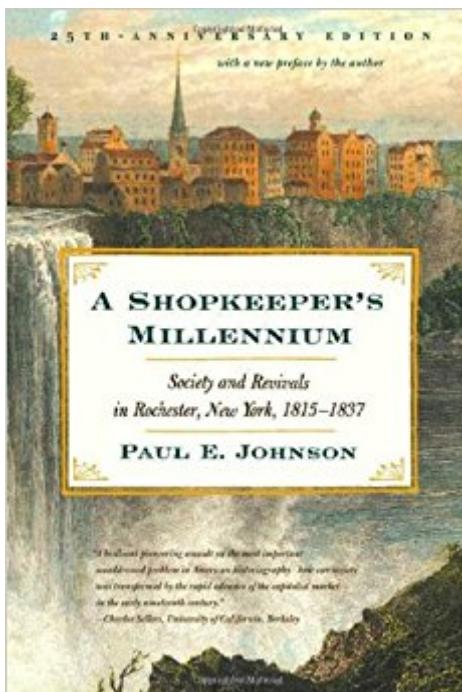


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# A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society And Revivals In Rochester, New York, 1815-1837



## Synopsis

A quarter-century after its first publication, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* remains a landmark work--brilliant both as a new interpretation of the intimate connections among politics, economy, and religion during the Second Great Awakening, and as a surprising portrait of a rapidly growing frontier city. The religious revival that transformed America in the 1820s, making it the most militantly Protestant nation on earth and spawning reform movements dedicated to temperance and to the abolition of slavery, had an especially powerful effect in Rochester, New York. Paul E. Johnson explores the reasons for the revival's spectacular success there, suggesting important links between its moral accounting and the city's new industrial world. In a new preface, he reassesses his evidence and his conclusions in this major work.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This is far more than a study of local history, and more even than a provocative interpretation of the social sources of religious revivalism. It is a brilliant pioneering assault upon the most important unaddressed problem in American historiography--how our society and very personalities were transformed by the rapid advance of the capitalist market in the earlier nineteenth century.” Charles Sellers, University of California, Berkeley “Johnson's book is indispensable for any understanding of the evangelical revival and related reform movements in New York's 'burned-over' district. No less important, Professor Johnson has brilliantly fused the quantitative methods of the 'new social history' with a sparkling style and an imaginative reconstruction of social reality. Both in substantive conclusions and as a model for future regional

studies, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* is one of the freshest and most exciting books I have read in the past few years. — David Brion Davis, Yale University

Paul E. Johnson, professor of history at the University of South Carolina, is co-author, with Sean Wilentz, of *The Kingdom of Matthias*. He lives in Columbia, South Carolina, and Onancock, Virginia.

Interesting historical take, but it's clear that he's not a scholar of religion. There are better books for understanding the religious milieu of the time but Johnson's argument remains important to the historiography of Jacksonian America.

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Paul E. Johnson uses his book, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*, to examine the causes of the Second Great Awakening from a Marxist perspective. Johnson writes, "The Rochester revival was generated in the problem of social class." Johnson argues that the culture of religious fervor and revivalism stemmed from the interaction of the economic and religious motives of Rochesterians rather than from purely religious motives. Johnson's self-appointed task in examining religion and economic forces is "to define how they made each other in history." Johnson structures his argument to explain how the economic forces at work in Rochester fostered a revivalist culture, eventually forcing the bourgeoisie to adopt the evangelical language of the proletariat and use it to their advantage. Johnson divides his argument into six sections: Economy, Society, Politics, Impasse, Pentecost, and Christian Soldiers. In Economy, Johnson illustrates Rochester's burgeoning market culture, in which the bourgeoisie mingled with the proletariat. Johnson begins to lay out how religion became a tool of the upper class, writing, "More than others, Finney's converts were firmly engaged in the country trade and in the elaborate and stability-inducing relationships through which it was conducted." Johnson writes in Society about effect of the economic transition from household to factory, arguing, "The whole pattern of society separated class from class: master and wage earner inhabited distinct social worlds." Johnson uses Politics and Impasse to write about the social and political movements that grew from the distancing of the classes, including the Anti-Masonic Party and the "introduction of organized party warfare into village politics."

Johnson demonstrates how religion, as Marx understood it, worked to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. Johnson writes of the wealthy temperance reformers, "They preferred to translate power into authority." The propaganda "promised masters social peace, a disciplined and docile labor force, and an opportunity to assert moral authority over their men." Johnson writes in *Pentecost*, "Charles Finney's revival was strongest among entrepreneurs who bore direct responsibility for disordered relations between classes." The bourgeoisie, having disrupted the traditional order, felt responsible for the proletariat that had once lived in their house under the old patriarchal order. Finney's message of individual salvation absolved the bourgeoisie of their guilt, laying the responsibility for the proletariat's salvation in the proletariat's own hands. Finally, in *Christian Soldiers*, Johnson writes, "The Rochester elite had divided on the question whether working men could or should be reformed by force." The elite instead combined economic with religious power and limited credit to those who met their religious standards, thereby regulating "the membership of their own class, and to a large extent of the community as a whole." Through Finney, the bourgeoisie realized the power of religion in economics. Johnson, echoing Marx's lamentations for the loss of the old feudal order, writes, "a nascent industrial capitalism became attached to visions of a perfect moral order based on individual freedom and self-government, and old relations of dependence, servility, and mutuality were defined as sinful and left behind." Johnson explains the fervent religiosity Rochester experienced in the early nineteenth century through economic and class. Johnson argues that religion served as a new class-bound means of social control. To Johnson, Rochesterians, while outwardly preparing their community for the second coming were more interested in implementing social controls in the burgeoning proletariat as the city industrialized.

Book arrived well ahead of anticipated date. It is a book I'm using for background work and so I knew what it was that I was buying - a great historical insight into the changing economic conditions in early 19th century America.

This book has come under some scrutiny for its assertions, however I found it to be enlightening and informative. Mr. Johnson discusses the town of Rochester, NY during the 1800's from the economy up in simple and somewhat humorous examples. I highly recommend!

Great book in my wheelhouse!

This is one of the textbooks my daughter needed for her college class. It is one she will keep.

The item was as mentioned in the description. No problems occurred with my transaction. Very clean and very quick handling of the item. Thank you.

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