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*Evangelicals at a Crossroads*



## INTRODUCTION

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In recent years, prominent American evangelicals such as Jim Wallis and Rick Warren have described themselves as “nineteenth-century evangelicals” and have expressed their desire to take contemporary evangelicals “back to the nineteenth century,” when revivalist fervor and valiant efforts at social reform were both emphasized.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, many nineteenth-century evangelicals did have this dual focus. Outreach efforts among sailors, immigrants, and the desperately poor were begun at the same time that evangelicals also devoted enormous amounts of energy to citywide revivals. Evangelical revivalism and social reform were the movement’s most public expressions of their corporate identity. But this double commitment was no more easily attained than it is now. A complex array of historical events, people, religious ideas, and shrewd political decisions shaped evangelicals’ involvement in revival and social reform in growing nineteenth-century cities. Simply put, evangelical involvement in revivalism and social reform was a messy affair that involved politics and piety and showcased evangelicals’ contradictions as much as their consistency.

The Methodist, Baptist, and (especially) Salvation Army evangelicals discussed in this book—whom I sometimes call “upstart evangelicals”—were newcomers to nineteenth-century Boston, and they, in turn, sought to come to grips with even more recently arrived immigrants from Europe. The upstart evangelicals, though a diverse lot, could be generally categorized as persons of lower socioeconomic status with relatively little formal education compared with more established Protestants in Boston. Evangelical rural migrants, in particular, seemed especially adept at finding a creative marginal space for themselves in Boston. The concept of “marginality” has been utilized by other scholars to describe residents of lodging houses in late-nineteenth-century Boston who created a new subculture that “differed in important ways from those formed by earlier groups of Americans or immigrants, or by native- and foreign-born tenants at the higher and lower reaches of the social scale.” This concept of a marginal middle class describes both how upstart evangelicals were often perceived by other Protestants as well as how they understood themselves in the era immediately preceding and following the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

Upstart evangelical initiatives in the city were sometimes remarkably brash and frequently caught more established Protestants off guard. These revivalistic upstarts often led in efforts for labor reform, public school reform, temperance, and tenement housing reform as these movements swept through the city and prompted dramatic political rearrangements and new

alliances during the fifty years under consideration. Although never controlling city politics in Boston in ways that the Irish and Boston Brahmins did in the late nineteenth century, evangelicals nonetheless influenced the outcome of many mayoral elections—at times in precisely the opposite way than the way they had intended.

As insightfully noted by Margaret Bendroth, upstart evangelicals could also be identified by the relatively marginal position of their church buildings. Much of the prime real estate had already been taken before Baptists and Methodists arrived in any significant numbers.<sup>3</sup> A similar phenomenon of a new sort of “upstart evangelical” is occurring among American evangelicals today as an older generation of leaders gives way to younger evangelicals—many of whom are recent immigrants or the children of immigrant parents. The storefronts that house these churches are often in neighborhoods with the lowest rents, and their churches frequently lease space from declining congregations, which may themselves have been characterized as “upstarts” a century earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Experts predict that by the year 2050 the population of the United States will grow by an additional 100 million persons, almost entirely the result of immigration streams from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The vast majority of these immigrants will have some kind of affiliation with the Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> Dramatic changes in urban neighborhoods in late-nineteenth-century-Boston because of immigration from southern and southeastern Europe were as apparent to residents then as the effects of growing numbers of immigrants from Latin America and elsewhere are in today’s city—perhaps even more so.<sup>6</sup>

This book will not try to point out all the similarities and differences between today’s Boston and that of the nineteenth century; readers are left to draw their own conclusions in this regard. Nevertheless, I insist that this story of Boston evangelicals, in all its particularity, does indeed shed light on contemporary debates in American religious life. Generalizations are difficult to make about contemporary American evangelicals just as they were in the late nineteenth century. The study of any broad-based religious movement requires careful attention to local circumstances as well as global influences—not least of which being migration trends. A famous Boston congressman has remarked that “all politics is local.”<sup>7</sup> Contemporary studies of the varieties of pentecostalism around the world, and this study of evangelicals in the late nineteenth century, demonstrate that the same must be said for religion.

*Evangelicals at a Crossroads* illustrates the complex web of relationships and ideas connecting nineteenth-century evangelicals as they went about their business of revivalism and social reform in the streets, tenements, and tabernacles of the city from approximately 1860 to 1910. I strive to keep in focus the influences of the changing city itself in all its socioeconomic and

political complexity as well as to take seriously both the religious revivalism of evangelicals and their attempts at social reform in a city increasingly filled with poor immigrants and rural migrants from the American countryside.

I utilize the metaphor of “crossroads” in this book to draw attention to the interconnecting “roads” that evangelicals traveled in their public activities of revivalism and social reform in this period.<sup>8</sup> (The terms social reform and social welfare are used interchangeably in this book.) Visitors to Boston in the nineteenth century, no less than those today, were likely easily dismayed by the confusing nature of Boston’s streets. Boston crossroads are anything but neat and tidy, but they do get the city’s people where they want to go and are even loved by current and former residents (such as myself) who note that they “add character” to the city. I argue that, like Boston’s streets, evangelicals were far from a logical, uniform bunch as they journeyed through their lives on a variety of “roads” converging and diverging from one another along the way. Their endless particularities as women and men, rural migrants, recent immigrants, scholars, preachers, students, and workers comprise the “thick description” of their lives conveyed in this book.<sup>9</sup> The argument is made that, despite these particularities and the ways that their paths converged and diverged at different points, there was a general direction—a common destination if you will—toward which these upstart evangelicals were moving. Their destination can be understood as their desire for sanctification in themselves as well as their city to more perfectly reflect God’s will as they understood it. The way this religious vision played out in the Boston context, as well as the ways it was altered and, in some cases, secularized is an important part of the story.

The metaphor of “crossroads” is also used in a somewhat narrower sense to explain how and why the fragile evangelical consensus concerning revivalism and social reform that was held together for much of the period under consideration began to fragment in the 1890s. People who had previously walked side by side began to go in markedly different directions owing to a whole assortment of ideas and strategies surrounding their revivalism and social reform efforts. The book draws attention to these “crossroads of decision” and explains how the very persons who had a considerable measure of consensus as evangelicals in the 1870s could, by the early decades of the twentieth century, be sometimes best described by their antagonism toward one another and be labeled liberal Protestants, fundamentalists, or pentecostals.

Before moving on to our analysis of Boston evangelicals and their crossroads, there are two important questions to be considered. First, why look at Boston when trying to understand American evangelicals during this time in history? Second, who were the evangelicals discussed in this book and why do they matter? The answers to these two questions situate the book in its historiographical context and further clarify its key contributions.

## WHY BOSTON?

Boston residents today smile about their city's title as the "hub of the universe"—a modification of a phrase coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1858, incidentally also the year of a dramatic revival taking place throughout the city.<sup>10</sup> When Holmes referred to Boston's primacy as an intellectual center in mid-nineteenth-century America, few would have questioned his assertion. This intellectual vigor included a large religious component. The thick network of Protestant theological seminaries such as Harvard (Unitarian), Andover (Congregationalist), Newton (Baptist), Episcopal Theological School, and Boston University School of Theology (Methodist Episcopal) all within a convenient commute from downtown Boston underscored the position of Boston as the intellectual center of American Protestantism. Boston remained an abiding influence in later decades; two standard-bearers of mid-twentieth-century Protestantism, Carl F. H. Henry (a prominent evangelical theologian) and Martin Luther King, Jr., both received their doctoral degrees from Boston University, in 1949 and 1955 respectively.

Of course, the historical importance of the New England region for American religion can be pushed back to the earliest years of European settlement on the continent. Many parents are reminded of this fact each November as elementary schoolchildren across the nation are introduced to the importance of New England religion in American history as they don paper Pilgrim hats in memory of early Puritans. Boston and the wider New England region have been the subject of extensive scholarship on seventeenth-century Puritanism and the revivals of the First and Second Great Awakenings. Research by historians of subsequent periods presents a richly textured portrait of the region. Scholars such as Thomas H. O'Connor have told the story of Boston Catholics, and Margaret Bendroth has, more recently, provided a similarly richly textured portrayal of the rise of American fundamentalism in the city.<sup>11</sup> Although less concerned with religious themes, urban historians Sam Bass Warner, Oscar Handlin, and Stephen Thernstrom also focused on Boston, thus providing an excellent foundation for historians of urban religion.<sup>12</sup>

Histories of American urban religion, however, have barely scratched the surface when compared with the historiography of urban religion in the British Isles and the European continent.<sup>13</sup> For example, the American *Journal of Urban History* has published only a handful of articles on urban religion in its thirty-year history, and most of these have been book review essays.<sup>14</sup> As a local history of Boston's upstart evangelicals, this book addresses the lack of attention to religious themes in American urban history scholarship.

Boston's upper-class residents—or Boston Brahmins—were national leaders in the establishment of urban social welfare institutions, but evangelical contributions in this regard were also significant.<sup>15</sup> Without an impressive lineage of churches or social welfare institutions to give them social status,

Boston's upstart evangelicals established new institutions for poor relief that were simultaneously true to their revivalistic motivations as well as to their Boston context.<sup>16</sup> These new evangelical social welfare institutions differed substantially from those belonging to an older tradition of social welfare and reform dominated by Boston Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Unitarians. The process of building the new institutions drew evangelicals together across denominations, but over time the consensus broke apart. The evangelical contribution to social welfare in the late nineteenth century has often been overlooked in histories of American social work. This book seeks to address that deficiency.<sup>17</sup>

Nineteenth-century Boston was simultaneously one of the oldest cities in America and one of the newest when one considers the tremendous numbers of rural migrants from farming communities and new immigrants from Europe who increasingly called the city home. The rural migration to the cities was impressive. In 1860, 80.2 percent of Americans were rural residents; by 1910 only 54.4 percent of Americans could be so categorized.<sup>18</sup> In Boston, most rural migrants came from surrounding New England states, but migrants from the Midwest also made their mark. The contributions of these rural migrants to the city have rarely been given due attention by historians. From a purely numerical standpoint, Boston received fewer immigrants from Europe than New York did at this time. In terms of religious differences, however, Boston felt the strains of immigrant movements more acutely than any other city. In 1890, the census revealed Boston to be the nation's most Catholic city at 41.3 percent of the total population—over 15 percentage points ahead of New York, its closest competitor. It is little wonder that anti-Catholic feelings among evangelicals were such a motivating force for Protestants as they grappled with the “peril of Romanism.”<sup>19</sup> The presence in Boston of so many recent immigrants from Britain and the Maritime Provinces of Canada further intensified anti-Catholic feelings as conflict between Irish Catholics and British Protestants in the old country was transported to Boston without the slightest diminishing of fervor on either side.<sup>20</sup> In addition to analyzing the important role anti-Catholic organizing played for evangelicals, this study demonstrates that a few Protestant immigrants from Italy, Sweden, and elsewhere were important leaders in revivalism and social reform, not merely recipients of native-born efforts.

#### WHO WERE THE EVANGELICALS?

The group referred to in this book as “evangelicals” was a broad, variegated movement—just as it is in American society today. Efforts to precisely define who was and who was not an evangelical inevitably fail if pushed too far, but some generalizations are possible. Evangelicals were devoted to revivalism and thus possessed a heightened concern for persons to have a personal ex-

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perience of salvation through Jesus. A large contingent of evangelicals especially stressed the Bible's teachings on holiness and encouraged one another to seek the experience of "entire sanctification"—to be discussed below. The evangelicals described in this book were a group composed mostly of Methodists, Baptists, and Salvation Army adherents along with some members of the more firmly established Protestant denominations such as Congregationalists and Episcopalians. A portion of Episcopalians, for example, were recent arrivals to the city from the Maritime Provinces and were generally of a lower social class than many wealthy Boston Episcopalians.<sup>21</sup> These mostly white, generally lower-middle-class evangelicals often settled into a Methodist orbit of camp meetings and prayer gatherings that were part of the transdenominational American holiness movement.

Because of this book's focus on the Methodists and the holiness movement, the term "holiness evangelical" may be a more precise description of the group of evangelicals under consideration. I have chosen, however, to use the less cumbersome term "evangelical" for three reasons that go beyond its being an easy shorthand description. First, the late-nineteenth-century history of the evangelical movement in America needs to be seen in light of the Methodist movement more than it has been in past scholarship. The Methodist Episcopal Church, after all, was by far the largest denomination in North America and evangelical in its emphasis on revivalism and personal experience of God. Yet too many historians of the nineteenth century seem to either ignore it or give it short shrift relative to its large size and influence.<sup>22</sup> Second, and in the opposite way, historians of American Methodism would benefit from examining it in light of the wider evangelical movement in the nineteenth century. The holiness movement is too often seen as a dimension of Methodism's own denominational history. It was much more than this. Its impact was felt far beyond denominational boundaries.

A third reason to focus attention on the Methodists and the wider holiness movement is related to the contemporary expansion of pentecostal movements around the world and in America's cities, including Boston. Most pentecostal groups began as departures from Methodist or other Wesleyan denominations. Careful attention to evangelicals' involvement in revivalism and social reform in a nineteenth-century city offers a much-needed historical perspective for the contemporary pentecostals and their growing interest in social welfare activity.<sup>23</sup>

By focusing on the Wesleyan holiness movement as a kind of "gravitational center" for the evangelical movement, I also counter a tendency in historical scholarship to interpret the late-nineteenth-century evangelical movement through the lens of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century. Northeastern Methodists played a minor role in this controversy as they carved out a moderate position that was difficult for them to

hold for very long. This will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters. Readers who are interested in better understanding the rise of Boston's fundamentalist community especially in flagship congregations such as Tremont Temple Baptist Church and Park Street Church are urged to consult Margaret Bendroth's fine study, *Fundamentalists in the City*.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to Bendroth, my attention to social welfare and reform movements and citywide revivals has caused me to focus more attention on institutions (orphanages, settlement houses, and the like) established by evangelicals that were independent from local congregations. I also pay more attention to the ecumenical dynamics of citywide revivals than on what was happening within particular local churches.

Evangelical motives for establishing social reform institutions and engaging in revivalism were in a constant state of flux and are thus best understood through dynamic metaphors. If one pictures a magnet with a positive and negative pole, evangelicals' anti-Catholic feelings serve as the best negative marker of evangelical motives in Boston at this time. Evangelical piety nurtured in the American holiness movement with its attendant camp meeting revivals and Tuesday afternoon meetings in a small Beacon Hill church was the most powerful positive motive (enthusiastically positive) that inspired efforts among Boston's poor as well as personal holiness. These two motives of anti-Catholic loathing and holiness movement piety worked like a magnet (or rotor) in an electric motor that spins because of the constantly changing polarities of the magnet. The evangelical machine kept humming as long as the motivational forces at both poles of the magnet remained strong. When they weakened, the cohesiveness of the evangelical community in Boston began to break apart.<sup>25</sup>

There were many theological disputes among evangelicals in late-nineteenth-century Boston; one of the most important disputes concerned ideas about the end times and the return of Jesus to earth. Prior to the Civil War the dominant belief among American evangelicals was that Jesus would return after a millennium of increasing improvements in the church and the world and that it was the responsibility of Christians to contribute to this work. A strong belief in this postmillennial return of Jesus fueled the abolitionist fervor of many evangelicals prior to the Civil War. Commitment to postmillennialism continued after the Civil War, but beginning in the 1870s it began to be challenged by evangelicals who espoused a premillennial interpretation of Jesus' return whereby the world was not going to get better at all but rather would be getting worse until Jesus returned. Such beliefs about the millennium were accompanied by a more pessimistic belief in human beings' potential. Premillennialist belief was influential in prompting many evangelicals to pull back from involvement in social reform at the very end of the nineteenth century to focus more exclusively on "saving souls."<sup>26</sup> A Salvation Army and

Methodist leader criticized this outlook in one 1883 publication and referred to premillennialists as “gloomy pessimists” and followers of an “O wretched man that I am religion.”<sup>27</sup>

For many evangelicals, however, these ideas of premillennialism and postmillennialism remained in tension with one another, and many people simply never felt any compulsion to make up their minds. Many important evangelical leaders sought to steer a middle way through such controversies with varying degrees of success.<sup>28</sup> In time, however, postmillennial optimism about human potential would transform into a vague and secularized belief in progress, but at least until the 1890s such postmillennial perspectives mostly maintained their religious moorings in the groups considered in this book. The holiness movement’s influence—especially at the popular level—was important for the way that it continued to supply many evangelicals with the language of postmillennial expectation and stressed the importance of a wholehearted devotion to God as a prerequisite for their work to sanctify the city.

The strategies evangelicals used to promote revivalism and social reform in the city are equally worthy of attention as theological ideas. It is clear that the methods utilized in D. L. Moody’s Boston revival in 1877, for example, felt familiar to upstart evangelical groups (the Methodists and Baptists) but were more alien for the Episcopalians and Congregationalists. A few months after the 1877 Boston campaign, Methodist Episcopal Bishop Jesse Peck drew attention to the methodological distinctiveness of his denomination while also warning his colleagues against the temptations of allowing Methodism to become a more refined religion:

The great danger is that we shall not be ourselves—that original, historic Methodism will not preserve its identity. . . . There is a distinction between Methodism and all other forms of Christianity. It believes in the Bible, in Christ, in the Holy Ghost, and a holy life, like all other evangelical Churches; but it is distinct in its methods. It is the method of inspiration in distinction from logic. Logic reasons and then believes. Methodism believes and reasons. Logic reasons and feels. Methodism feels and then reasons. Logic reasons and enjoys. Methodism gets happy and then reasons. Logic educates and waits for a call, and then preaches. Methodism preaches, being “moved by the Holy Ghost,” and studies, guided by logic. Logic “sings and prays with the understanding;” Methodism “with the spirit and understanding also.” Logic proves things and then uses them. Methodism strikes heavy blows, wins souls to Christ, and vindicates itself by what it has done. Logic is prophecy; Methodism is history.<sup>29</sup>

Peck’s sermon would have resonated with other upstart evangelicals. Many Baptist and (in subsequent years) Salvation Army leaders would have affirmed a similar difference between the “logic” of the generally more af-

fluent Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians and their own less refined “method of inspiration.”

The methods evangelicals utilized in social welfare efforts also differed from the ways employed by Boston Brahmins even while evangelicals strategically sought the counsel—and money—of the more firmly established “proper” Bostonians. Simply stated, evangelical social welfare tended to more freely intermingle revivalism with social reform, while more affluent Protestants found revivalism rather unsophisticated. The Salvation Army, more than any other denomination in Boston, displayed the greatest innovation in its methods of revivalism and social reform, and those methods were consequently mimicked by other evangelical groups as they observed the Salvationists’ uncouth success. Proper Bostonians mostly just looked on with dismay.

#### THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

Before commencing an examination of upstart evangelicals in late-nineteenth-century Boston, it is important to understand the origins and establishment of the religious movement that most inspired them. Among religious movements blowing through Boston before and after the Civil War, the holiness movement is by far the most important for our understanding of evangelicals in the city and nation.<sup>30</sup> In the early years of the twentieth century the holiness movement began to decline in its influence and was replaced by other movements that did not have the same cohesive power for as wide an array of evangelical adherents. Today, camp meeting sites in Hamilton, Massachusetts, and on Martha’s Vineyard stand as sedate architectural reminders of a movement that once ran wild in New England. The impact of the holiness movement on New England religion has been generally overlooked compared with the influence of the much-pondered Transcendentalists and their forebears, who did so much to shape Protestant liberalism in America.<sup>31</sup>

Historians usually trace the origin of the holiness movement in the late nineteenth century to the evangelical revival of the prior century in England led by John Wesley and countless lay itinerant preachers—male and female—who sought to “spread Scriptural holiness over the land.” Wesley’s doctrine of “entire sanctification” stressed that the goal of the Christian life was to attain an experience of “perfect love” whereby avoiding sin was no longer a struggle. Unlike Calvinists, Wesley believed such “Christian perfection” was possible and even to be expected in this life—although he personally never claimed to have attained it. Numerous hymns by Charles Wesley on this theme inspired Methodists and other evangelicals around the world. “Finish then Thy new creation; Pure and spotless let us be; Let us see Thy great salvation; Perfectly restored in Thee.”<sup>32</sup>

New England was the literary birthplace of a revived emphasis in America on the idea of entire sanctification. Timothy Merritt’s *The Christian’s*

*Manual, a Treatise on Christian Perfection*, published in 1825, and his journal, the *Guide to Christian Perfection*, were instrumental in sparking renewed interest in this motivational engine of evangelical expansion. In 1839 Merritt proclaimed his journal the “first publication of its kind ever commenced.”<sup>33</sup> The founding of a new journal focused on encouraging the promulgation of holiness revival was a foreshadowing of the holiness movement’s later tendency to found new organizations and publications rather than work solely through denominational structures.<sup>34</sup>

Drawing on Merritt’s work, Phoebe and Walter Palmer of New York City promoted entire sanctification ideas among Methodist leaders in the Northeast through their popular Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness begun in 1835 by Phoebe’s sister, Sarah Lankford. The Palmers purchased Merritt’s *Guide to Holiness* in 1865, and Phoebe Palmer quickly became the name most associated with the holiness movement. After the Palmers’ purchase of the *Guide*, its circulation skyrocketed from thirteen thousand to thirty thousand monthly subscribers.<sup>35</sup>

The Palmers’ leadership in ministry with the poor through the Five Points Mission and New England Methodist preachers’ leadership in abolitionism demonstrate the intimate link between revivalism and social reform in the years leading up to the Civil War. During the period of Reconstruction and beyond, these leaders sought to further the task of “spreading Scriptural holiness” by coordinating their revivalistic efforts in the National Camp Meeting Association established immediately following the Civil War. African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church preacher Frederick Douglass even used holiness terminology when he defined the problem of Reconstruction as the “great work of national regeneration and entire purification.”<sup>36</sup> Leaders in other parts of the holiness movement thought similarly, viewing their involvement in social welfare activities as a natural extension of their earlier efforts in revivalism. A revival in individuals’ hearts and souls that remained important to evangelicals also became a revivalism to change the social and political realities around them.<sup>37</sup>

This doctrine of holiness or entire sanctification was a powerful force in the expansion of Methodism from just 2.5 percent of religious adherents in America in 1776 to 34.2 percent in 1850—nearly double the combined percentage of Americans who claimed Congregationalist, Presbyterian, or Unitarian identity. In the decades following the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church remained the largest Protestant denomination in the country. But Methodism never posted such large numbers in the city of Boston—usually ranking third behind Baptists and Congregationalists. The dominance of Methodism elsewhere in the country, however, made the Boston Methodists act with greater boldness than their numbers alone would have justified, and they established revivalist and social reform efforts that often surpassed those of other denominations with more adherents in Boston. One of the reasons

they could do this was because, unlike Baptists, the Methodists organized themselves in a regionally centralized manner and could usually manage to organize and coordinate the financing of new ministry initiatives, especially those efforts located outside the supervision of a single local congregation, in a somewhat easier way than less centralized ecclesial groups such as the Boston Baptists.

Methodists in Boston were also emboldened by the presence of several of the holiness movement's most important intellectual and organizational leaders who claimed New England as their home. The Reverends Daniel Steele and William McDonald stand out as the two most important holiness movement leaders in New England at the time. Only four years apart in age, Daniel Steele and William McDonald were both sons of farmers, born in rural New York and rural Maine, respectively. Both Steele and McDonald shared an interest in writing, although Steele was the more prolific and scholarly while McDonald was more of an administrator and editor of holiness movement journals.<sup>38</sup>

William McDonald's magazine, the *Advocate of Christian Holiness*, was a fixture in the homes of New England Methodist pastors and evangelical laypersons. It was the main publication of the American holiness movement. McDonald took up the editorial pen in 1871, and by June of 1874 the *Advocate of Christian Holiness*, a Boston publication, claimed that every Methodist preacher in eight annual conferences (a ministry area that would have covered much of the Northeast) read it.<sup>39</sup> William McDonald was a famous evangelist and promoter of revivals across the country and internationally in England, India, and Rome, and he also served as pastor of Methodist Episcopal churches in the immediate Boston area from 1865 to 1869 and again from 1876 to 1884.<sup>40</sup>

The name Daniel Steele appears more frequently in this book than that of any other single person. Born in 1824, Daniel Steele was an influential pastor and teacher in the holiness movement throughout the nineteenth century. In 1871, before coming to Boston to serve as pastor of Tremont Street Methodist Episcopal Church in the South End, Steele served as president of Methodist-affiliated Syracuse University. From 1884 to 1893 he was a professor at Boston University School of Theology, often pastoring local churches along with his teaching responsibilities. He was a gifted teacher, but Steele was best known as a writer and an advocate for Methodist revivalism and social reform efforts in Boston. Steele's influence in these efforts was symbolic of the importance of holiness movement ideas in the Boston urban mission as a whole. During his lifetime he was sometimes compared to Timothy Merritt and John Fletcher (a close colleague of John Wesley) because of his heartfelt advocacy for the experience of entire sanctification. His best-selling book on holiness, *Love Enthroned: Essays on Evangelical Perfection* (published in 1875), was said to have some of the most beautiful prose about entire sanctification of

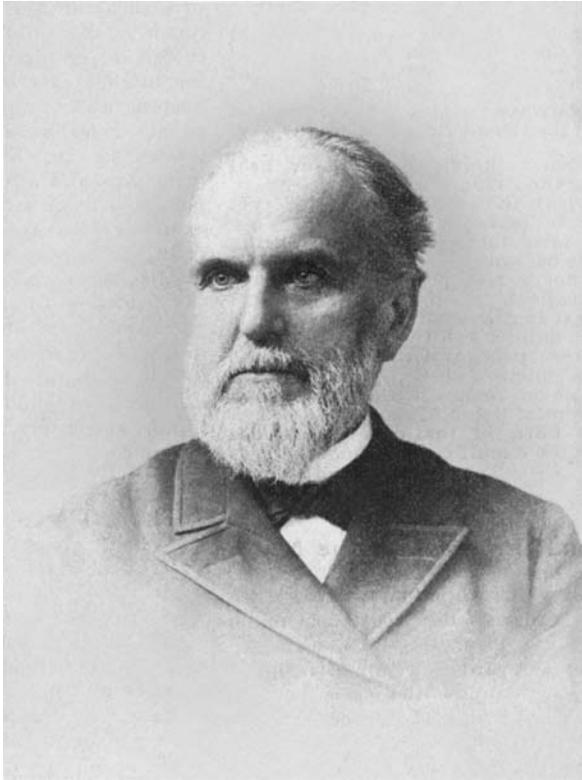


FIGURE I.1.  
*The Reverend Daniel  
Steele around 1900.  
Image from Zion's  
Herald, 15 August 1900,  
1025.*

any book in the late nineteenth century. Steele also possessed a lifelong interest in foreign and home missions, which he gained from his mother, who was the great-niece of the famous missionary to the American Indians David Brainerd.<sup>41</sup>

The apex of Steele's personal influence as a theologian, teacher, and author in the mid-1880s paralleled the height of the holiness movement's influence in late-nineteenth-century Methodism. His influence quickly diminished among the intellectual elite of his denomination after 1900 as the holiness movement itself declined in New England Methodism. A 1906 article on "changes in American Methodist theology" barely mentioned Steele's name, but his popular appeal remained strong for a number of years longer.<sup>42</sup> That *Love Enthroned* was reprinted in 1908 and again in 1923 is a testimony to its influence among holiness movement adherents.

This book begins with the story of the Dwight L. Moody evangelistic campaign, which serves as the first of two "bookend events" for the period under consideration. The first chapter provides an orientation to the people, politics, religion, land, and buildings of Boston in 1877—the year Dwight L. Moody came to town for a citywide revival. It was a city Moody knew well,

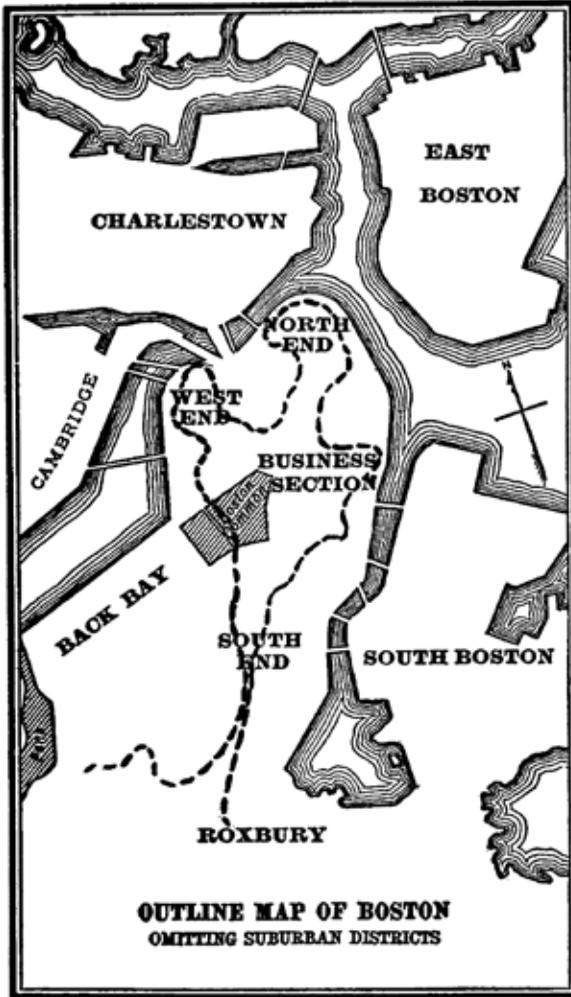


FIGURE I.2.  
*Map of Boston neighborhoods.*  
 Image from Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913).

but it had changed a great deal from the time he first came to the city in 1855. Demographic, geographical, and architectural portraits of the city illustrate these changes in different ways. The drama of the revival offers a glimpse of life in Boston at a particularly intense time in its history. The reader is also introduced to evangelical leaders A. J. Gordon, Frances Willard, and Eben Tourjée—persons who will be discussed in greater depth in subsequent chapters of the book.

Whereas chapter 1 emphasizes the revivalistic manifestation of evangelical piety, chapter 2 focuses on the roots of their social reform efforts. It does this by backing up to a time approximately fifteen years prior to the Moody revival when several charismatic upstart evangelical leaders began new insti-

tutions for social reform in the neighborhoods of Beacon Hill, the North End, the South End, and Roxbury. The transdenominational reach of the holiness movement becomes obvious in this early period as well.

The next three chapters are less chronologically oriented and instead illustrate the complex interplay of people, ideas, strategies, and politics at work in Boston. Chapter 3 focuses on the anti-Catholic and labor organizing of Boston evangelicals in 1888 and examines the Boston political context of the late nineteenth century as Irish and Boston Brahmins vied for control of city hall and the statehouse. Chapter 4 brings to center stage the story of women's leadership in evangelical organizations that spanned the globe as well as the Boston neighborhoods where they worked. The interrelationship of the temperance movement and the women's foreign missionary movement is especially noteworthy. The Salvation Army's invasion of Boston is given special attention as a church in Boston that was primarily—but not exclusively—led by women. Chapter 5 analyzes the conflict among evangelicals in the 1880s and 1890s as the holiness movement experienced its time of greatest division. New intellectual developments in biblical scholarship, differing attitudes toward world religions, and differences in the priority placed on evangelistic efforts and social reform caused sharp—and sometimes highly nuanced—disagreements among evangelical leaders.

The sixth chapter is primarily a case study of evangelical revivalism and social reform with a focus mostly on the North End during the 1890s. (The South End is also briefly discussed.) An examination of the North End at this time provides a vantage point from which to assess the changes in evangelical ministries previously discussed in chapter 2, which had been there in the 1870s. One of the most obvious changes in the North End was the neighborhood's transition from one of primarily Irish immigrants to one where Italian and Jewish immigrants predominated. The influence of rural migrant church leaders (from Iowa of all places) and the amazing leadership abilities of an Italian Methodist couple are part of the fascinating stories from the North End in the 1890s.

The concluding chapter once again returns to the drama of citywide revivals, in this case two of them held in Boston in 1906 and 1909. Evangelical leaders welcomed Gipsy Smith and J. Wilbur Chapman in these years as church leaders sought to resurrect the spirit of Moody's 1877 revival. The early-twentieth-century revivals were successful to some extent, but Boston evangelicals now stood at a different place on the crossroads. They had changed along with their city—perhaps more than they realized.