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Contents

Cover: Governor Morrow's Mill *by Godfrey Frankenstein, 1869, oil on canvas. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

Contributors

GINETTE ALEY received the Ph.D. in History from Iowa State University in 2005. Beginning in August she will be Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Indiana.

TOM KANON is an archivist/historian at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville. He holds a master's degree in History from Middle Tennessee State University. A version of this article was presented at The Filson Institute Conference in Spring 2003, "Constructing and Reconstructing a Region: 21st-Century Approaches to the Ohio Valley's History."

ARTHUR ROLSTON is a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of California at Los Angeles and a former Filson Fellow.

ROB GIOIELLI is a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Cincinnati.

"Scared from Their Sins for a Season": *The Religious Ramifications of the New Madrid Earthquakes, 1811-1812*

Tom Kanon

In the very early morning hours of December 16, 1811, the population of the tiny community of New Madrid, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in the Bootheel of present-day Missouri, awoke to an ominous rumbling in the sky. Within minutes, a violent shaking of their homes caused the aroused citizens to run out into the dark. Once outside, they could see, during the brilliant flashes of lightning, images worthy of Dante's *Inferno*. The riverbank, in huge portions, slid into the churning Mississippi, taking with it the tenants of the local graveyard. Islands in the river disappeared, swallowed up by the agitated waters. Crashing trees fell indiscriminately to the ground as wide, hissing gaps in the soil opened. Spouts of sand and water shot up into the thundering sky, ejected by an angry earth quivering and reeling with the force of doomsday.

From mid-December 1811 to the middle of March the following year, a series of natural disasters literally shook the earth in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. Known as the New Madrid earthquakes because the epicenter of activity was located near the town of that name, the cataclysmic shocks forever changed the landscape of the region. The estimated two to three thousand tremors occurring in the winter of 1811-12 altered the topography of thirty to fifty thousand square miles in present-day southeast Missouri, northeast Arkansas, and western Kentucky and Tennessee. Vibrations shook the ground in a region encompassing nearly two million square miles, south toward New Orleans, north to Detroit, and east to Boston and Charleston. Miraculously, despite the gaping fissures, landslides, and flooding waters, estimates suggest that only a dozen deaths occurred as a result of

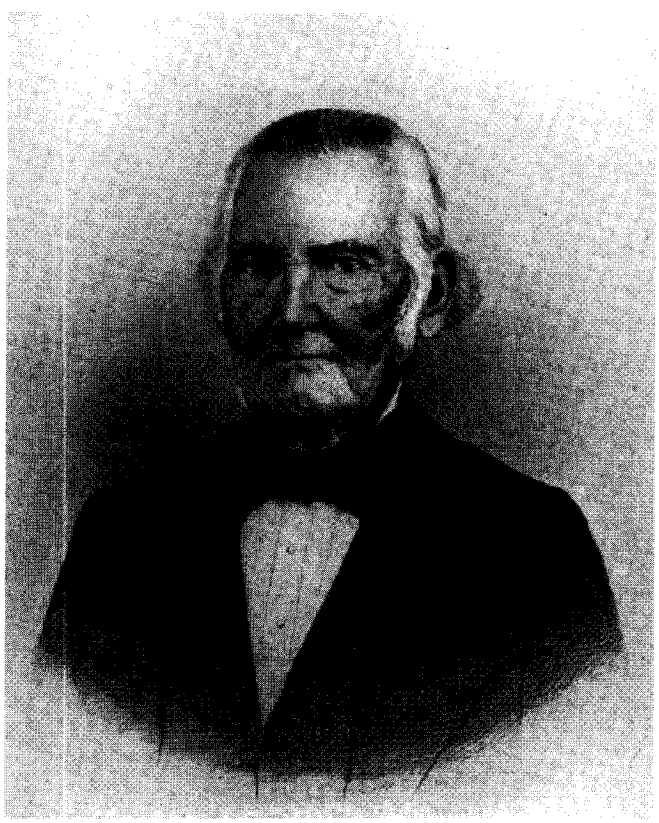
THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE AT NEW MADRID.

"Then the houses crumbled, the trees waved together, the ground sunk; while ever and anon vivid flashes of lightning, gleaming through the troubled clouds of night, rendered the darkness doubly horrible."--Page 244.

The Great Earthquake at New Madrid from The Great West *(1851) by Henry Howe. Cincinnati*

the New Madrid earthquakes. The region lying along the New Madrid Fault was sparsely populated, and the rudimentary wooden structures in the towns and villages lessened the possibility of fatalities that might have resulted from toppling brick buildings.[1]

Still, the psychological impact on the region's population was profound. The earthquakes affected the frontier community's religious climate, resulting in an initial surge of pietistic passion, then, once the earthquakes had subsided, a subsequent decline in devout fervor. A decade earlier another earthquake of sorts, a religious revival known alternately as the Great Revival or the Second Great Awakening, had rocked the frontier in a fashion similar to the dramatic upheavals of the New Madrid earthquakes. This essay re-examines the Great Revival, particularly in the West, through its contextual relationship to the New Madrid earthquakes. The unique qualities of the earthquakes, the acute psychological effects they had on individuals, and the residents' varied responses to this catastrophe, when compared with those elicited during the Great Revival, offer important insights into the transitory, unsteady, and sometimes violent nature of the frontier, its people, and its religious institutions.



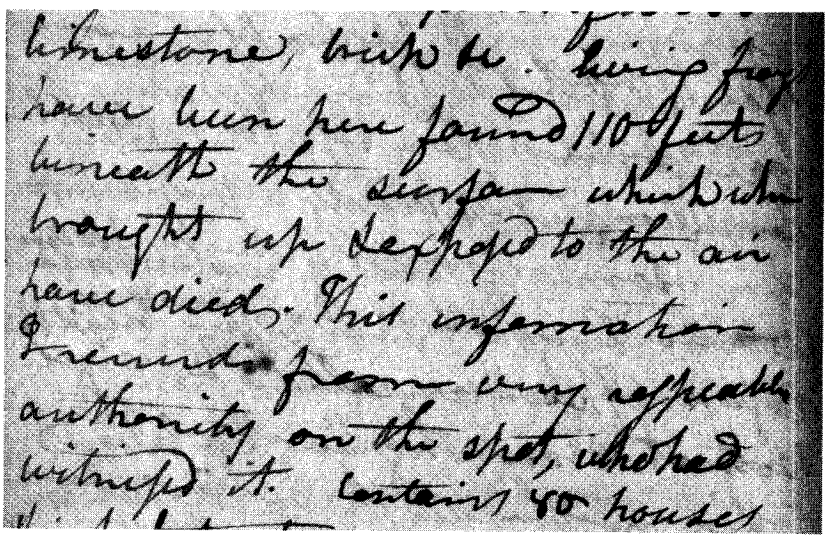
Ephraim Cutler (1767-1853) from History of Ohio *(1912) by E. O. Randall and Daniel J. Ryan. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

Three factors set apart the New Madrid earthquakes from similar episodes in American history. First, the tremors that shook the area lasted several months, according to witnesses and aftershocks persisted for several years. Second, the affected region was vast, one that stretched well west of the Mississippi River and east to the Atlantic seaboard. Indeed, most of the populated area of the United States experienced the earthquakes or their repercussions in one form or another. Finally, the timing of the quakes coincided with a particularly inauspicious social and political setting, as a series of natural disasters and the threat of war distressed the nation. These factors, taken together, enabled the New Madrid earthquakes to affect the psyche of an entire frontier populace.

Letters from the frontier in the winter of 1811-12 abound with references to the earthquakes that shook the region. In every state in the West, accounts of crumbling brick chimneys, toppling trees, and deafening roars of thunder filled the pages of diaries, journals, memoirs, and correspondence. In Tennessee, Reuben Ross recalled that at about sunrise on December 16, "a noise

like distant thunder, far away to the southwest, began to be heard. . . . When it reached us the noise for a moment was terrific, and the vibrations of earth violent." In the remote outpost of Vincennes in the Indiana Territory, Lydia Bacon wrote to her mother on January 29, 1812, about the "truly alarming" earthquake that occurred six days earlier, noting "a few chimneys have been thrown down and the ceiling of some houses cracked considerably." In Zanesville, Ohio, Ephraim Cutler testified that he saw the spire of the courthouse vibrate "at least twelve inches" during a shock in early February. He later experienced another tremor while lying in bed one evening and described the motion as "that of a sieve in the act of sifting meal." In the East, residents recorded similar experiences. In Washington, for example, President James Madison felt the shocks of the February 7 quake in the early morning hours and immediately wrote a letter to his old friend Thomas Jefferson.[2]

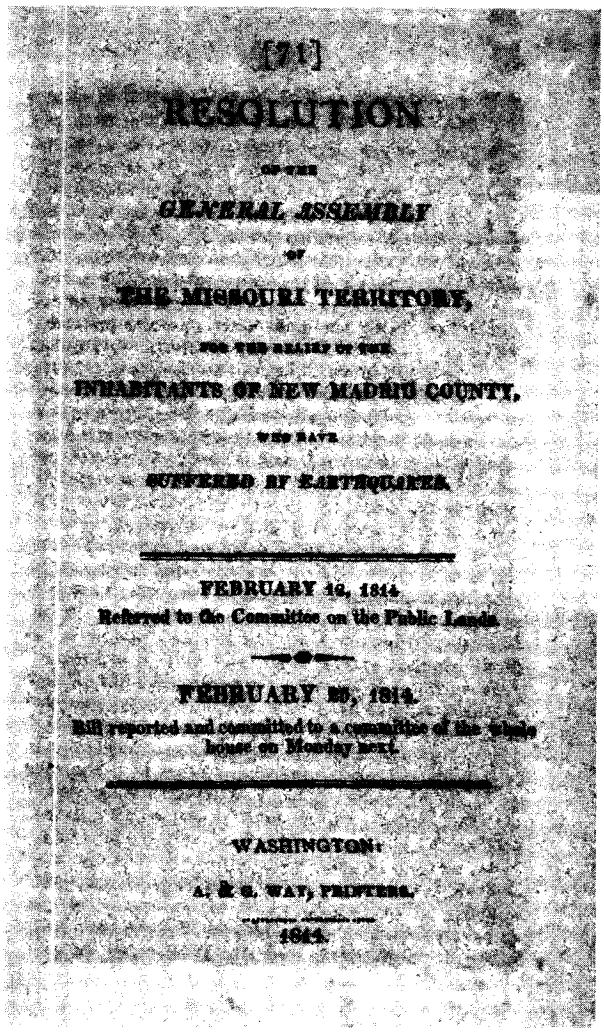
Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the New Madrid earthquakes is the time setting in which they took place. The quakes would have constituted, of course, an astonishing and historic event in any epoch. Coming at the end of the year 1811, however, they became apocalyptic. The year was marked by disastrous spring floods of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, a wide-spread summer drought resulting in crop failures, destructive storms off the Atlantic coast in the fall, and a horrifying fire at a Richmond, Virginia, theatre in December that killed seventy people, including the governor of the state. In addition, war with Great Britain was imminent, the newspapers filled with the deliberations of the Twelfth Congress as it met in Washington to hammer out resolutions destined to involve the nation in an armed conflict with its old enemy. Stories of bizarre occurrences circulated throughout the country, such as the report that thousands of squirrels had evacuated the northern forests to head south, perishing lemming-like as they tried to cross the Ohio River.[3]



Bizarre occurrences reported in the aftermath of the earthquakes included this story about live frogs being found 110 feet below the ground in New Madrid. According to an informant, the frogs died instantly when exposed to the air. From a November 25, 1815 entry in the Daniel Chapman Banks Diary. The Filson Historical Society

Equally startling was the appearance of a comet visible in the skies throughout the latter part of 1811. Traditionally, Americans have interpreted such an astronomical sight as a portent of dark times. One Tennessean remembered the first sighting of the comet "caused a deep sensation in a crowd, all of whom had been taught to look upon comets as harbingers of impending calamity."

A Nashville newspaper, in an article reprinted from the *Louisiana Gazette*, informed its readers "the comet has been universally acknowledged by all nations as the harbinger of evil." The disappearance of the comet coincided with the arrival of the initial earthquakes, causing many to believe the two events were connected. In summing up the events of 1811, one soldier on the Indiana frontier ruefully commented, "We live in times of comets, earthquakes, and rumors of War." A St. Louis newspaper editor made the grand understatement when he wrote, "On the whole, this has been an uncommon year."[4]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RESOLUTION

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

THE MISSOURI TERRITORY,

FOR THE RELIEF OF THE

INHABITANTS OF NEW MADRID COUNTY,

WHO HAVE

SUFFERED BY EARTHQUAKES.

FEBRUARY 10, 1814.

Referred to the Committee on the Public Lands.

FEBRUARY 23, 1814.

Bill reported and committed to a committee of the whole house on Monday next.

WASHINGTON:

A. & G. WAY, PRINTERS.

1814.

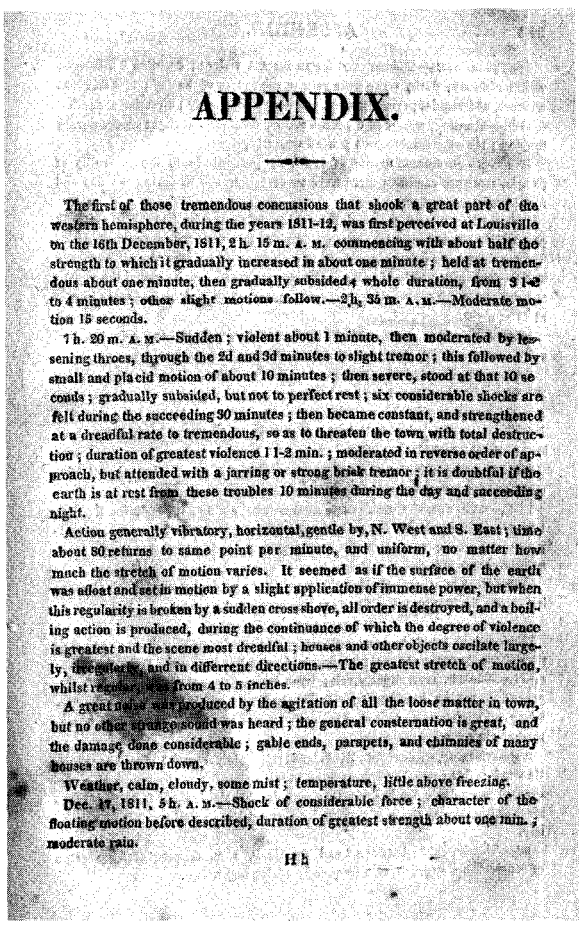
Resolution of the General Assembly of The Missouri Territory for the Relief of the Inhabitants of New Nadrid County, who have Suffered by Earthquakes. 1814. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library

The occurrence of the earthquakes elicited a variety of reactions. Initially, as expected, panic and fear struck at the heart of the population nearest the center of seismic activity. Firmin La Roche, owner of a fleet of flatboats descending the Mississippi from St. Louis, was sleeping on one of his boats anchored a few miles north of New Madrid when he was suddenly awakened by a loud, explosive sound. He could see the trees on shore falling down as "great masses of earth tumbled into the river." "Everywhere there was a noise like thunder," La Roche later reported, "and the air was thick with something like smoke. There was much lightening. We believed we must surely die." In regions where the effects of the earthquakes were not life-threatening, the emotional impact was, nevertheless, comparable to that experienced by those along the Mississippi River. Reuben Ross was in a Tennessee field looking for a lost horse when a second series of tremors erupted on the morning of December 16. Fleeing "in a badly demoralized condition" toward his house, he was startled to see many of his neighbors, "a pitiable and terror-stricken crowd," as he described them, flocking to his house seeking spiritual comfort from his father, the local preacher. The stunned group of people remained at the house throughout the day, Ross recalled, noting that "toward evening their uneasiness seemed to increase, and it was soon apparent they intended to stay all night." Another young Tennessean, Joseph Tarkington, remembered his family sat up throughout the night "in great fear and trepidation." After a night of distressful expectations, the family agreed to say nothing about their anxiousness out of fear of ridicule from their neighbors. "But with the morning came the neighbors, with startling accounts of this strange visitation," Tarkington recalled, "and while we yet talked of this night of terrors, a sound

like loud, distant thunder startled them." The crowd felt the earth vibrate and witnessed the trees quavering. Tarkington related that many in the horror-stricken crowd felt the end of the world was near and noted "the promises made to God by the terrified people were not few nor far between."[5]

Not all the accounts of the reactions to the earthquakes reflected abject fear and hysteria. One group of stunned emigrants in southern Illinois caught in one of the "Great Shakes" was even more undone when one of their members, known as "Duck River Gibson," seized a young girl and began to dance with her while whistling a merry tune. When reproached for his behavior, Gibson retorted, "if we got to go down we might as well go a-dancing." One of the most frequently told tales is that of Kentucky preacher Valentine Cook, who raced out into the night in his bed clothes shouting, "My Jesus is coming!" His wife Tabitha ran after him, begging him not to leave her behind, but the excited preacher yelled back, "When the Lord comes, I wait for nobody." A similar story was told in Tennessee of an elderly man who sprang out of bed at the first tremors of an earthquake and was about to jump out the window when his wife called out for him to wait for her. Thinking judgment day had arrived, he replied, "I may be in heaven for a thousand years before I think to look for you."[6]

An appendix to Henry McMurtrie's Views of Louisville, *1819 describes the effects of the 1811-1812 earthquakes in Louisville. The Filson Historical Society*



APPENDIX.

The first of those tremendous concussions that shook a great part of the western hemisphere, during the years 1811-12, was first perceived at Louisville on the 16th December, 1811, 2 h. 15 m. A. M. commencing with about half the strength to which it gradually increased in about one minute; held at tremendous about one minute, then gradually subsided; whole duration, from 3 1-2 to 4 minutes; other slight motions follow.—2 h. 36 m. A. M.—Moderate motion 15 seconds.

7 h. 20 m. A. M.—Sudden; violent about 1 minute, then moderated by lessening throes, through the 2d and 3d minutes to slight tremor; this followed by small and placid motion of about 10 minutes; then severe, stood at that 10 seconds; gradually subsided, but not to perfect rest; six considerable shocks are felt during the succeeding 90 minutes; then became constant, and strengthened at a dreadful rate to tremendous, so as to threaten the town with total destruction; duration of greatest violence 1 1-2 min.; moderated in reverse order of approach, but attended with a jarring or strong brisk tremor; it is doubtful if the earth is at rest from these troubles 10 minutes during the day and succeeding night.

Action generally vibratory, horizontal, gentle by, N. West and S. East; time about 80 returns to same point per minute, and uniform, no matter how much the stretch of motion varies. It seemed as if the surface of the earth was afloat and set in motion by a slight application of immense power, but when this regularity is broken by a sudden cross shove, all order is destroyed, and a boiling action is produced, during the continuance of which the degree of violence is greatest and the scene most dreadful; houses and other objects oscilate largely, the gables, and in different directions.—The greatest stretch of motion, whilst regular, was from 4 to 5 inches.

A great noise was produced by the agitation of all the loose matter in town, but no other strange sound was heard; the general consternation is great, and the damage done considerable; gable ends, parapets, and chimnies of many houses are thrown down.

Weather, calm, cloudy, some mist; temperature, little above freezing.

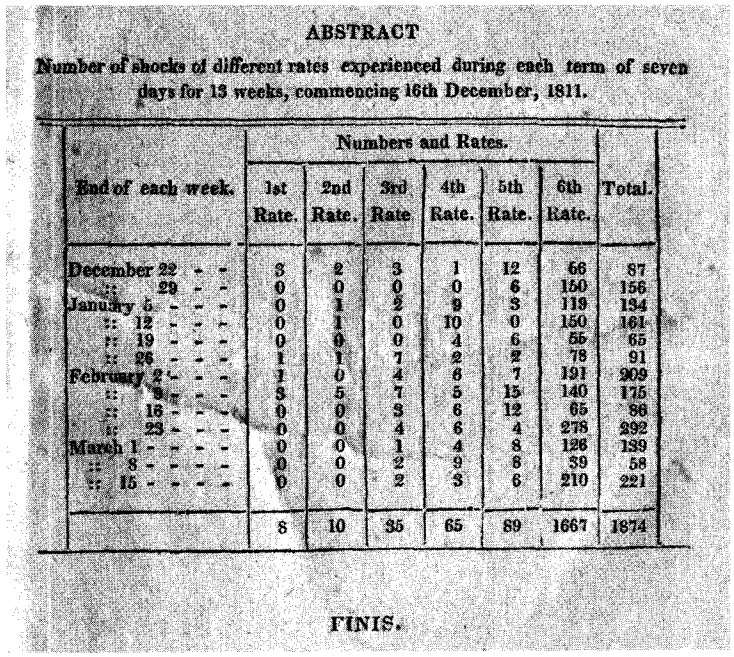
Dec. 17, 1811, 5 h. A. M.—Shock of considerable force; character of the floating motion before described, duration of greatest strength about one min.; moderate rain.

Hh

The millenary nature of these stories serves to illustrate a prevailing assumption made by people of the day that the end of the world had come. Many within the religious community of the era furthered this notion. Judgment Day sermons were commonplace on the frontier and trance-like manifestations at revival meetings often had individuals predicting the end of the world. Millennial literature, such as Ethan Smith's 1811 tract *Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to Antichrist and the Last Times*, espoused the belief that the close of "the wickedness of the world" was at hand. Methodist founder John Wesley published a sermon in 1750 entitled *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes* in which he proclaimed earthquakes as being sent by God as punishment for the sins of man. When the citizens of New Orleans (a city surprisingly untouched by the earthquakes) heard of the destruction along the Mississippi, they feared for the safety of the inhabitants of Natchez, a town with a distasteful reputation. One city newspaper wrote: "The Shakes which the Natchezians have felt may be a mysterious visitation from the Author of all nature on them for their sins;

wickedness and the want of good faith have long prevailed in that territory. . . . Sodom and Gomorrah would have been saved had three religious persons been found in it; we therefore hope that Natchez has been saved on the same principle."[7]

Despite the mind-set that divine intervention was at the source of the earthquakes, many embraced a variety of explanations, thus exposing a lack of firm religiosity on the frontier. While the more enlightened observers were convinced that subterranean fires, electricity, or volcanic activities were at the root of causation, others held onto a variety of superstitious beliefs that ranged from vibrations of the moon or a comet crashing into the earth to witchcraft. The best illustration of the latter was the tale told of a Louisville man who was certain that witches were trying to shake down his brick house. Convinced the only device to ward off the evil spirits was a silver bullet, he placed all his silver coins in a musket and fired through an open window. Later, when he realized the folly of his ways, he had his children frantically search the yard for the discharged pieces of silver.[8]



ABSTRACT

Number of shocks of different rates experienced during each term of seven days for 13 weeks, commencing 16th December, 1811.

End of each week.	Numbers and Rates. 1st Rate.	2nd Rate.	3rd Rate	4th Rate.	5th Rate.	6th Rate.	Total.
December 22 - -	3	2	3	1	12	66	87
:: 29 - -	0	0	0	0	6	150	156
January 5 - - -	0	1	2	9	3	119	134
:: 12 - - -	0	1	0	10	0	150	161
:: 19 - - -	0	0	0	4	6	55	65
:: 26 - - -	1	1	7	2	2	78	91
February 2 - - -	1	0	4	6	7	191	209
:: 9 - - -	3	5	7	5	15	140	175
:: 16 - - -	0	0	3	6	12	65	86
:: 23 - - -	0	0	4	6	4	278	292
March 1 - - - -	0	0	1	4	8	126	139
:: 8 - - - -	0	0	2	9	8	39	58
:: 15 - - - -	0	0	2	3	6	210	221
	8	10	35	65	89	1667	1874

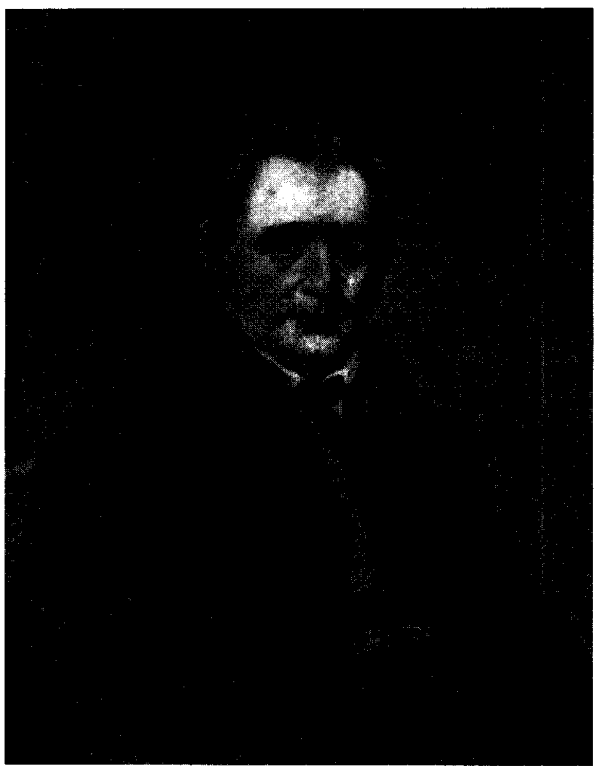
FINIS.

Chart of earthquake activity in Louisville from 1811-1812. From an appendix to Henry McMurtrie's Views of Louisville, *1819. The Filson Historical Society*

It may not be such a stretch to believe the "silver coins" story, as the memoirs of many of those who experienced the quakes indicate they simply had no idea what was happening. Nathan Vaught, of Columbia, Tennessee, recalled the different opinions as to what caused the shaking of the houses in his town: "The houses that was put up in Town was one story high generally and Sett on Blocks or pillars—one man said he thought the hoggs was rubbing against the blocks and that caused the house to Shake—he went out to drive them away. Another man said he thought some one had got on the Top of the house for mischief and was shaking the house—he went out to see what was the mater." Joseph Tarkington remembered his father "going out frequently to ascertain whether evil-disposed persons might have shaken the house, by some means, in order to terrify the family." In Vincennes, Lydia Bacon's first impression "was that the Indians were trying to get into the house, for I never thought of an Earth quake."[9]

Once all "practical" explanations had been exhausted and reality set in that earthquakes were plaguing the western country, citizens began to seek solace in the most logical place—the church. Writing from Kingston, Tennessee in

January 1812, William Alexander admitted that although the effects of the earthquakes "may have been injurious in some places I think for the most part . . . it will do much good as to reclaiming the people where it was felt." Alexander went on to say that "there is now in parts of this state, where perhaps there was never before since its first settlements, a prayer heard, meetings, fasting, and prayer." In the minutes recorded in October 1812, the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky expressed its gratefulness "for providential dealings such as Earthquakes and War that . . . increased attention to the Scriptures and all means of grace—that many additions have been made to the Church last year—that some have returned to our communion who formerly went from us—that Infidels in general [have] been more silent, and in some instances reclaimed." Rev. James B. Finley, a Methodist circuit rider, stated "multitudes who previously paid no attention to the subject of religion, now flocked to meetings. . . . The number of converts was great, and the work extended almost everywhere." Baptist preacher Jacob Bower summed up the situation: "Men, women, and children everywhere were heard inquiring what they must do to be saved."[10]



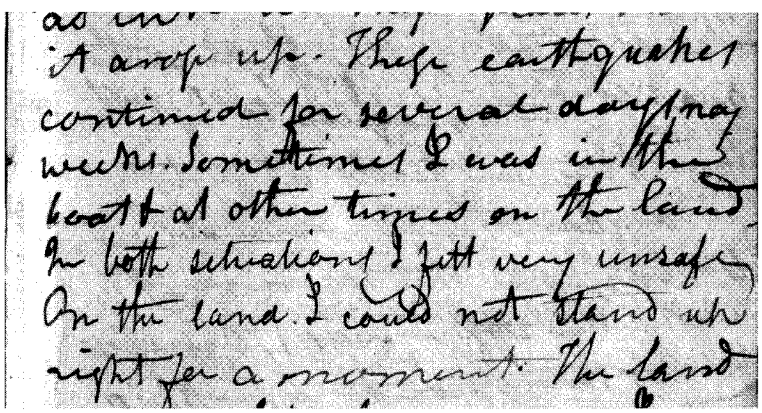
James B. Findlay (1770-1835) from History of Ohio (1912) by E. O. Randall and Daniel J. Ryan. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Numbers for church membership of the Methodist Western Conference show a total of 31,000 for the year 1811, but after the earthquakes, membership jumped to nearly 46,000. This fifty percent increase appears even greater when compared to the Methodist figures for the rest of the nation, which grew by less than half that amount. With the exception of the Methodists and their "obsessive self-chronicling," as historian Nathan Hatch calls it, conversion estimates for the various Protestant denominations are scarce. Yet, by all written accounts, one can easily surmise the New Madrid earthquakes caused a surge in church membership throughout the West. An Ohio settler writing in May 1812 observed that his region underwent "a little revival of religion" as a result of the emotional aftermath of the earthquakes. His choice of words is appropriate. The outpouring of religious inclinations following the New Madrid earthquakes can be likened to the dramatic increases of church membership experienced in the wake of the so-called Second Great Awakening, or Great Revival, at the turn of the nineteenth century.[11]

Noted for its innovative camp meetings, egalitarian messages, and religious "exercises," the Great Revival took the West by storm, redefining its social structure and democratizing American religion. Revivalist meetings engulfed the West in a sweep of collective enthusiasm at a time of economic and politi-

cal uncertainty. The revivals boosted church membership considerably in the first few years of the nineteenth century, but by the middle of the first decade a noticeable decline had occurred. While most of the recent research done on the Great Revival places emphasis on the social factors associated with the phenomena, historians in the past focused mainly on the camp meeting "exercises" that were themselves the most discussed, written about, and controversial characteristics of the revival at that time.[12]

The bodily manifestations (exercises, as they were referred to) were the most visible aspects of the camp meetings of the Great Revival. Taking on various forms, such as the "jerks" (the whole body, especially the head, violently jerking back and forth), falling to the ground, dancing, laughing, and even barking like a dog, these agitations were part of the conviction process experienced in group settings numbering sometimes in the thousands. Evangelical preacher Peter Cartwright claimed to have seen more than five hundred persons at one time "seized with a convulsive jerking all over . . . so sudden would be the jerking that their [young ladies] long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a waggoner's whip." Hundreds of participants would fall to the ground in one sweep, causing typical remarks like those of Illinois minister Lewis Garrett: "While I looked around me and saw the numbers that were lying on the ground as dead men and listening to the groans, cries, and lamentations of the mourning, I could but think of the field of battle after a heavy engagement was over." Presbyterian evangelist John Lyle was even more to the point in describing those who "fell" at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, as "suddenly as if struck with a bullet."[13]



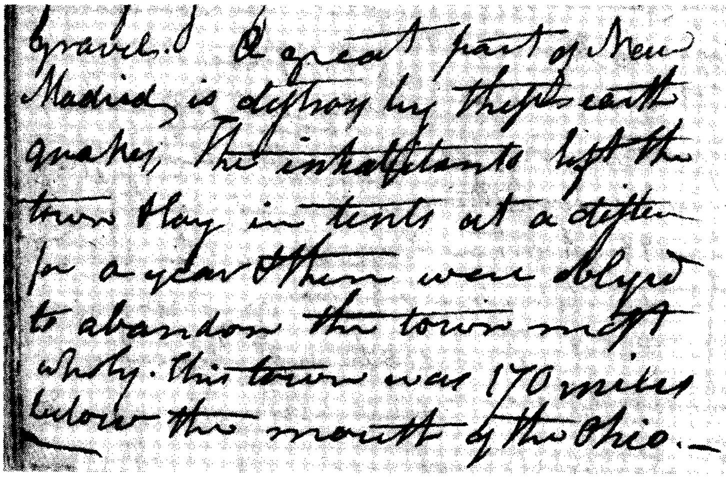
Account of the earthquake as told to Daniel Banks in 1815 by an eyewitness in New Madrid. From a November 25, 1815 entry in the Daniel Chapman Banks Diary. The Filson Historical Society

Focus upon the demonstrative character of the camp meetings has often overshadowed the social significance of revivalism. Arising during a period of intense public transition from economic cooperation to capitalistic competition and social disintegration, the camp revivals were a liberal reaction to this new culture. "At a time when people had been suffering prolonged political, economic, and social change," according to historian Ellen Eslinger, "the communitas of the camp meeting posed a startling and impressive contrast. Huge segments of the population found it irresistible."[14] Still, at the time, it was the physical aspect of the revivals that offered the most speculation, interest, and curiosity.

In an 1803 letter written to her brother in Kentucky, Mary Miller of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, questioned him about the "uncommon stir"

of religion taking place in his state. "It has not reached us nor have I seen any of those uncommon appearances which has given ground to such a difference of opinion concerning the true cause of those wonderful exercises," she wrote, adding, "There is one Congregation in this County . . . where there is nearly the same kind of exercises, and others in Washington [County] but I have seen none of them, and therefore would be glad to hear your sentiments on the subject as soon as convenient." Writing from Ohio in 1802, Charlotte Chambers responded to her mother's description of a rather staid revival meeting in Pennsylvania in a somewhat defensive and mocking manner: "I thank you for the description of the 'great meeting.' You inform me you had no 'disorder,' no 'crying out.' My dear mother, I wish you could all have such zeal and deep feeling. How I would rejoice to hear that some of your dignified ladies, some of your stout-hearted Deists, or some of your good old formalists, had been heard crying out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?'"[15]

Mary Miller's defense of the "zeal and deep feelings" exemplified by camp meeting participants in the West is echoed by Presbyterian minister George Baxter's 1802 analysis of the revival phenomena. "The revival in Kentucky," Baxter wrote, "was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country into which it came. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature appeared necessary to arrest the attention of a giddy people, who were ready to conclude, that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream." Barton Stone, a key figure in the Kentucky revivals, saw religious exercises as not only necessary, but directed from God: "So low had religion sunk, and such carelessness universally had prevailed, it was thought nothing common could have arrested the attention of the world. . . . Therefore, those uncommon agitations, already described, were sent for that purpose . . . indeed it would have been a wonder, if such things had not appeared, in the circumstances of that time."[16]


gravel.) A great part of New Madrid is destroy by the earth quakes, The inhabitants left the town & lay in tents at a distan for a year & then were oblyed to abandon the town most wholy. This town was 170 miles below the mouth of the Ohio.—

Account of the destruction in New Madrid, and the relocation of the townspeople in the wake of the earthquakes. From a February 20, 1821 entry in the Daniel Chapman Banks Diary. The Filson Historical Society

Baxter's and Stone's comments indicate the frontier was ready for the Great Revival, and statistics verify this. Kentucky's Baptist churches gained over ten thousand members between 1800-1803, while its Methodist congregations increased their rolls with over twelve thousand new adherents by 1805.[17] Rev. George Baxter was profoundly impressed with the moral changes in Kentucky as a result of the camp meetings. In a bit of exaggeration, Baxter referred to the Bluegrass State as "the most moral place I had ever seen." Indeed, it appeared


November 2, 1815.

* WARS—PESTILENCE—EARTHQUAKES and FAMINE are the sword and scourge of GOD—the spirit of Missionary is prevalent—the *times* are *eventful*—and the *signs* are ominous; but it shall be *well* with those whose GOD is the LORD!!

Cincinnati—Looker & Wallace Print.

From a broadside, November 2, 1815. The Filson Historical Society

to some that the dawn of a new religious epoch had arrived. Presbyterian minister Robert Finley saw a generation destined to embrace the second coming of Christ. Foreseeing a period of universal peace and divine knowledge, Finley outlined what he perceived to be the true impact of the Great Revival: "God has chosen the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, as the season in which to display, with peculiar sovereignty and glory, the riches of his grace." Many agreed with Finley's perception. "God is working wonders here," wrote one resident of Mercer County, Kentucky, "the Millennium is certainly about to commence; young and old are bowing to the scepter of King Jesus." In fact, camp meetings became linked to millennialism to the degree that ridicule ensued when sin and disorder did *not* disappear from the scene. Furthermore, the Great Revival was already losing some of its fire by the middle of the first decade of the nineteenth century. A Baptist minister, touring through Ohio circa 1809, reported that the state seemed "more destitute of preachers than any part through which I have traveled."[18]

Some were wondering if, in fact, the revivals had greatly changed the religious landscape at all. Lutheran missionary Paul Henkel journeyed to Ohio in 1806 and found what he described as "an ungodly people" with "little inclination for religion." Joshua Gilpin, a British traveler touring western Pennsylvania in 1809, was stunned by the "wild scenes of fanaticism" he witnessed at a camp meeting. He was even more astonished at the superstitious nature of the backcountry folk upon viewing a letter being circulated "said to be written by Jesus Christ himself to some of their leaders approving their tenets and exhorting all to follow them under assurances that those who believe in that letter, shall be perfectly secured from all harm." The May 1811 minutes of the Synod of Kentucky confessed that "the sincere worshippers of God, compared with the irreligious, are but few." It appeared frontier religion needed a shot in the arm, and the New Madrid earthquakes, beginning in mid-December 1811, provided just that.[19]

Much like the Great Revival, the "Great Shakes" of 1811-12 provided an intense, albeit brief, emotional experience for those directly affected by its demonstrations. Not all, however, were caught up in the excitement. From

the onset, there were those who believed people were simply overreacting to the situation. Joseph Underwood of Lexington sent a letter to his uncle in Barren County, Kentucky, on February 13, 1812, downplaying the events of the day:

> The repeated shocks of earthquakes have alarmed the timorous inhabitants of this place. A respectable gentleman told me that his wife had not eat[en] anything for several days. I suppose she was under the dreadful apprehension of being swallowed by the opening of the earth and believing earthquakes take place on account of the iniquity of mankind, she was willing (like a Catholic) to attempt to appease the wrath of Heaven by fasting and praying. I do not dread very serious consequences, but even should a general destruction ensue; it becomes us to await the calamity with courage and not anticipate horrors which may never result.

Underwood's coolness in the face of potential disaster is replicated in an account left by John Allan, headmaster of Lebanon Academy in Christian County, Kentucky. On the morning of the December 16 earthquake, Allan calmly went to work as usual and "was not a little astonished to learn that the whole neighborhood was in a state of exceeding alarm." His summation of the "earthquake religion" experience, as he termed it, is typical of the skeptical accounts made in the aftermath of the quakes: "From this time for many weeks religious meetings were frequent and numerously attended. They were accompanied with a great deal of noisy excitement. Multitudes appeared for a time to be serious, many made a profession of religion. Far the greater proportion of these, so far as my observation went, threw off their concern as soon as the earth ceased to shake." Allen Wiley, a Methodist preacher in Indiana, expressed similar concerns with this assessment: "It seemed as if almost everybody would become religious that winter and spring," Wiley wrote in his memoirs, "time would fail me to tell of the individual and family hard cases that became members of the church and many of them truly converted; many of them, however, were only scared from their sins for a season: not being renewed in their hearts, they endured but for a season."[20]

"Earthquake Christians," as more fervent evangelicals dubbed those who professed religion at the time of the earthquakes and then, just as quickly, became backsliders after their fears subsided, typified the short-lived hysteria that followed the "Great Shakes" just as it revealed the western population's shallow religious convictions. A story (later proved false) circulated that Earthquake Christians in Louisville, who had collected seven thousand dollars to build a church, a consequence of the frightening earthquakes, soon abandoned their plans and constructed a theater instead. Even in the town of New Madrid, hit hardest by the quakes, citizens returned to their devastated homes to continue their "dances, frolics, and vices," according to one local

resident. Some westerners confessed their embarrassment over their sudden proselytism, such as headmaster John Allan, who was mortified at the thought "I might subject myself to reproach of having merely an earthquake religion." In fact, the passionate outpourings of the Earthquake Christians were later deemed as potential causes for mental illness. In an interesting letter concerning the sale of slaves in 1824, one owner blamed the emotional instability of a female slave on the "religious foolishness" said to have taken place "about the time of the Earthquakes." The owner consoled the potential buyer with the assurance that her condition was "not hereditary, the family being remarkably sane." By the Jacksonian era, religious exercises themselves were often viewed as a cause of insanity.[21]

Many assigned the declension of religious fervor to the War of 1812. Even the most dedicated of souls, such as Elder Samuel Rogers, were not immune to the negative effects of war: "During the war, the people became estranged from the house of worship, and a general coldness and demoralization prevailed. Licentiousness and corruption, the offspring of war, had taken the place of virtue and good order. . . . I, myself, was not exempt from the baneful influences of the war. . . . I had forgotten my first love, and turned back to my old sinful ways." Chroniclers of frontier religion hammered out this theme, time and time again, in their explanation of backsliding church membership.[22]

Yet, most reminiscences attribute the lack of Christian energy to the influence of worldly distractions. A minister writing from Alabama in 1814 lamented the state of spiritual affairs there, noting that religious matters were "at quite a low ebb." "The hearts of the people are carried away with the world," he lamented, "so that they talk of little else but corn, cotton, the price of land, &c." When Alfred Brunson, a Connecticut Methodist about to emigrate to Ohio in 1812, was told he would need more religion in the West than in the East, he asked why. A "good sister" replied: "You will have new trials; new scenes to attract, and new enterprises to engage your attention: all of which will so engross your thoughts and attention, that unless you watch and pray much, you will find yourself involved in cares, perplexities, and troubles . . . if you don't entirely backslide." Brunson later confessed in his memoirs that the good sister's prediction was entirely accurate.[23]

The competitive opportunities and confrontations representative of the West served to paint a grim picture of moral decay. Missionaries and travelers were sometimes scathing in their portraits of backcountry culture in the era of the Great Revival, as well as the post-earthquake period. One foreign visitor to Louisville in 1806 complained that "the inhabitants are universally addicted to gambling and drinking," noting that "the billiard rooms are crowded from morning to night, and often all night through." The same observer was no less shocked by conditions in nearby Lexington, where "the churches have never been finished, and they have all the glass struck out by

boys in the day, and the inside torn up by rogues and prostitutes who frequent them at night." In 1815, missionary Timothy Flint labeled the Ohio Valley inhabitants as nothing more than "wretched pagans." Regarding the city of St. Louis, Flint remarked that "there is no Sabbath—no moral restraints—and the profanity is, I believe, unparalleled." Another missionary, Samuel Mills, in speaking of Louisiana in 1815, claimed there were American families living there "who never saw a Bible, nor heard of Jesus Christ." Such stinging moralization, however exaggerated, suggests that religious behavior in the West was decidedly less institutionalized than in the more settled East.[24]

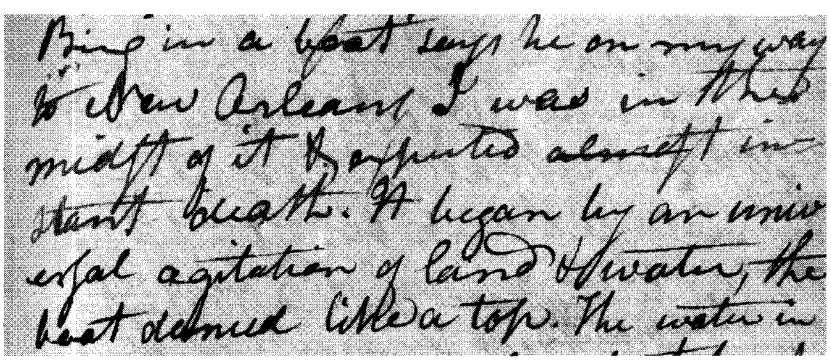
The roughshod image of the frontier actually promoted the frenzied reactions to the Great Revival and the Great Shakes. In spite of the West's search for order and stability, a violent subculture existed in which, very often, the "best" man was understood to be the best fighter, literally and figuratively. Aggressiveness was considered a necessary ingredient to success in every endeavor, even in religious matters. For example, a common phrase used by Kentuckians was to have "whipped" all the rest, a term denoting success and used by farmers, lawyers, and preachers in their respective fields. Ministers often viewed the act of converting sinners as hand-to-hand combat. One preacher, unable to convert a single person at a meeting, lamented "I hate to be whipped that way." In what historian Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., refers to as "muscular Christianity," revival preachers used a violent style of preaching as "a useful tool for achieving and maintaining order, given the aggressive sinfulness of men." At camp meetings, it was not so much the message as the *way* the message was presented. Conversion of the masses was the preacher's ultimate duty, and in using the methods his audience understood best he awakened sinners by the force of his bodily expressions and language. The New Madrid earthquakes, through their own violence and message of destruction, forced the people to re-evaluate the state of their own salvation.[25]

New Madrid is shown on this map, The Middle States and Western Territories of the United States, including The Seat of the Western War. From Brooke's General Gazateer Improved, *1812. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

Indeed, paroxysm steeped the conversion process itself. Typical was the experience of Kentucky reverend John Taylor, who at the age of seventeen attended a meeting of the "New Light" Presbyterians for the "sport" of it. Hoping to witness the falling exercise and hear supplicants crying for mercy, Taylor was disappointed when he saw none of these manifestations:

I began to wish I had not come, for there was nothing to be seen. At length a negro began to cry out in a doleful manner, I crowded through the people to get near enough to see, as well as hear. Others cried out in different directions, I was then very busy to see what to me was then sport; at length a partner of mine burst out in tears at my side! His cries for mercy startled me! and for the first time I looked at the preacher to hear what he was saying—he was on the awful scene of judgment; and just as I looked, he delivered these words: *O! rocks fall on me, &c.* My heart was touched as with a dagger! I felt as if God was near, and judgment at hand, and I unprepared.

The components of Taylor's conversion, including a dismissive attitude turned to sudden realization, the feeling of a punishing despair, and a sense of impending doom, were all part of the same process many experienced at the onset of the New Madrid earthquakes. Baptist Elijah Hanks credited his own conversion to the ministry to the powerful force of the earthquakes: "In the year of our Lord, 1812, when the earth was shaking and trembling like the leaves before the wind, he was awakened to a sense of his lost and helpless condition. He at once began to seek salvation."[26]



Account of the earthquake as told to Daniel Banks in 1815 by an eyewitness in New Madrid. From a November 25, 1815 entry in the Daniel Chapman Banks Diary, November 25, 1815. The Filson Historical Society

What is significant about the reaction of the church to the earthquakes is that its ministers, rather than trying to calm the apprehensions of the multitudes, played into their fears. Again, this is consistent with the style of preaching prevalent during the Great Revival. Even the titles of sermons were geared to inspire dread amongst the listeners. For instance, Methodist bishop Francis Asbury's teachings in Ohio and Kentucky came under such headings as "Knowing the Terror of the Lord" and "The Time is Short." Texts were often based on two pervasive ingredients: guilt and violence. Frontier minister James McReady's sermon, "The Character, History, and End of the Fool," was designed to scare the backslider onto the path of righteousness. When a "fool" died, according to McReady, black flaming vultures dragged their victim to Hell. As remembrance of past sermons flashed before the spirit, the sinner's conscience "stings and gnaws his soul like a never-

dying worm." Note that in the sinner's final moments, his guilty conscience recollects the sermons he may not have paid much attention to, a convenient device to warn listeners to lend a more willing ear to the preacher's words. The New Madrid earthquakes provided a ready-made format for ministers eager to frighten their audience into confessional submission. Preachers such as James Finley were not averse to opportunism. During one of the Great Shakes, he stood upon a quivering table in the meeting-house where he was exhorting and cried out, "For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"[27]

A further comparison of revivals and the earthquakes reveals a shared sense of temporary community and a leveling of social distinctions. At camp meetings, one might find Presbyterians and Baptists, normally bitter foes, worshipping together "and it was no easy mat[t]er to tell which one of them," recalled one pioneer, "were the more noisy in shouting praises of God." At New Madrid, during the vicious quake of February 7, 1812, the population fled to higher ground to avoid the flooding Mississippi waters. They formed an encampment and one citizen recalled "it was proposed that all should kneel, and engage in supplicating God's mercy, and all simultaneously, Catholics and Protestants, knelt and offered solemn prayer to their creator." Just as the revivals made no distinction between classes of people, the earthquakes exhibited the same quality. John Wesley once wrote that earthquakes were "no undesirable event" because, as he put it, "the rich can no more guard against it than the poor."[28]

The New Madrid earthquakes offer a unique glimpse into the state of religion on the frontier in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Ensconced in a period of social transformation, the religious revivals of the day relied on intense public ecstasy to lure backsliders into renewed devotion. The emotional upheavals experienced by those caught in the earthquakes served a similar purpose, and organizing ministers were quick to seize upon the opportunities provided by the "Great Shakes." One could say that the New Madrid earthquakes sent a "shockwave" message to backsliders on the frontier and that the Great Revival helped create an atmosphere in which ministers could easily employ the earthquakes as a means to "shake" the spirit of their wayward flocks. In both instances, however, the immediate results were transitory; such emotional intensity could not endure. Like the raucous camp meetings preceding them, the earthquakes were a reminder that the shot in the arm to ailing backcountry religion was merely a quick fix. The true success of religion hinged on local churches and their leaders striving to create moral communities that persistently survived the onslaughts of rabid enthusiasm.[29]

When taken in the context of the revival movement in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the passionate outpourings of a confused and fearful populace facing a series of cataclysmic earthquakes mirror the responses of

camp meeting participants who sought stability and security in a backcountry society fraught with uncertainty and isolation. A further analysis of the religious ramifications of the New Madrid earthquakes more clearly reveals the state of frontier religion in the early 1800s, a religious environment rife with unsteady beliefs and inspired by violent distractions. ❧

1. Eyewitness accounts of the new Madrid earthquakes can be found in a variety of sources. One of the best compilations is James L. Penick, *The New Madrid Earthquakes* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981). An excellent bibliography of original materials is included in Francis A. Sampson, "The New Madrid and Other Earthquakes of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 92 (April 1998): 252-53. There are literally dozens of websites on the Internet devoted to the New Madrid earthquakes. The best site for eyewitness descriptions is located at www.ceri.memphis.edu/compendium/eyewitness/index. Technical data compiled from Berlen C. Moneymaker, "Some Early Earthquakes in Tennessee and Adjacent States," *Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science* 29 (July 1954): 224-33; Otto W. Nuttli, "The Mississippi Valley Earthquakes of 1811 and 1812: Intensities, Ground Motion and Magnitudes," *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* 63 (February 1973): 227-48; Henry J. Gwiazda II, "In Search of the Big One: Earthquakes in United States History," *Prologue* 21 (Winter 1989): 358-71; Robert M. Hamilton and Arch C. Johnson, eds., "Tecumseh's Prophecy: Preparing for the Next New Madrid Earthquake: A Plan for an Intensified Study of the New Madrid Seismic Zone," *U. S. Geological Survey Circular* 1066 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990); Carolyn V. Platt, "Nightmare on the Mississippi: The New Madrid Earthquakes," *Timeline* 10 (September-October 1993): 18-31; and W.L. Ellis, "Summary and Discussion of Crustal Stress Data in the Region of the New Madrid Seismic Zone," *U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper* 1538-B (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994). For estimate of deaths, see Morma Hayes Bagnall, *On Shaky Ground: The New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-1812* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 27. The most recent research estimates as many as 1,500 fatalities, most thought to be Native Americans. See Jake Page and Charles Officer, *The Big One: The Earthquake That Rocked Early America and Helped Create a Science* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 7.
2. James Ross, *Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross* (Philadelphia: Grant, Faires, and Rodgers, 1882), 202; Mary M. Crawford, ed., "Mrs. Lydia B. Bacon's Journal, 1811-1812," *Indiana Magazine of History* 40 (December 1944): 385; Julia Perkins Cutler, *Life and Times of Ephraim Cutler: Prepared from his Journals and Correspondence* (Cincinnati: R. Clarke and Company, 1890), 109; James Morton Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, 1776-1826* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), v. 3, 1687.
3. Penick, *New Madrid Earthquakes*, 11-13; [Lexington] *Kentucky Gazette*, May 12, 1812; and Margaret Ross, "The New Madrid Earthquake," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27 (Summer 1968): 88-89.
4. Ross, *Elder Reuben Ross*, 201; [Nashville] *Clarion*, December 24, 1811; Florence G. Watts, ed., "Lieutenant Charles Larrabee's Account of the Battle of Tippecanoe, 1811," *Indiana Magazine of History* 57 (September 1961): 247; and "The Reminiscences of General Bernard Pratte, Jr.," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 6 (October 1949): 96; Helen Massie to Henry Massie, December 18, 1811, Filson Historical Society, Louisville[hereinafter cited as FHS]; also, Paul Woehrmann, ed., "The Autobiography of Abraham Snethen, Frontier Preacher," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 51 (October 1977): 319. *Niles' Weekly Register*, March 21, 1812, v. 2, 50-52; David Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816* (Albany, NY: David Rumsey, 1819; reprint, Darien, CT: Hafner Publishing, 1970, 1970), 57. In addition to the appearance of the comet, a total eclipse of the sun occurred in September 1811 that caused consternation among the population. See "A Retrospect of the Year 1811" in *The Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 1 (May 1812): 29-33; and (June 1812): 71-77.
5. "Missouri History Not Found in Textbooks," *Missouri Historical Review* 22 (January 1928): 269; Ross, *Elder Reuben Ross*, 203; David L. Kimbrough, *Reverend Joseph Tarkington, Methodist Circuit Rider: From Evangelism to Refined Religion* (Knoxville University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 25-26.
6. "Missouri History Not Found in Textbooks," *Missouri Historical Review* 20 (October 1925): 150-51; John Abernathy Smith, *Cross and Flame: Two Centuries of United Methodism in Middle Tennessee* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1984), 57; W.P. Strickland, ed., *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, 1856), 181; Mary Morris Smith Memories 1886-1895, Manuscripts Section, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville [hereinafter cited as TSLA].
7. Ira V. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (December 1952): 450-51; Kimbrough, *Reverend Joseph Tarkington*, 24-25; [New Orleans] *Louisiana Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, December 21, 1811; [Boston] *The Satirist*, May 2, 1812.
8. Marshall Scott Legan, "The Popular Reactions to the New Madrid Earthquakes, 1811-1812," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 50 (January 1976): 60-71; David Meriwether Memoirs 1800-1855, FHS. In colonial New England, earthquakes were thought to be caused by the same properties that created thunder. See Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 33.
9. Nathan Vaught Memoir 1871, Manuscript Section, TSLA; Kimbrough, *Reverend Joseph Tarkington*, 25; Crawford, ed., "Mrs. Lydia Bacon's Journal, 1811-12," 385.
10. Campbell Family Papers [microfilm edition], Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University; Walter Brownlow Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), 38; W.P. Strickland, ed., *Autobiography of Reverend James B. Finley; or Pioneer Life in the West* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern,

1853), 239; John B. Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), 127.

11. Walter Brownlow Posey, "The Earthquake of 1811 and Its Influence on Evangelistic Methods in the Churches of the Old South," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, 1 (January 1931): 111-13; Bagnall, *On Shaky Ground*, 55; *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually Held in America, from 1773 to 1813, Inclusive* (New York: Daniel Hitt and Thomas Ware, 1813), 514-15, 548-49; Nathan O. Hatch, "The Puzzle of American Methodism," *Church History* 63 (June 1994): 182; Peter A. Pelham to Sarah Dromgoole, May 3, 1812, in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840, Volume IV—The Methodists, A Collection of Source Materials* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 201.
12. Chronologically, some of the recent key works on the significance of the Great Revival include Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1969): 23-42; John B. Boles, *The Great Revival 1787-1805* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1972); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); George M. Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Nathan O. Hatch, "The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics," in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 92-120; Jean V. Matthews, *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture 1800-1830* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), esp. chapter 2; Timothy L. Smith, "The Ohio Valley: Testing Ground for America's Experiment in Religious Pluralism," *Church History* 60 (December 1991): 461-79; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginning of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). All of these works are in marked contrast to the mostly autobiographical material written in the mid-nineteenth century by preachers who wrote extensively on the "physical" aspects of the camp meetings. While not negating the extreme importance of the above-mentioned works, I submit that revivalist "exercises" deserve more scholarly attention precisely because they were the most prominent components of the revival at that time. For a typical example of period literature concerning this, see James Hall, *A Narrative of a Most Extraordinary Work of Religion in North Carolina, Also a Collection of Interesting Letters from the Rev. James McCorkle* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1802).
13. A good summary of revival exercises can be found in John Carr, *Early Times in Middle Tennessee* (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F.A. Owen, 1857; reprint Nashville, 1958), 36-38; Reverend John Lyle Diary, June 14, 1801-January 10, 1808, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort; Strickland, ed., *Peter Cartwright*, 48-49; Lewis Garrett, *Recollections of the West* (Nashville: Western Methodist Office, 1834), 113; William L. Hiemstra, "Early Frontier Revivalism in Kentucky," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 59 (April 1961): 141.
14. Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, esp. chapter 9 (quote on p. xxi); T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), esp. chapter 6.
15. Mary Miller to William Henry, August 25, 1803, Draper Papers [microfilm edition], Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, 3MM107; Lewis Hector Garrard, *Memoirs of Charlotte Chambers* (Philadelphia: T.K. and P.G. Collins, 1856), 50.
16. *Western Missionary Magazine* 1 (June 1803): 226-27; Barton W. Stone, *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone—Written by Himself with Additions and Reflections by Elder John Rogers* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. Jones, 1847), 38, 42.
17. Catherine C. Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West 1797-1805* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916; reprint Gloucester, Mass., 1959), 130-31, 148; Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 237.
18. *Western Missionary Magazine* 1 (August 1803): 260; Isaac V. Brown, *Memoirs of the Rev. Robert Finley, D.D. Late Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Basking Ridge New Jersey, and President of Franklin College, Located at Athens, in the State of Georgia. With Brief Sketches of Some of His Contemporaries, and Numerous Notes* (New Brunswick, NJ: Terhune and Letson, 1819), 230; Boles, *Great Revival*, 101-105; Charles A. Johnson, "The Frontier Camp Meeting: Contemporary and Historical Appraisals, 1805-1840," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 37 (June 1950): 98-101; "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. David Benedict, now on a Tour through the Southern and Western States, in order to collect materials for a General History of the Baptists in the United States, dated at Savannah, March 31, 1810; and addressed to the Rev. Mr. Gano, of Providence," *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 2 (May 1810): 308-309.
19. Clement L. Martzolff and F.E. Cooper, eds., "Rev. Paul Henkel's Journal: His Missionary Journey to the State of Ohio in 1806," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 23 (1914): 184-85; "Journal of a Tour From Philadelphia Thro the Western Counties of Pennsylvania in the Months of September and October, 1809," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 51 (1927): 368-69; Merrill E. Gaddis, "Religious Attitudes in the Early Frontier," *Church History* 2 (September 1933): 152-70; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 391.
20. Joseph R. Underwood to Edmund A. Rogers, February 13, 1812, Underwood Collection, 1791-1912, series 1, box 1, folder 2, Manuscripts and Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 821; Allen Wiley, "Methodism in Southeastern Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 23 (March 1927): 60-61.
21. Walter Brownlow Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley 1776-1845* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 59; Ross, *Elder Reuben Ross*, 204; Wayne Vitanen, "The Winter the Mississippi Ran Backwards: Early Kentuckians Report the New Madrid, Missouri, Earthquake of 1811-12," *Register of Kentucky Historical Society* 71 (January 1973): 66; Ben Casseday, *The History of Louisville From Its Earliest Settlement Till the Year 1852* (Louisville: Hull and Brother, 1852), 125-26; "New Madrid Earthquake: Account of Col. John Shaw," *Missouri Historical Review* 6 (October 1911-July 1912):

91-92; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 826; J.S. Allison to William C. Bullitt, October 17, 1824, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection, folder 359, FHS; Daniel J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 119; Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 192-93. It is significant that an Ohio historian, writing in the late 1840s, attributed the 1805 conversion of one Ohio man to Shakerism on the basis that "his excitable temperament had led him into such wild exercises during the revival that many doubted his sanity." See Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio in Two Volumes* (Cincinnati: State of Ohio, 1900), v. 2, 752.

22. John I. Rogers, *Autobiography of Elder Samuel Rogers* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1880), 20-21; William Warren Sweet, *Circuit-Rider Days Along the Ohio* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1923), 41-42; Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 39-40.

23. Robert Donnell to William Harris, December 23, 1814, in David Lowry, *Life and Labors of the Late Rev. Robert Donnell* (Alton, Ill. : S.V. Crossman, 1867), 102; Alfred Brunson, *A Western Pioneer: or, Incidents of the Life and Times of Rev. Alfred Brunson, A.M., D.D., Embracing a Period of Over Seventy Years* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1872), v. 1, 100-101.

24. Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, Performed in 1806, For the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity* (London: W. Sawyer and Company, 1808), 191, 237; Colin Brummitt Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier with Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society* (Caldwell, Id.: Caxton Printers, 1939), 143-44; Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, Late Society, Deputed to Explore the Coast of Africa* (New York: New York Evangelical Missionary Society, 1820), 73. Nathan O. Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) ably details the influence on religion of a competitive, capitalistic society in the Early Republic.

25. One of the best works on violence in the backcountry during the early republic is Elliott J. Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (February 1985): 18-43; Robert William Mondy, *Pioneers and Preachers: Stories of the Old Frontier* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980), chapter 8; Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 112-13; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 233-35, 242-45. For examinations of preaching styles at revivals and on the frontier, see Boles, *Great Revival*, chapter 8, esp. pp. 111-21; Mondy, *Pioneers and Preachers*, chapter 13; Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and The Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 38-43; Daniel W. Patterson, "Word, Song, and Motion: Instruments of Celebration Among Protestant Radicals in Early Nineteenth-Century America," in Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, D.C. : Smithsonian University Press, 1982), 220-30; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, chapter 3.

26. "The Rev. John Taylor's Experience," *Kentucky Missionary and Theological Magazine* 1 (May 1812): 33; S.C. Evins, *Memoir of the Late Elder Elijah Hanks of Maury County, Tennessee; Together with a Synopsis of His Views on the Atonement of Christ, and Other Subjects* (Nashville: Union and American Books, 1872), 6. In his article on millennialism in America, James Moorhead refers to the conversion process as a "miniature apocalypse" in which believers were assured of salvation "only after a season of terror, sometimes prolonged, during which they knew themselves to be destined to hell." See James H. Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millenialism in American Religious Thought," *Journal of American History* 71 (December 1984): 538-39.

27. Samuel W. Watkins, "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes: Methodists and the New Madrid Earthquakes, 1811-1812," *Methodist History* 30 (July 1992): 242-50; Kimbrough, *Reverend Joseph Tarkington*, 22; Mondy, *Pioneers and Preachers*, 223; Strickland, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley*, 239-40; Posey, *Frontier Mission*, 37. A discussion on the doomsday themes in revival sermons can be found in Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early American Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000), 64-66.

28. Carr, *Early Times in Middle Tennessee*, 34-35; "Account of Col. John Shaw," 91; John Wesley to Christopher Hopper, October 18, 1777, in John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, (London: Epworth Press, 1931), v. 6, 284. For more on the egalitarian aspects of camp meetings, see Ellen Eslinger, "Some Notes on the History of Cane Ridge Prior to the Great Revival," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 91 (Winter 1993): 1-23.

29. For an expansion on this last statement, see Mathews, "Second Great Awakening," 35-36; McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 132-33; Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 90.