly on the frontier. The emphasis in these meetings was "experimental religion," and it was hoped, and often occurred, that the sinner experienced conversion

¹⁵McCready's evangelistic techniques are described in writings quoted in: Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, Boston: Little and Company, 1958, pp. 25f.

¹⁶*The Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1956, p. 38. Reprint. Two objections may be raised relative to the validity of this quote. Cartwright may merely have meant that he with others gathered to hear the preaching. Also, the chronology in this part of the *Autobiography* is inaccurate, and it may be that Cartwright's memory was incorrect in other details. The May 1801 date, however, is probably correct since Cartwright considered this the time of his conversion.

¹⁷William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism*, Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959, p. 95. He wrote: "But while the anxious meeting had a long tradition behind it, the anxious seat was a comparatively new measure which went back no farther than the use of the 'Mourner's Bench' at the Methodist camp meetings."

¹⁸Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

while at the front of the audience. The ones who came forward were often mourning, weeping, and praying, and the place designated for them in front of the assembly became known as the mourner's bench, or with other arrangements, the mourner's tent, the praying tent, the praying circle, the altar, and to scoffers, "the pen," because of its similarity to a hog enclosure. By the 1820's the title "anxious seat" also came into use.¹⁹ Jesse LeLe observed that as early as 1806 the ministers took great pains to report accurately the numbers who openly professed in this public manner.²⁰

The manner in which the invitation was employed varied from place to place and from preacher to preacher. The account by Frances Trollope, an English woman who visited a Kentucky evangelistic service in 1829, perhaps depicts a typical "invitation." Toward the close of the sermon Mrs. Trollope noted the first urgent pleading to coax members of the audience forward, then:

Again a hymn was sung, and while it continued, one of the three was employed in clearing one or two long benches that went across the rail, sending the people back to the lower part of the church. The singing ceased, and again the people were invited, and exhorted not to be ashamed of Jesus, but to put themselves upon the "anxious benches," and lay their heads on his bosom. "Once more we will sing," he concluded, "that we may give you time." And again they sang a hymn.²¹

From this beginning the mourner's bench became popular wherever the evangelistic spirit broke out. In a report of the Long-Calm Camp Meeting, Baltimore Circuit, Maryland, October 8th to 14th, 1806, the use of the "pen" is mentioned. The manner in which the statement is made suggests that the mourner's bench had become a standard practice at the camp meetings.

In the evangelistic campaigns to the north, however, the practice was slower to gain a foothold. Charles Finney, a Presbyterian evangelist, popularized the technique in those regions. His own conversion, however, took place in the woods. In his early evangelizing he encouraged those concerned for their souls to seek their salvation in a similar place.²³ Finney first employed the "invitation" at Evans Mills, New York, in 1825, an innovation for which he was bitterly criticized by his Presbyterian colleagues.²⁴ One of the critics, a

¹⁹Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting*, Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955, p. 132. Johnson describes the pen: "In composition the altar ranged from an allocated first row of seats for mourners to a spacious enclosed area, often twenty or thirty feet square, down the center of which ran a rail fence segregating the men from the women." p. 133.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 143.

²¹Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949, p. 79. A Reprint.

²³Finney, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 116.

Connecticut minister named Nettleton, stated that when he noticed signs of anyone becoming overwrought at his meetings he told them to go home and pray.²⁵ Even as late as 1830 the invitation was not accepted by the northern Baptists. Jebez Swan, a Baptist minister of upper state New York commenced the practice that year and aroused a great deal of antagonism among his fellow Baptist preachers.²⁶

Among the majority of the religious groups in the first half of the nineteenth century the invitation was employed either to encourage the conversion experience or to receive the report that conversion had taken place. Regardless of the purpose, the conversion itself was of an "experiential nature." In the early stages of the "New Light" movement in which Barton W. Stone emerged as the chief figure, the invitation was employed for the customary purpose of encouraging the mourner's bench experience. In later years, however, it came to be employed for a new and unique purpose among his people, which was accepted also and given added impetus by the Campbell reformers. Rather than experiential conversion, these men became convinced that salvation was secured through believer's baptism, and they therefore employed the invitation for a purpose without prior precedence, at least in modern times, and probably in the history of the Christian religion. They invited men and women to come forward as an indication of their desire to be baptized.

In 1798 Barton Warren Stone moved west from Virginia and after a period of travel on the frontier, settled as minister for the Presbyterian churches at Cane Ridge and Concord in Kentucky. The Second Awakening with its camp meetings was just then getting underway. Stone at first was not enthusiastic about these meetings due to the bizarre activities reported, but he traveled to Logan County, Kentucky, to observe one in progress. While not completely satisfied with all that went on, he became convinced that God's power was present. When therefore what was perhaps the greatest of the camp meetings occurred at Cane Ridge in August 1801, Stone was a zealous participant.²⁷ Also involved in the meeting, in addition to a number of Presbyterians, were preachers of the Methodist and Baptist faiths.

As the result of their movement away from the Calvinistic concept of conversion, and their enthusiasm over the ecumenical spirit of the camp meetings, Stone and five other Presbyterian ministers departed from that faith to form the Springfield Presbytery which they dissolved in June of 1804 to "sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." They took with them the "mourner's bench." Reflecting back on this period later, Stone wrote:

We had mourner's benches in those days, and they were things unauthorized by the Word of God. We long since abolished

²⁵McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 32

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁷Mathes, *op. cit.*, pp. 18f.

them, and we did right in so doing; but I almost fear that we did it in such a way as to abolish the mourners too.²⁸

Stone and those who had departed from the Presbyterian faith had insisted that salvation was possible for all men and not the elect few. This theology made the invitation—in that period the mourner's bench—central in the "New Light" thought and brought these men in conflict with their Presbyterian superiors.

In 1807 or 1808 the place of baptism in conversion became a subject of discussion among Stone's people. Prior to this period baptism, when administered by the New Lights, had followed at some convenient time the experiential salvation of the mourner's bench. Stone now became convinced that baptism held a more vital position in the conversion of New Testament Christians. He later wrote of his thinking during that period:

I remember once about this time we had a great meeting at Concord. Mourners were invited every day to collect before the stand, in order for prayers (this being the custom of the times). The brethren were praying daily for the same people, and none seemed comforted. I was considering in my mind what could be the cause. The words of Peter, at Pentecost, rolled through my mind, "Repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." I thought, were Peter here, he would thus address these mourners. I quickly arose, and addressed them in the same language, and urged them to comply.²⁹

As might be expected, Stone's proposition received a cold reception. He therefore did not propose baptism again in an invitation until some twenty years later when a few of the New Light preachers and Walter Scott of the Campbell reformers had made the practice popular.³⁰ Barton W. Stone was the first preacher in modern times to encourage men and women to signify their desire to be baptized for the remission of sins by "coming forward," but he did not have the courage and persistence to popularize the practice.

In 1825, B. F. Hall, a New Light preacher, was struck by the same inability of some to be comforted at the "anxious seat." A year later, in September, he preached baptism for the remission of sins and offered an invitation to that effect in Lauderdale County, Alabama. When the invitation was extended Tolbert Fanning came forward and was immersed the next morning.³¹ This was probably the first time that a response had resulted from a formal invitation to be baptized. Shortly afterwards, James E. Matthews "embraced the sentiment" and wrote articles on the subject which were published in Stone's *Christian Messenger*. Even then, however, the

²⁸Quoted in: Colby D. Hall, *The New Light Christians*, Fort Worth: Stafford-Lowdon Co., 1959, p. 103.

²⁹Mathes, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

³⁰Stone related the cold reception to B. F. Hall when Hall proposed the same action to Stone in 1825. Hall had reached the conclusion that baptism was for the remission of sins after reading the Campbell-McCall debate held in 1823. Colby Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 75.

practice did not become common until after Walter Scott of the Campbell reformers extended the invitation for the same purpose a little over a year later.

Thomas and Alexander Campbell commenced their reformation in earnest in 1810. They were little interested in evangelism, in contrast to Stone and his disciples, partly as the result of their Calvinistic presuppositions, and partly because their chief concern was reforming current religious practices rather than converting sinners. From the historical evidence it appears extremely unlikely that any of the Campbell reformers offered an invitation at the close of their sermons prior to 1827.³² It was about this time that Alexander perceived the ineffectiveness of the non-evangelical course of action, with the result that he encouraged the Mahoning Association in Ohio to appoint Walter Scott as its evangelist.³³ Scott was the first to hold such a position among the followers of the Campbells.

As the result of his own study and through his discussions with the Campbells, Scott had by this time come to the conclusion that sins were remitted through baptism. It was now up to him to work out a practical evangelistic technique for applying this conclusion. He therefore, in his first sermon for the association, proceeded to do what Barton W. Stone had done some twenty years earlier. He extended a formal invitation for any present to come forward and be baptized for the remission of sins. No one, however, came.³⁴ Scott was not as easily discouraged as Stone and on November 18, 1827, he tried again, and this time a preacher named William Amend came forward to be baptized.³⁵ With this incentive, Scott now began to offer the invitation at the close of each sermon and with great success. In April of the next year Thomas Campbell visited Scott to observe his work. In a letter dated April 9, 1828, he wrote to Alexander:

Mr. Scott has made a bold push to accomplish this object, by simply and boldly stating the ancient gospel and insisting upon it; . . . by putting the question generally and particularly to males and females, old and young—will you come to Christ and be baptised for the remission of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit? . . . This elicits a personal conversation; some confess faith in the testimony—beg time to think; others consent—give their hands to be baptised as soon as convenient; others debate the matter friendly; some go straight to the water, be it day or night and, upon the whole, none appear offended.³⁶

From this letter it is evident that the Campbells were unaccustomed to "extending an invitation." Whether Scott had read about the development among the New Lights or had simply taken over the

³²*Ibid.*, p. 114.

³³Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1956 (Reprint), p. 206.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 214.

³⁶Quoted in: Richardson, *Ibid.*, p. 219.

mourner's bench call and modified it to suit his own purposes is not clear. Regardless, the approval of this practice by the Campbells assured its success.

From 1827 the invitation which offered baptism for the remission of sins spread throughout the bodies of the Reformers and New Lights and appears to have been standard procedure in most of the congregations by the time of the merger which was completed about 1832.³⁷

While the invitation was gaining acceptance in the Campbell-Stone restoration its use was becoming widespread among the evangelicals of all denominations. Charles Grandison Finney, who is called by many the father of modern evangelism, popularized several of the techniques which are now the "tools of trade" of the twentieth century evangelist.³⁸ When Finney commenced preaching early in the 1820's he did not use the invitation as it was unheard of among the Presbyterians of the north and not readily accepted by the Calvinistic Presbyterians of the south. He had, however, come in contact with the Methodists and had probably heard of their mourner's benches. Whether he borrowed the invitation from them or whether it was the product of his extreme evangelical zeal and the desire to make more concrete the results of his efforts is not clear. Anyway, for the first time in his preaching career at Evans Mill, New York, in 1825, Finney "... called upon any who would give their hearts to God, to come forward and take the front seat."³⁹ On his first attempt Finney was successful.

Although Finney used the invitation on numerous occasions throughout his career, the manner of its usage varied from situation to situation. Sometimes he invited the auditors to attend an inquiry meeting upon the cessation of the service. On other occasions he invited those who had been converted during the day to come forward and report themselves in front of the pulpit.⁴⁰ In 1849 when Mr. Finney went to London he preached for a week without requesting action. When the week had elapsed he decided that the time was ripe for a response, so at the close of the sermon he invited those in the audience who were anxious for their souls to go to another building following the dismissal. Later in his stay, when large numbers were "awakening" Finney requested that the auditors stand and offer themselves since the aisles were so narrow and the house so packed that it was impossible to use the "anxious seat." The persons standing up were urged to go to the inquiry room when the services were completed.⁴¹

Finney so popularized the invitation among the evangelicals that after the middle of the nineteenth century its use was widespread

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 218.

³⁸McLoughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

³⁹Finney, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 160ff.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 404-407.

throughout England and America. Certain churchmen resisted the innovation, however, particularly the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and German Reformed in the state of New York and in New England. Prior to 1843, according to Nevin, the "anxious bench" had gained considerable acceptance among these groups, but due to opposition its usage was on the decline.⁴² The objectors in the east, however, did not deter the evangelists in the west and south from employing the altar call as frequently as they felt desirable.

When Dwight Moody began his evangelical work in Chicago in the 1860's he utilized the invitation which had already been popularized among people of his theological bend by Finney. As Finney, he varied its usage to meet the occasion. When Moody attended a conference in England in 1870 he was invited to preach at a London church. At the morning service he observed little reaction on the faces of his auditors so he did not offer an invitation. That night he sensed a different response and at the close of the sermon requested that those who wished to signify their desire to become Christians, arise. So many responded that Moody felt they had misunderstood, so he asked that those who really wanted to become Christians withdraw to the vestry.⁴³

Moody's standard technique in the midst of an evangelistic campaign was to request that those who wished to become Christians arise at the close of the sermon, then to encourage them to attend an inquiry meeting following dismissal. Great emphasis was always placed on this "second meeting" as Moody called it.⁴⁴ Within this framework Moody employed considerable variation in an attempt to adjust to different situations as they arose.

The awakening of the individual in the modern period resulted in great religious revolutions in Europe and America. These revivals once again emphasized conversion with the result that in the eighteenth century the evangelicals of the world sought to attain such an experience. Early in the nineteenth century the evangelicals gave birth to a new technique for producing conversion—the invitation. The reformers of the Campbell-Stone movements departed from the original use of the invitation and requested that men and women come forward for the purpose of being baptized unto the remission of sins. The invitation which originated in the great camp meetings of Kentucky continues unabated among the conservative evangelicals of the twentieth century.

4 Oak Knoll Rd., Natick, Massachusetts.

⁴²Nevin, *op. cit.*, pp. 11f.

⁴³William R. Moody, *D. L. Moody*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930, p. 121.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 225.