

# History of the Reformation

## The Great Awakening and Revival

- Background – Evangelicalism

- One part Pietistic spirituality
- One part Presbyterian doctrinal precision
- One part Puritan introspection
- Jonathan Edwards
  - “What does it mean to be a Christian?”
  - “What is the evidence that my faith is genuine?”
- John/Charles Wesley
  - “What do I need to do to be holy?”
- George Whitefield
  - “Have you repented of your sins and have been born again?”
  - “Is your life transformed by God’s transforming power?”
- All these are major parts of the Great Awakening



- Revival

- One cannot separate the Great Awakening from the concept of Revival
- What is Revival?
  - Essentially, it is Spiritual renewal
- Context
  - The human tendency is to begin with a vision and then, over time, drift into complacency
    - Moral – lifelessness, backsliding, lethargy, indifference, weakness
    - Spiritual – theological, devotional
- Need
  - There is a need to breathe new life back into the life
  - A fresh, God given outpouring of His life-giving Spirit

- Biblical

- Psalm 85:6 – “Will not you revive us, that your people might rejoice in you?”
- Isaiah 57:15 - For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to **revive** the spirit of the lowly and to **revive** the heart of the contrite.
- OT examples
  - Times of wicked kings of Israel, followed by a renewal of the people (David, Josiah, Hezekiah)
- NT
  - Church in Ephesus – “You have abandoned your first love, therefore, keep in mind how far you have fallen. Repent and perform the deeds you did at first”
    - Beware that you long for the days when you were first a believer. Long for the days that you grow in grace and continue growing.
  - Eph. 3:16-17 – “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

- Revival
  - (John Piper) – “A sovereign work of God in which a whole region of many churches has been lifted out of spiritual indifference and worldliness and into
    - Correction of sin
    - Earnest desire for Christ and His Word
    - Boldness in witness
    - Purity of life
    - Many conversions of unbelievers
    - Joyful worship
    - Renewed commitment to mission
  - That which God does continually in individuals, He does on a much larger regional scale
- Revival involves the whole person
  - Theological
    - The Reformation
    - 20<sup>th</sup> Cent Evangelicalism
    - Late 20<sup>th</sup> Cent Calvinism
  - Emotional
    - Pietism
    - The Great Awakening
    - 20<sup>th</sup> Cent Pentecostalism
  - Sometimes referred to as a “2<sup>nd</sup> blessing”
  - Involves believers and non-believers
- Patterns of Spiritual Renewal
  - Usually preceded by Spiritual depression, apathy, gross sin
    - Baby or nominal Christians not much different from secular society
    - Churches seem to be “dead” or “asleep”
  - Individuals or small groups become conscious of condition
    - Usually through a concentrated study of God’s Word
    - Vow to forsake all that is displeasing to God
  - Yearning for manifestation of God’s power, leaders arise
    - Insights into causes of lethargy
    - Remedies to problems
    - New awareness of the holy and pure character of God is present
  - The awakening of Christians occurs as many take part in a new Spiritual life
    - Evangelism of the lost may or may not accompany
    - But a desire to mission (converting the lost) will be the result
  - Often, periods of revival are preparation and strengthening for trials to come
    - Early church at Pentecost
      - Persecution from the Roman Government
    - The Reformation
      - Conflict with the Roman Church
  - The Great Awakening
    - War and change of Government
- The Great Awakening
  - 1730’s and 1740’s (even to 1770’s)

- Not only America, but England, Scotland, Wales, Germany
- A new “Age of Faith” to counter the “Age of Enlightenment”
  - Reaffirm “heart religion” rather than just rational “head religion”
  - Feeling vs thinking
  - Revelation vs rationalism
- Early Manifestations
  - Solomon Stoddard – predecessor to Jonathan Edwards
  - William Tennent
- William Tennent
  - Founded the “Log College” 1727
    - Presbyterian seminary in Pennsylvania
  - Preached and taught evangelical zeal
  - Log College graduates spread throughout New England preaching the message of the requirement of the New Birth
  - Sons Gilbert, William Jr, John Rowland, Samuel Finley, Samuel Blair
    - Eventually became trustees for College of New Jersey (Princeton)
- Jonathan Edwards
  - Revival in Northampton 1734
    - The “Surprising Work of God”
  - Preaching faithful and earnest devotion to Christ
    - “The Beauty of God’s Sovereignty”
    - Amazement that a Holy God would take pleasure in having relationship to men
  - Studied the conversions to understand just what happened
- George Whitefield
  - Great orator who went “up and down the American landscape”
    - The majesty and holiness of God
    - The devastating nature of sin
    - The reality of future judgment including the reality of hell
    - The sole remedy of a crucified Christ
    - The utter necessity of repentance and the new birth
    - Salvation that is manifested in a new life, not a mere profession
  - Preached to thousands
    - Professing believers were “revived” in the Christian lives
    - Unbelievers were converted
  - Yet disdained by many in the religious community
  - An American Phenomenon
    - American Influence “Accidental Revolutionary”(Jerome Mahaffey – 2011)
    - While English, Whitefield became increasingly drawn to the Americas
      - Wesley – always loyal to the crown
      - Whitefield – institutional attachments and personal identification were more to the colonies
  - He became a unifying colonial force
    - 80% of colonials heard him at least once
    - By 1750 – virtually every American from Boston to Charleston loved him and saw him as their champion
  - Though dying prior to the American Revolution

- You might argue that a unified American people was possible because of George Whitefield
  - Controversy of Slavery
    - Once advocated that the colony of Georgia should legalize slavery
    - However, angered plantation owners by advocating
      - 1) Slaves should have the Gospel preached to them
      - 2) Slaves should be credibly educated
  - Letter to the editor
    - Whitefield advocated his position
    - “His letter represents the 1<sup>st</sup> journalistic statement concerning slavery” (Harry Stout)
    - Whitefield did not even realize that his letter would be the seed of the Abolition movement
  - In one famous sermon
    - “And to you Negroes here, Jesus Christ died for them. . .For in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female, bond or free. . . Jesus Christ will wash you in His blood”
- Influence of Whitefield
  - Whitefield did not spend his time organizing churches
    - Wesley, with genius for organization, took the seed planted by Whitefield and made it into the Methodist Church
  - Whitefield’s influence was on revivalistic evangelism
    - Charles G. Finney
    - Dwight L. Moody
    - Billy Sunday
    - Billy Graham
  - His leadership was by integrity, affection, and example
    - “inflexible in matters of moral rectitude
  - Heartfelt concern, unfailing encouragement, and personal example
- Effects of the Great Awakening
  - Spread and growth of many denominations
    - Baptists – though “New Lights”, spreading to the South
      - Not restricted to Rhode Island
      - Became “troublemakers, disregarding race and gender”
      - Black congregations formed
      - Deaconesses were given opportunity to tell of their experiences with God
    - Methodists – became separate from the Anglicans
      - Evangelistic spread of the Gospel through circuit riding preachers
    - Religious pluralism began to take hold
  - Resentment to Revivalism
    - Clergymen questioned the “emotionalism” of evangelicals
    - They looked down on “itinerants” such as Whitefield
      - Who often criticized local clergy
    - They complained about the blacks and women “shedding their social status” during religious meetings
  - Controversy within denominations
    - “Old Lights vs New Lights”, “Old Side vs New Side”
    - Eventually, old preferred groups lost their required status

- Congregationalists in Connecticut and Massachusetts
    - Anglicans in the South
  - In America, the Great Awakening provided a binding factor for the American people
    - One nation under God was a common theme
      - Even though Enlightenment Deism was a common understanding
    - Modes of mass communication set the stage for revolution
  - The combination of “head and heart” blended the emotional aspect of the soul with the intellectual aspect of the mind
    - Jonathan Edwards, the brightest intellectual, would be in tears at the preaching of George Whitefield
- What Can We Take from This?
  - Pray that God would continue to work His grace into our lives individually
    - Beware of growing cold in our personal relationship with God
    - Personal study of the Word, fellowship with other saints
  - In our church, ensure that our teaching continually blends the “heart and the head”
    - Not allowing either to take dominance over the other
    - Becoming “whole”, “perfect”, “complete”
  - The spread of the Gospel is our mission
    - Revival and renewal are important
    - Repentance and regeneration of the lost is just as important
  - Social impact of believers is also important
    - The Gospel changes lives
    - Changed lives impact society
    - But the purpose of the Gospel is not to change society
    - The end is not societal change (the Social Gospel)

Revive us again  
 Fill our hearts with Thy Love  
 Let our souls be rekindled  
 With fire from above

Hallelujah – Thine the glory

All glory and praise  
 To the God of all grace,  
 Who hast bought us, and sought us,  
 And guided our ways.