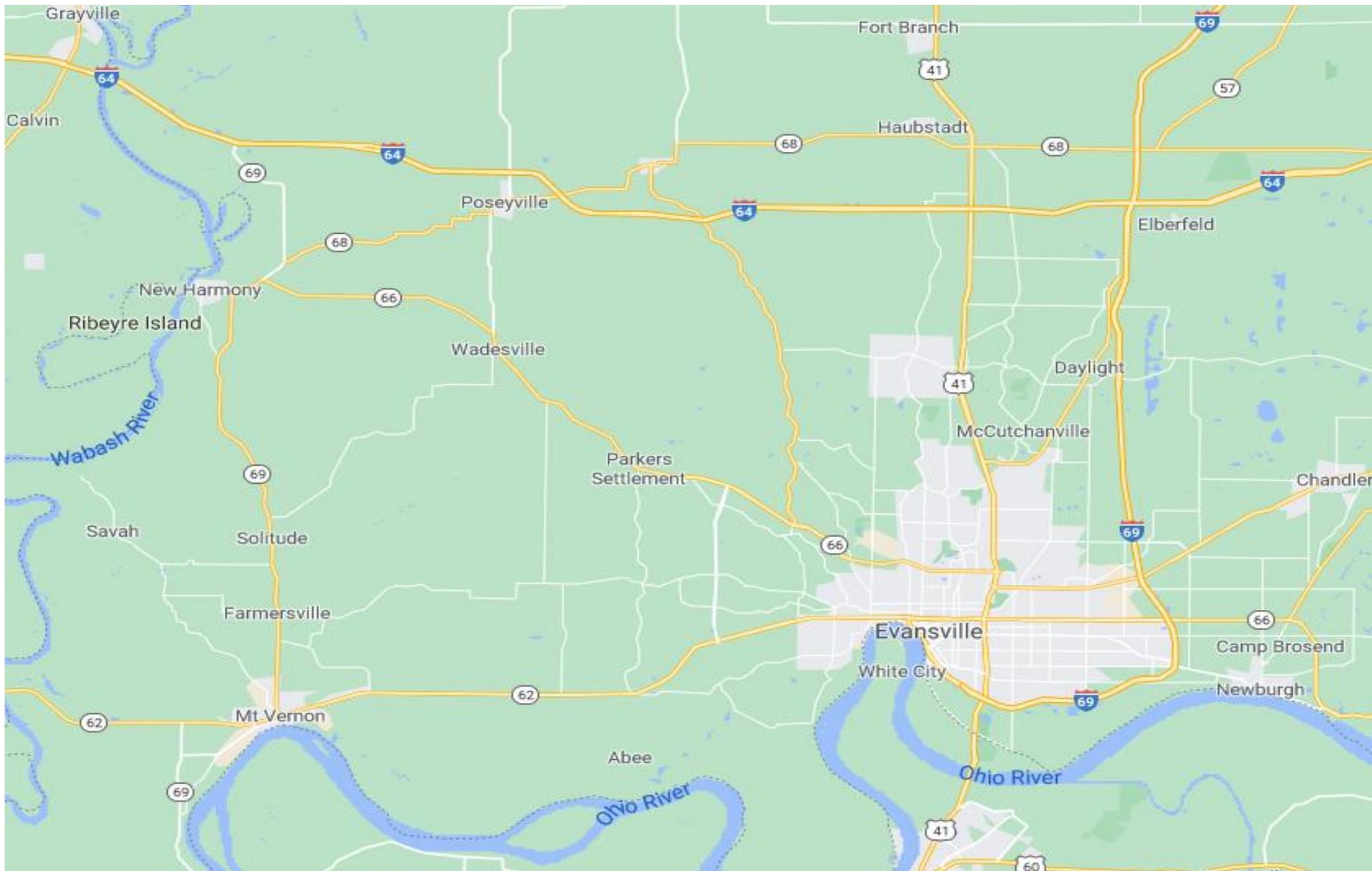


Church History

Campbell – Owen Debate



New Harmony, Indiana

- Robert Owen purchased the community and renamed it New Harmony in January 1825.
- Some reasons for failure:
 - Owen actively attacked established religion.
 - Held to the principles of the rationalist Age of Enlightenment.
 - Consistently appealed to the upper class for donations.
- His “utopian” community lasted two years, 1825 – 1827.

Alexander Campbell & Robert Owens Debate

- April 1829 – lasted eight days – over 1200 in attendance at each session.
- Summary of Owens' beliefs:
 - All religions of the world have been founded on human ignorance.
 - They are directly opposed to the never changing laws of our nature.
 - They have been, and are, the real sources of vice, disunion, and misery of every description.
 - They are now the only real bar to the formation of a society of virtue, intelligence, sincerity and benevolence.
 - That they can no longer be maintained except through the ignorance of the mass of people and the tyranny of the few over the mass.

Owens' "divine" laws

- He listed twelve, the debate hinged around these:
 - Man, at birth, is ignorant of everything relative to his own organization – that he has not been permitted to create any part of his faculties, qualities or powers, physical or mental.
 - Since we have no control over the formation of ourselves, we are not responsible.

Owens' "divine" laws

- Each individual is placed at birth within the influence of circumstances which operate irresistibly upon his peculiar organization and these circumstances stamp their own general character on the infant.
- Each individual is liable to imbibe false and injurious notions or their opposites and retain them with great tenacity.
- Each individual is created so that he must believe according to the strongest impressions made on his feelings and faculties.

Campbell's response

- Summary – “Man did not make himself, and consequently is irresponsible: *ergo*, all religions must be false.”
- No man can be responsible for anything bad or good, anymore than can a stone.
- While Owen is trying to rid us of bad feelings, he is destroying the foundations of society.
- The adult is constantly changing his circumstances. There is not a more common incident in human life, nor a more common phrase in human language, than to *change one's circumstances*.
- When we develop reason, we assign responsibility.

Campbell's response

- “The basis of all obligation or responsibility I hold to be *dependence*. A being, independent of any other, has no rule to obey but that which his own reason, or will prescribes.”
- “A man depends absolutely upon his Creator for everything, it is necessary that he should, in all points, submit to his will.”
- *Belief* always depends upon the testimony of others; *knowledge*, upon the evidence of our senses; opinion, upon our own *reasonings*.
- *Testimony* is essential to faith; and that whether we shall possess the testimony sufficient to constrain belief, very generally depends upon our determination and volition.

God has spoken

- And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut. 4:8 NIV)
- Rahab the harlot
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Daniel
- Centurions

God has spoken

- ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.
- ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.
- ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:20-22 NIV)