

Great Awakening

I. Great Awakening

- A. Historical Definition: intense religious revivalism, 1730-1740
- B. Occurred after a religious decline felt throughout the colonies
- C. Important for the following reasons:
 - 1. Changed the religious culture in America, fundamentally.
 - 2. New churches established throughout the colonies.
 - 3. Provides a dress rehearsal for American Revolution.
 - a. Taught people how to challenge authority.
 - b. Provided colonists with new tools they would use as preparing for American independence.
- D. Why did the Great Awakening Occur at this point?
 - 1. Decline in church standards and increased formalism in congregational churches like Puritans.
 - 2. Begin relaxing standards of church membership. Began as early as 1662 with the ½ way covenant.
 - 3. Example 1: Brattle Street Church
 - a. Founded in Boston in 1699.
 - b. Eliminated conversion testimony as part of membership.
 - c. Lowers standards.
 - d. Outcry begins, "hey anyone can be a member."
 - 4. Example 2: Solomon Stoddard (John Edwards, Grandfather)
 - a. Lets anyone into his church in North Hampton Massachusetts.
 - b. His son takes over the church later.
 - 5. People notice the slip in standards. This helps contribute to the Great Awakening.
 - 6. Decreasing standards because people wanted to keep dwindling church membership up.

7. Sermons, if you can imagine it, became more formal and focused on theology and theological debates.
 - a. Began to lack individual relationship with god.
 - b. Style changed. Very little enthusiasm. Hours putting together sermons. Basically just read sermon.
 - c. Boring so people stop going.
8. South: Anglican Ministers dominate.
 - a. Anglican ministers paid little, to no attention, to the poor or the blacks.
 - b. Only ministered to the wealthy from whom they got something.
 - c. If poor did go to Church reminded of own meager status and the role the church played in their status.
9. Increase in Worldliness of Puritan Society.
 - a. People who were wealthy believed God blessed them because He rewarded them.
 - b. Puritans are supposed to be frugal and not want goods just for the sake of having goods.
 - c. But because quite prosperous in New England and buying mirrors, etc, started to feel guilty because knew acquiring things just to acquire them was bad.
 - d. So ashamed to go to Church.
10. Enlightenment
 - a. People began to look to science rather than to God to explain natural disasters and nature.
 - b. Some enlightened thinkers still believed in God, but looked at the conflict between churches and refrained from church because did not think one church was better than the others.
 - c. Many educated pulled out of church.
 - d. Ministers noticed this and were alarmed

Transition: All of this sets the stage for the Great Awakening.

E. Seeds of Great Awakening

1. Natural disasters and epidemics took place.
2. So huge numbers begin to look again to God
3. Earthquake in New England in 1720s evidence of God's displeasure. (discussion of earthquakes).
4. Reminds them to go to Church and restore their faith in God.
5. 1730s epidemic of diphtheria, hit northern New England most severely, killed more people than any war up to the Revolution.
6. Believed God was punishing New England and descendants of Puritans for breaking their covenant.

II. Localized Awakening

A. John Edwards

1. North Hampton Revival 1734-35.
2. Powerful orator
3. Made people afraid.
4. Must change your ways
5. Spread first among the young and people begin going back to church.

B. Youth and Family

1. Said the youth broke laws of the church all the time and corrupted each other.
2. Family disregarded this and failed to stop corruption
3. No family authority.
4. If the youth are corrupted, this means future society will be even worse

C. Revival Swept North Hampton and brought people back to church.

III. Progress of Awakening and its Meaning for America

A. George Whitefield

1. Most famous revivalists: credited with sparking the revival beyond the local level throughout the North.
2. Came to New England from England in 1739

3. Made a name for himself as a preacher in England.
4. Tried first in the South with little success.
5. So went to New England.
6. Emotional and evangelical style drew people in masses to listen to his preaching.
7. Elements of his sermons:
 - a. God is powerful
 - b. We have a lot to worry about, an eternity in hell, eternal damnation.
8. His message and his presentation were powerful.
 - a. Peoples' relationship with God is the focus
 - b. Itinerate preacher
 - c. Traveled to town squares, public places. Reaches lots of people.
 - d. People lying on the ground crying and moaning.
 - e. Traditional ministers horrified by participation of the people. They are supposed to sit still and listen).
 - f. Traditional ministers also alarmed because Whitefield says don't have to wait whole life reading the Bible to feel conversion.
 - g. You can do it immediately.
 - h. People experiencing conversion just listening to him.
9. Whitefield blamed the decline in the Church on ministers.
 - a. They are unconverted, dead men preaching the wrong message and the wrong delivery.
 - b. His criticism threatened their power.
10. Whitefield's followers.
 - a. Imitate his style
 - b. Criticized by ministers as frantic lunatics

B. James Davenport

1. Criticized ministry venomously.

2. Kicked out and locked up.
3. When he gets out of jail he said he could tell by looking who was saved and not.
4. Starting burning books of Puritan theology.
5. Started preaching NAKED in the street.
6. People realized he was crazy.
7. Admits he can't tell whose saved or not.
8. **His excess begins to turn people in the North off of the Great Awakening and the revival.
9. Begins to lose momentum in the North.

IV. Why the Great Awakening is Important

A. New Churches Arose

1. Some groups/congregations split in ½
 - a. Old Lights-Stayed with the established church.
 - b. New Lights-people followed people like George Whitefield and established new churches.
 1. Like the new style and message.
 2. No longer want to pay taxes to state to support a church, more churches as well

B. Great Awakening Challenges Authority

1. New Lights tend to be younger, poorer, rural people who would have to defer to their betters.
2. Challenge to authority.
3. Eventually challenge the British government and King.
4. New Lights remained hostile to Old Lights throughout this period.
 - a. Example: Charles Woodmason
 1. An Anglican minister.
 2. Went to South Carolina back country to convert poor people.

3. He is not welcomed.
4. Baptist and Methodist entrenched.
5. Charles Wodomason claims churches get people drunk so his service is disrupted.
6. Brought 577 dogs and let them fight while he preached.
7. Excrement on the alter.
8. Took his coat and gave it to a drunk who got in a woman's bed. They accuse him of it.
9. **Illustrates hostility and challenge to authority.

C. New Modes of Communication.

1. Open Public Squares—later used by colonists to rally people for revolution.
2. Beginning of separation of church and State because New Lights disagree with state tax for church in New England
3. First colony-wide movement—dress rehearsal for the American Revolution.
- 4.

D. Can think and interpret for themselves.

V. f