**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*Ekklesia Series*

*First Great Awakening*

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

June 9th In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS quoted)

This sermon series has taken us from the centuries before the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ through the 1st century and the close of that era with the Apostle John graduating to the glory of the Lord around the end of the 1st century. We then viewed the next generation of saints who furthered the mission of the Gospel. Remember, God spoke through Paul in Romans 1.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (Rom. 1:16-17 NAU)

With this understanding aligned with the great commission that all authority on heaven and earth resides in the Resurrected Lord. With this power and authority of the Lord the saints went out and witnessed to a fallen world. The next generation is referred by historians as the Apostolic Fathers. These people risked their lives and many were martyred for their witness. They would not relent, they would not deny, they would not cease to be the Lord’s witness and with great encouragement went to their public deaths. But they too, knew they really only lost their temporal bodies. They went on be with the Lord, as all the saints have.

We examine the transition (200’s A.D.) led by strong Bishops in North Africa leading the way in establishing that a person’s relationship with God is through the Church and the office of Bishop. Thus, a personal, one-on-one relationship with God was not taught. The beginnings of this shift started before the Roman Catholic Church emerged in the middle of the 5th Century.

We witnessed through the first quarter century of the 4th century the Church had grown faster in numbers and geographically then it has since. Through state persecution and cultural rejection, the Gospel is the greater power working in people’s hearts. You most likely have by now embedded in your mind that the Roman Emperor Constantine looked towards the heavens and heard a voice, so he claimed, that under the sign of the Cross he would conquer and so he did. From that day on the state sought-out the Church to govern through.

But there is a difference between creating rules and regulations to govern by and the Gospel of God, of Jesus Christ. Man, and his institutions of government can control and officiate over the temporal affairs of people but they cannot baptize people with God’s Holy Spirit and with fire as demonstrated at Pentecost. So, the state church called council after council starting in 325 A.D. to write and enforce, via the sword, their state church constitutions that held captive the populations of Western civilization for over one thousand years. Except for a few Christian communities in North Africa and east Asia the state church ruled. Their church councils, their Latin Bible, their sword ruled and crushed all opposition.

No doubt that during this time there were sincere Believers within the ranks of the state church apparatus. This kept the real Gospel fire going as God always has a remnant.

Looking at the Gospel being spread by individual effort, we see men like Alfred the Great of Britain (871-901) have a few books of the Bible translated in the English of his day (Exodus, Psalms, and Acts). Another Brit referred to as Aldred, Bishop of Dunham in 950 A.D. dictated between the lines of the state church Latin Bible what is called the Lindsfarne Gospels. There were other individual efforts that cumulatively effected the spread of God’s Word. In time, within the state church, men like Wycliffe come in the late 14 century (by 1382 A.D.) and produced a complete English New Testament that could be read by the common person. These New testaments were produced by hand. The printing press was not invented till the 1450’s.

After Wycliffe died his followers produced many copies of his work. These men were called Lollard’s (Babblers) by their enemies and were burned at the stake with a Wycliffe Bible hung around their neck. Through the 1400’s and to the middle of the 1500’s history records that 1000 Lollards were burned at the stake. However, their work had been done, the Bible in the common language of the English person was out. Eventually, others translated. Even though Wycliffe translated from the Latin Bible, it was still received. It was not until 1516 with the publication of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament did people have an opportunity to translate from the original language the New Testament was first written. Now all the Reformers of Europe could work to produce their native tongue Bible from a source outside the state church Latin Bible.

Through the martyrdom of saints like Huss and Tyndale and others, God’s Word advanced and in time people made their own decisions about what to believe. This did not happen all at once nor in the same country. This was not the age of mass communication and everyone watched the six-o-clock news. No, no, but the cat was out of the bag. There was no turning back. With this release of God’s Word, in time, came different opinions. Now that the state church had lost its cloths and was completely exposed people turned to others.

History dictates that when one power departs another step in and takes its place. By in large, the population, the common man as they say, of Europe could not read. This placed the interpretation, publication and reading of the Bible in the hands of a few people in each national community. Within these groups, strong educated men emerged with their own understanding of God’s Word. The state church was no longer there to tell them what to think and what to teach. They produce their own narrative. The state church became fractured. Every nation had leading personalities. We know of a few. Luther in Germany, Calvin in Geneva, the Swiss Reformation began in 1519 with Ulrich Zwingli, and Henry VIII of England can be included with this group for breaking from Rome. All of these had their own issues with the Roman state church. Some shared the same concerns but all did agree to break from the authority of the RCC.

During the 1500’s, moving forward, there were hundreds of individual groups that carve out their own understanding and therefore, beliefs from their own personal reading of the Bible. Some saw water-baptism as mandatory for salvation and other not. Some saw the need for the state church, be it their own nationality church like Henry in England. Or some set up a theocracy as Calvin did in Geneva and ruled with an iron fist.

Michael Servetus, http://www.reenactingtheway.com/blog/john-calvin-had-people-killed-and-bad-bible-interpretation-justified-it

a Spaniard, physician, scientist and Bible scholar, suffered a worse fate. He was Calvin's longtime friend who resisted the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. However, he angered Calvin by returning a copy of Calvin's Institutes with critical comments in the margins. The next time Servetus attended Calvin's Sunday preaching service on a visit, Calvin had him arrested and charged with heresy. The 38 official charges included rejection of the Trinity and infant baptism. Servetus pleaded to be beheaded instead of the more brutal method of burning at the stake, but Calvin and the city council refused the quicker death method.

On October 27, 1553, Calvin’s men used green wood for the fire so Servetus would be slowly baked alive from the feet upward. For 30 minutes he screamed for mercy and prayed to Jesus as the fire worked its way up his body to burn the theology book Calvin had strapped to his chest as a symbol of his heresy. How could such torture be condoned? In November 1552 the Geneva Council declared Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion to be a "holy doctrine which no man might speak against." Disagreeing with Calvin’s view of God was a violation warranting the death penalty according to the way John Calvin interpreted Leviticus 24:16.

There were many leaders like Calvin and his city council who condemn people to death for not agreeing with them. As the 16th and 17th centuries went on development in Christian communities took their ups and downs depending on who the local leaders were. This effected people in Europe and America. Those who came from Europe dissenting or protesting their European overlords arrived in American with their own version of religious-Christianity. As we have noted before, it was not until the establishment of the state of Pennsylvania (1701 - Charter of Privileges) was there a state that people could freely live-out their Christian faith as they individually chose.

Roger Williams https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\_Williams

(c. 21 December 1603 – between 27 January and 15 March 1683) was a Puritan minister, theologian, and author who founded the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. He was a staunch advocate for religious freedom, separation of church and state, and fair dealings with American Indians, and he was one of the first abolitionists.

Williams took holy orders in the Church of England in connection with his studies, but he became a Puritan at Cambridge and thus ruined his chance for preferment in the Anglican church. Williams knew that Puritan leaders planned to migrate to the New World. He did not join the first wave, but he decided before the year ended that he could not remain in England under Archbishop William Laud's rigorous administration. He regarded the Church of England as corrupt and false, and he had arrived at the Separatist position by the time that he and his wife boarded the Lyon in early December, 1630.

After a time, Williams decided that the Plymouth church was not sufficiently separated from the Church of England. Furthermore, his contact with the Narragansett Indians had caused him to question the validity of the colonial charters that did not include legitimate purchase of Indian land. Governor Bradford later wrote that Williams fell "into some strange opinions which caused some controversy between the church and him".[15] In December 1632, Williams wrote a lengthy tract that openly condemned the King's charters and questioned the right of Plymouth to the land without first buying it from the Indians. He even charged that King James had uttered a "solemn lie" in claiming that he was the first Christian monarch to have discovered the land. Williams moved back to Salem by the fall of 1633 and was welcomed by Rev. Samuel Skelton as an unofficial assistant.

Finally, in October 1635, the General Court tried Williams and convicted him of sedition and heresy. They declared that he was spreading "diverse, new, and dangerous opinions" [16] and ordered that he be banished. The execution of the order was delayed because Williams was ill and winter was approaching, so he was allowed to stay temporarily, provided that he ceased publicly teaching his opinions. He failed to do so, and the sheriff came in January 1636, only to discover that he had slipped away three days earlier during a blizzard. He traveled 55 miles through the deep snow, from Salem to Raynham, Massachusetts where the local Wampanoags offered him shelter at their winter camp. Their Sachem Massasoit hosted Williams for the three months until spring.

Williams was expelled by the Puritan leaders from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for spreading "new and dangerous ideas", and he established the Providence Plantations in 1636 as a refuge offering what he called "liberty of conscience". In 1638, he founded the First Baptist Church in America, also known as the First Baptist Church of Providence. He studied the Indian languages and wrote the first book on the Narragansett language, and he organized the first attempt to prohibit slavery in any of the American colonies

Williams wanted his settlement to be a haven for those "distressed of conscience", and it soon attracted a collection of dissenters and otherwise-minded individuals. From the beginning, a majority vote of the heads of households governed the new settlement, but only in civil things. Newcomers could also be admitted to full citizenship by a majority vote. In August 1637, a new town agreement again restricted the government to civil things. In 1640, 39 freemen (men who had full citizenship and voting rights) signed another agreement which declared their determination "still to hold forth liberty of conscience". Thus, Williams founded the first place in modern history where citizenship and religion were separate, providing religious liberty and separation of church and state. This was combined with the principle of majoritarian democracy.

**First Great Awakening**

History tells us that even tough men like Roger Williams and William Penn came along the vast majority of “Churched” Christians still practiced a very liturgical faith. The idea that belonging to a particular group and adhering to their leader’s teaching was the path to salvation and the retention of salvation was prevalent. Thus, the time of the First Great Awakening came in the early part of the 1700’s. Historians view that there are at least four Awakenings in American history. All of these have their particular personalities a flare.

**First** (c. 1730–1755) Whitefiled, Edwards, Tennant, John & Charles Wesley

**Second** (c. 1790–1840) Finney, Stone, McGready, McGee, Dwight, Beecher

Camp Meetings started. This movement was not limited to but saw heavy Methodist and Baptist participation. Also, men like Joseph Smith claimed special revelations from God and established the Mormon Church.

**Third** (c. 1855–1930) Social Gospel movement, Postmillennialism, Mary Baker Eddy & Christian Science, Charles Taze Russel & Jehovah’s Witness, Salvation Army, Holiness Pentecostal Movements.

**Fourth** (c. 1960–1980) This time is still being evaluated as to its impact. Among others, Billy Graham lead the way. Even though Graham started in the late 1940’s. This was a push-back against humanism, atheism and secularism by Christians who hold the Bible to be the Word of God and infallible regarding God’s Message of salvation and His plan for human life. It is my view that this is on-going. What is new?

**Fifth**?

The First Great Awakening (sometimes Great Awakening) or the Evangelical Revival was a series of Christian revivals that swept Britain and its Thirteen Colonies between the 1730s and 1740s. The revival movement permanently affected Protestantism as adherents strove to renew individual piety and religious devotion. The Great Awakening marked the emergence of Anglo-American evangelicalism as a transdenominational movement within the Protestant churches. In the United States, the term Great Awakening is most often used, while in the United Kingdom, it is referred to as the Evangelical Revival.

Building on the foundations of older traditions—Puritanism, pietism and Presbyterianism—major leaders of the revival such as George Whitefield, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards articulated a theology of revival and salvation that transcended denominational boundaries and helped create a common evangelical identity. Revivalists added to the doctrinal imperatives of Reformation Protestantism an emphasis on providential outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Extemporaneous preaching gave listeners a sense of deep personal conviction of their need of salvation by Jesus Christ and fostered introspection and commitment to a new standard of personal morality. Revival theology stressed that religious conversion was not only intellectual assent to correct Christian doctrine but had to be a "new birth" experienced in the heart. Revivalists also taught that receiving assurance of salvation was a normal expectation in the Christian life.

While the Evangelical Revival united evangelicals across various denominations around shared beliefs, it also led to division in existing churches between those who supported the revivals and those who did not. Opponents accused the revivals of fostering disorder and fanaticism within the churches by enabling uneducated, itinerant preachers and encouraging religious enthusiasm. In England, evangelical Anglicans would grow into an important constituency within the Church of England, and Methodism would develop out of the ministries of Whitefield and Wesley. In the American colonies, the Awakening caused the Congregational and Presbyterian churches to split, while it strengthened both the Methodist and Baptist denominations. It had little impact on most Lutherans, Quakers, and non-Protestants.[1]

Evangelical preachers "sought to include every person in conversion, regardless of gender, race, and status."[2] Throughout the colonies, especially in the South, the revival movement increased the number of African slaves and free blacks who were exposed to and subsequently converted to Christianity.[3] It also inspired the creation of new missionary societies, such as the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792.[4]

**Sinners in the Hands of an angry God. Johnathan Edwards 1741**

Excerpt: They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke xiii. 7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is, John viii. 23. "Ye are from beneath." And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assign to him. KJV

23 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

(Jn. 8:23-24 NAU)

22 "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. (Isa. 45:22 NAU)

**First Great Awakening see Wikipedia**

[**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\_Great\_Awakening**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening)

**Below are excerpts.**

**Events in continental Europe**

Historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom sees the Great Awakening as part of a "great international Protestant upheaval" that also created pietism in the Lutheran and Reformed churches of continental Europe.[5] Pietism emphasized heartfelt religious faith in reaction to an overly intellectual Protestant scholasticism perceived as spiritually dry. Significantly, the pietists placed less emphasis on traditional doctrinal divisions between Protestant churches, focusing rather on religious experience and affections.[6]

Pietism prepared Europe for revival, and it usually occurred in areas where pietism was strong. The most important leader of the Awakening in central Europe was Nicolaus Zinzendorf, a Saxon noble who studied under pietist leader August Hermann Francke at Halle University.[7] In 1722, Zinzendorf invited members of the Moravian Church to live and worship on his estates, establishing a community at Herrnhut. The Moravians came to Herrnhut as refugees, but under Zinzendorf's guidance, the group enjoyed a religious revival. Soon, the community became a refuge for other Protestants as well, including German Lutherans, Reformed Christians and Anabaptists. The church began to grow, and Moravian societies would be established in England where they would help foster the Evangelical Revival as well.[8]

While known as the Great Awakening in the United States, the movement is referred to as the Evangelical Revival in Britain.[9][10] The revivalist tradition had existed in Scottish Presbyterianism since the 1620s.[11] The Evangelical Revival, however, first broke out in Wales. In 1735, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland experienced a religious conversion and began preaching to large crowds throughout South Wales. Their preaching initiated the Welsh Methodist revival.[9]

In England, the major leaders of the Evangelical Revival were brothers John and Charles Wesley and their friend George Whitefield, who would become the founders of Methodism. They had been members of a religious society at Oxford University called the Holy Club and "Methodists" due to their methodical piety. This society was modeled on the collegia pietatis (cell groups) used by pietists for Bible study, prayer and accountability.[12] All three men experienced a spiritual crisis in which they sought true conversion and assurance of faith.[9]

Whitefield joined the Holy Club in 1733 and, under the influence of Charles Wesley, read German pietist August Hermann Francke's Against the Fear of Man and Scottish theologian Henry Scougal's The Life of God in the Soul of Man. Whitefield wrote that he "never knew what true religion was" until he read Scougal, who said that it consisted of becoming a "new creature". From that point on, Whitefield sought the new birth. After a period of spiritual struggle, Whitefield experienced conversion during Lent in 1735. Afterwards, he was ordained a priest in the Church of England, but he always maintained a willingness to work with evangelicals from other denominations. In 1737, Whitefield began preaching in Bristol and London, and he became well known for his dramatic sermons, which were reported on by the press.[13]

In February 1739, Whitefield began open-air field preaching in the mining community of Kingswood, near Bristol. He learned this method from Howell Harris, who had been successfully field preaching in Wales. Within a week, he was preaching to crowds of 10,000. By May, he was preaching in London to crowds of 50,000. While enjoying success, his itinerant preaching was controversial. Many Anglican pulpits were closed to him, and he had to struggle against Anglicans who opposed the Methodists and the "doctrine of the New Birth". Whitefield wrote of his opponents, "I am fully convinced there is a fundamental difference between us and them. They believe only an outward Christ, we further believe that He must be inwardly formed in our hearts also. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." In August 1739, Whitefield left England to begin his preaching tour in the American colonies.[14]

In 1736, John Wesley was returning to England from a failed Anglican mission in Georgia when he came into contact with members of the Moravian Church led by August Gottlieb Spangenberg. The Moravians' faith and piety deeply impressed Wesley, especially their belief that it was a normal part of Christian life to have an assurance of one's salvation.[15] Despite being an Anglican priest, his encounters with the Moravians led him to conclude that he was in need of conversion himself. He developed further contacts with the Moravians in London and became friends with Moravian minister Peter Boehler who convinced him to join a Moravian small group called the Fetter Lane Society.[16]

In May 1738, Wesley attended a Moravian meeting on Aldersgate Street in London where he felt spiritually transformed during a reading of Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. Wesley recounted that "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."[17] Wesley understood his "Aldersgate experience" to be an evangelical conversion, and it provided him with the assurance of his salvation that he had been seeking. Afterwards, he traveled to Herrnhut and met Zinzendorf in person.[16]

By March 1739, Whitefield was ready to launch his preaching tour in the 13 Colonies but wanted someone to continue the revival preaching at Bristol. He turned to Wesley who was at first uneasy about preaching outdoors, which violated his high-church sense of decency. Eventually, however, Wesley changed his mind and, in his own words, "submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation". On April 2, 1739, Wesley preached to about 3,000 people near Bristol.[18]

**Events in America**

Further information: Evangelicalism in the United States

**Early revivals**

In the early 18th century, the 13 Colonies were religiously diverse. In New England, the Congregational churches were the established religion; whereas in the religiously tolerant Middle Colonies, the Quakers, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Congregational, and Baptist churches all competed with each other on equal terms. In the Southern colonies, the Anglican church was officially established, though there were significant numbers of Baptists, Quakers and Presbyterians.[22] At the same time, church membership was low from having failed to keep up with population growth, and the influence of Enlightenment rationalism was leading many people to turn to atheism, Deism, Unitarianism and Universalism.[23] The churches in New England had fallen into a "staid and routine formalism in which experiential faith had been a reality to only a scattered few."[24]

In response to these trends, ministers influenced by New England Puritanism, Scots-Irish Presbyterianism, and European Pietism began calling for a revival of religion and piety.[23][25] The blending of these three traditions would produce an evangelical Protestantism that placed greater importance "on seasons of revival, or outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and on converted sinners experiencing God's love personally."[26] In the 1710s and 1720s, revivals became more frequent among New England Congregationalists.[27] These early revivals, however, remained local affairs due to the lack of coverage in print media. The first revival to receive widespread publicity was that precipitated by an earthquake in 1727. As they began to be publicized more widely, revivals transformed from merely local to regional and transatlantic events.[28]

In the 1720s and 1730s, an evangelical party took shape in the Presbyterian churches of the Middle Colonies led by William Tennent, Sr., of Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. He established a seminary called the Log College where he trained nearly 20 Presbyterian revivalists for the ministry, including his three sons and Samuel Blair.[29] Within the Synod of Philadelphia, these ministers would gravitate towards the anti-subscriptionist party led by Jonathan Dickinson.[30] This faction opposed requiring ministers to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, believing that the Bible itself was a sufficient rule of faith and practice and that the church's purity could best be guaranteed by closely examining the religious experiences of ordination candidates and disciplining scandalous ministers.[31]

While pastoring a church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Gilbert Tennent became acquainted with Dutch Reformed minister Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. Historian Sydney Ahlstrom described Frelinghuysen as "an important herald, if not the father of the Great Awakening".[29] An advocate of Reformed pietism, Frelinghuysen believed in the necessity of personal conversion and living a holy life. The revivals he led in the Raritan Valley were "forerunners" of the Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies. Under Frelinghuysen's influence, Tennent came to believe that a definite conversion experience followed by assurance of salvation was the key mark of a Christian. By 1729, Tennent was seeing signs of revival in the Presbyterian churches of New Brunswick and Staten Island. At the same time, Gilbert's brothers, William and John, oversaw a revival at Freehold, New Jersey. [30]

**Northampton revival**

The most influential evangelical revival was the Northampton revival of 1734–1735 under the leadership of Congregational minister Jonathan Edwards.[32] In the fall of 1734, Edwards preached a sermon series on justification by faith alone, and the community's response was extraordinary. Signs of religious commitment among the laity increased, especially among the town's young people. Edwards wrote to Boston minister Benjamin Colman that the town "never was so full of Love, nor so full of Joy, nor so full of distress as it has lately been. ... I never saw the Christian spirit in Love to Enemies so exemplified, in all my Life as I have seen it within this half-year."[33] The revival ultimately spread to 25 communities in western Massachusetts and central Connecticut until it began to wane in 1737.[34]

At a time when Enlightenment rationalism and Arminian theology was popular among some Congregational clergy, Edwards held to traditional Calvinist doctrine. He understood conversion to be the experience of moving from spiritual deadness to joy in the knowledge of one's election (that one had been chosen by God for salvation). While a Christian might have several conversion moments as part of this process, Edwards believed there was a single point in time when God regenerated an individual, even if the exact moment could not be pinpointed.[35]

The Northampton revival featured instances of what critics called enthusiasm but what supporters believed were signs of the Holy Spirit. Services became more emotional and some people had visions and mystical experiences. Edwards cautiously defended these experiences as long as they led individuals to a greater belief in God's glory rather than in self-glorification. Similar experiences would appear in most of the major revivals of the 18th century.[36]

Edwards wrote an account of the Northampton revival, A Faithful Narrative, which was published in England through the efforts of prominent evangelicals John Guyse and Isaac Watts. The publication of his account made Edwards a celebrity in Britain and influenced the growing revival movement in that nation. A Faithful Narrative would become a model on which other revivals would be conducted.[37]

**Whitefield, Tennent and Davenport**

George Whitefield first came to America in 1738 to preach in Georgia and found Bethesda Orphanage. Whitefield returned to the Colonies in November 1739. His first stop was in Philadelphia where he initially preached at Christ Church, Philadelphia's Anglican church, and then preached to a large outdoor crowd from the courthouse steps. He then preached in many Presbyterian churches.[38] From Philadelphia, Whitefield traveled to New York and then to the South. In the Middle Colonies, he was popular in the Dutch and German communities as well as among the British. Lutheran pastor Henry Muhlenberg told of a German woman who heard Whitefield preach and, though she spoke no English, later said she had never before been so edified.[39]

In 1740, Whitefield began touring New England. He landed in Newport, Rhode Island, on September 14, 1740, and preached several times in the Anglican church. He then moved on to Boston, Massachusetts, where he spent a week. There were prayers at King's Chapel (at the time an Anglican church) and preaching at Brattle Street Church and South Church.[40] On September 20, Whitefield preached in First Church and then outside of it to about 8,000 people who could not gain entrance. The next day, he preached outdoors again to about 15,000 people.[41] On Tuesday, he preached at Second Church and on Wednesday at Harvard University. After traveling as far as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he returned to Boston on October 12 to preach to 30,000 people before continuing his tour.[40]

Whitefield then traveled to Northampton at the invitation of Jonathan Edwards. He preached twice in the parish church while Edwards was so moved that he wept. He then spent time in New Haven, Connecticut, where he preached at Yale University. From there he traveled down the coast, reaching New York on October 29. Whitefield's assessment of New England's churches and clergy prior to his intervention was negative. "I am verily persuaded," he wrote, "the Generality of Preachers talk of an unknown, unfelt Christ. And the Reason why Congregations have been so dead, is because dead Men preach to them."[40]

Whitefield met Gilbert Tennent on Staten Island and asked him to preach in Boston to continue the revival there. Tennent accepted and in December began a three-month long preaching tour throughout New England. Besides Boston, Tennent preached in towns throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Like Whitefield's, Tennent's preaching produced large crowds, many conversions and much controversy. While antirevivalists such as Timothy Cutler heavily criticized Tennent's preaching, most of Boston's ministers were supportive.[42]

Tennent was followed in the summer of 1741 by itinerant minister James Davenport, who proved to be more controversial than either Tennent or Whitefield. His rants and attacks against "unconverted" ministers inspired much opposition, and he was arrested in Connecticut for violating a law against itinerant preaching. At his trial, he was found mentally ill and deported to Long Island. Soon after, he arrived in Boston and resumed his fanatical preaching only to once again be declared insane and expelled. The last of Davenport's radical episodes took place in March 1743 in New London when he ordered his followers to burn wigs, cloaks, rings and other vanities. He also ordered the burning of books by religious authors such as John Flavel and Increase Mather.[42] Following the intervention of two pro-revival "New Light" ministers, Davenport's mental state apparently improved, and he published a retraction of his earlier excesses.[43]

Whitefield, Tennent and Davenport would be followed by a number of both clerical and lay itinerants. However, the Awakening in New England was primarily sustained by the efforts of parish ministers. Sometimes revival would be initiated by regular preaching or the customary pulpit exchanges between two ministers. Through their efforts, New England experienced a "great and general Awakening" between 1740 and 1743 characterized by a greater interest in religious experience, widespread emotional preaching, and intense emotional reactions accompanying conversion, including fainting and weeping.[43] There was a greater emphasis on prayer and devotional reading, and the Puritan ideal of a converted church membership was revived. It is estimated that between 20,000 to 50,000 new members were admitted to New England's Congregational churches even as expectations for members increased.[24]

By 1745, the Awakening had begun to wane. Revivals would continue to spread to the southern backcountry and slave communities in the 1750s and 1760s.

**Old and New Lights**

The Great Awakening aggravated existing conflicts within the Protestant churches, often leading to schisms between supporters of revival, known as "New Lights", and opponents of revival, known as "Old Lights". Old Lights saw the religious enthusiasm and itinerant preaching unleashed by the Awakening as disruptive to church order, preferring formal worship and a settled, university-educated ministry. They mocked revivalists as being ignorant, heterodox or con artists. New Lights accused Old Lights of being more concerned with social status than with saving souls and even questioned whether some Old Light ministers were even converted. They also supported itinerant ministers who disregarded parish boundaries.

Congregationalists in New England experienced 98 schisms, which in Connecticut also affected which group would be considered "official" for tax purposes. It is estimated in New England that in the churches there were about one-third each of New Lights, Old Lights, and those who saw both sides as valid.[45] The Awakening aroused a wave of separatist feeling within the Congregational churches of New England. Around 100 Separatist congregations were organized throughout the region by Strict Congregationalists. Objecting to the Halfway Covenant, Strict Congregationalists required evidence of conversion for church membership and also objected to the semi–presbyterian Saybrook Platform, which they felt infringed on congregational autonomy. Because they threatened Congregationalist uniformity, the Separatists were persecuted and in Connecticut they were denied the same legal toleration enjoyed by Baptists, Quakers and Anglicans.[46]

The Baptists benefited the most from the Great Awakening. Numerically small before the outbreak of revival, Baptist churches experienced growth during the last half of the 18th century. By 1804, there were over 300 Baptist churches in New England. This growth was primarily due to an influx of former New Light Congregationalists who became convinced of Baptist doctrines, such as believer's baptism. In some cases, entire Separatist congregations accepted Baptist beliefs as a body.[47]

As revivalism spread through the Presbyterian churches, the old disputes between the subscription and anti-subscription parties were recast into conflict between the anti-revival "Old Side" and pro-revival "New Side", respectively. At issue was the place of revivalism in American Presbyterianism, specifically the "relation between doctrinal orthodoxy and experimental knowledge of Christ."[38] The New Side, led by Gilbert Tennent and Jonathan Dickinson, believed that strict adherence to orthodoxy was meaningless if one lacked a personal religious experience, a sentiment expressed in Tennent's 1739 sermon "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry". Whitefield's tour had helped the revival party grow and only worsened the Old Side–New Side Controversy. When the Synod of Philadelphia met in May 1741, the Old Side expelled the New Side, which then reorganized itself into the Synod of New York.[48]

**Aftermath**

Historian John Howard Smith noted that the Great Awakening made sectarianism an essential characteristic of American Christianity.[49] While the Awakening divided many Protestant churches between Old and New Lights, it also unleashed a strong impulse towards interdenominational unity among the various Protestant denominations. Evangelicals considered the new birth to be "a bond of fellowship that transcended disagreements on fine points of doctrine and polity", allowing Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and others to cooperate across denominational lines.[50]

While divisions between Old and New Lights remained, New Lights became less radical over time and evangelicalism became more mainstream.[51][52] By 1758, the Old Side–New Side split in the Presbyterian Church had been healed and the two factions reunited. In part, this was due to the growth of the New Side and the numerical decline of the Old Side. In 1741, the pro-revival party had around 22 ministers, but this number had increased to 73 by 1758.[53] While the fervor of the Awakening would fade, the acceptance of revivalism and insistence on personal conversion would remain recurring features in 18th and 19th-century Presbyterianism.[54]

The Great Awakening inspired the creation of evangelical educational institutions. In 1746, New Side Presbyterians founded what would become Princeton University.[53] In 1754, the efforts of Eleazar Wheelock led to what would become Dartmouth College, originally established to train Native American boys for missionary work among their own people.[55] While initially resistant, well-established Yale University came to embrace the revivalism and played a leading role in American evangelicalism for the next century.[56]

**Revival theology**

The Great Awakening was not the first time that Protestant churches had experienced revival; however, it was the first time a common evangelical identity had emerged based on a fairly uniform understanding of salvation, preaching the gospel and conversion.[57] Revival theology focused on the way of salvation, the stages by which a person receives Christian faith and then expresses that faith in the way they live.[58]

The major figures of the Great Awakening, such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Dickinson and Samuel Davies, were moderate evangelicals who preached a pietistic form of Calvinism heavily influenced by the Puritan tradition, which held that religion was not only an intellectual exercise but also had to be felt and experienced in the heart.[59] This moderate revival theology consisted of a three stage process. The first stage was conviction of sin, which was spiritual preparation for faith by God's law and the means of grace. The second stage was conversion, in which a person experienced spiritual illumination, repentance and faith. The third stage was consolation, which was searching and receiving assurance of salvation. This process generally took place over an extended **time.[60]**

**Conviction of sin**

Conviction of sin was the stage that prepared someone to receive salvation, and this stage often lasted weeks or months.[61] When under conviction, nonbelievers realized they were guilty of sin and under divine condemnation and subsequently faced feelings of sorrow and anguish.[62] When revivalists preached, they emphasized God's moral law to highlight the holiness of God and to spark conviction in the unconverted.[63] Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is an example of such preaching.[citation needed]

As Calvinists, revivalists also preached the doctrines of original sin and unconditional election. Due to the fall of man, humans are naturally inclined to rebel against God and unable to initiate or merit salvation, according to the doctrine of original sin. Unconditional election relates to the doctrine of predestination—that before the creation of the world God determined who would be saved (the elect) on the basis of his own choosing. The preaching of these doctrines resulted in the convicted feeling both guilty and totally helpless, since God was in complete control over whether they would be saved or not.[64]

Revivalists counseled those under conviction to apply the means of grace to their lives. These were spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, church attendance and personal moral improvement. While no human action could produce saving faith, revivalists taught that the means of grace might make conversion more likely.[65]

An issue that had to be addressed were the intense physical and emotional reactions to conviction experienced during the Awakening. Samuel Blair described such responses to his preaching in 1740, "Several would be overcome and fainting; others deeply sobbing, hardly able to contain, others crying in a most dolorous manner, many others more silently weeping. ... And sometimes the soul exercises of some, thought comparatively but very few, would so far affect their bodies, as to occasion some strange, unusual bodily motions."[66] Moderate evangelicals took a cautious approach to this issue, neither encouraging or discouraging these responses, but they recognized that people might express their conviction in different ways.[61]

**Conversion**

The conviction stage lasted so long because potential converts were waiting to find evidence of regeneration within their lives. The revivalists believed regeneration or the new birth was not simply an outward profession of faith or conformity to Christianity. They believed it was an instantaneous, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit providing someone with "a new awareness of the beauty of Christ, new desires to love God, and a firm commitment to follow God's holy law."[61] The reality of regeneration was discerned through self-examination, and while it occurred instantaneously, a convert might only gradually realize it had occurred.[67]

Regeneration was always accompanied by saving faith, repentance and love for God—all aspects of the conversion experience, which typically lasted several days or weeks under the guidance of a trained pastor.[68] True conversion began when the mind opened to a new awareness and love of the gospel message. Following this illumination, converts placed their faith in Christ, depending on him alone for salvation. At the same time, a hatred of sin and a commitment to eliminate it from the heart would take hold, setting the foundation for a life of repentance or turning away from sin. Revivalists distinguished true conversion (which was motivated by love of God and hatred of sin) from false conversion (which was motivated by fear of hell).[69]

**Consolation**

True conversion meant that a person was among the elect, but even a person with saving faith might doubt his election and salvation. Revivalists taught that assurance of salvation was the product of Christian maturity and sanctification.[70] Converts were encouraged to seek assurance through self-examination of their own spiritual progress. The treatise Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards was written to help converts examine themselves for the presence of genuine "religious affections" or spiritual desires, such as selfless love of God, certitude in the divine inspiration of the gospel, and other Christian virtues.[71]

It was not enough, however, to simply reflect on past experiences. Revivalists taught that assurance could only be gained through actively seeking to grow in grace and holiness through moritification of sin and utilizing the means of grace. In Religious Affections, the last sign addressed by Edwards was "Christian practice", and it was this sign to which he gave the most space in his treatise. The search for assurance required conscious effort on the part of a convert and took months or even years to achieve.[72]

**Impact on individuals**

The new style sermons and the way in which people practiced their faith breathed new life into religion in America. Participants became passionately and emotionally involved in their religion, rather than passively listening to intellectual discourse in a detached manner. Ministers who used this new style of preaching were generally called "new lights", while the preachers who remained unemotional were referred to as "old lights". People affected by the revival began to study the Bible at home. This effectively decentralized the means of informing the public on religious matters and was akin to the individualistic trends present in Europe during the Protestant Reformation.

**Women**

The Awakening played a major role in the lives of women, though they were rarely allowed to preach or take leadership roles.[73] A deep sense of religious enthusiasm encouraged women, especially to analyze their feelings, share them with other women, and write about them. They became more independent in their decisions, as in the choice of a husband.[74] This introspection led many women to keep diaries or write memoirs. The autobiography of Hannah Heaton (1721–94), a farm wife of North Haven, Connecticut, tells of her experiences in the Great Awakening, her encounters with Satan, her intellectual and spiritual development, and daily life on the farm.[75]

Phillis Wheatley was the first published black female poet, and she was converted to Christianity as a child after she was brought to America. Her beliefs were overt in her works; she describes the journey of being taken from a Pagan land to be exposed to Christianity in the colonies in a poem entitled "On Being Brought from Africa to America."[76] Wheatley became so influenced by the revivals and especially George Whitefield that she dedicated a poem to him after his death in which she referred to him as an "Impartial Saviour".[77] Sarah Osborn adds another layer to the role of women during the Awakening. She was a Rhode Island schoolteacher, and her writings offer a fascinating glimpse into the spiritual and cultural upheaval of the time period, including a 1743 memoir, various diaries and letters, and her anonymously published The Nature, Certainty and Evidence of True Christianity (1753).[78]

**African Americans**

The First Great Awakening led to changes in Americans' understanding of God, themselves, the world around them, and religion. In the southern Tidewater and Low Country, northern Baptist and Methodist preachers converted both white and black people. Some were enslaved at their time of conversion while others were free. Caucasians began to welcome dark-skinned individuals into their churches, taking their religious experiences seriously, while also admitting them into active roles in congregations as exhorters, deacons, and even preachers, although the last was a rarity.[79]

The message of spiritual equality appealed to many slaves, and, as African religious traditions continued to decline in North America, black people accepted Christianity in large numbers for the first time.[80]

Evangelical leaders in the southern colonies had to deal with the issue of slavery much more frequently than those in the North. Still, many leaders of the revivals proclaimed that slaveholders should educate their slaves so that they could become literate and be able to read and study the Bible. Many Africans were finally provided with some sort of education.[81]

George Whitefield's sermons reiterated an egalitarian message, but only translated into a spiritual equality for Africans in the colonies who mostly remained enslaved. Whitefield was known to criticize slaveholders who treated their slaves cruelly and those who did not educate them, but he had no intention to abolish slavery. He lobbied to have slavery reinstated in Georgia and proceeded to become a slave holder himself.[82] Whitefield shared a common belief held among evangelicals that, after conversion, slaves would be granted true equality in Heaven. Despite his stance on slavery, Whitefield became influential to many Africans.[83]

Samuel Davies was a Presbyterian minister who later became the fourth president of Princeton University.[84] He was noted for preaching to African slaves who converted to Christianity in unusually large numbers, and is credited with the first sustained proselytization of slaves in Virginia.[85] Davies wrote a letter in 1757 in which he refers to the religious zeal of an enslaved man whom he had encountered during his journey. "I am a poor slave, brought into a strange country, where I never expect to enjoy my liberty. While I lived in my own country, I knew nothing of that Jesus I have heard you speak so much about. I lived quite careless what will become of me when I die; but I now see such a life will never do, and I come to you, Sir, that you may tell me some good things, concerning Jesus Christ, and my Duty to GOD, for I am resolved not to live any more as I have done."[86]

Davies became accustomed to hearing such excitement from many blacks who were exposed to the revivals. He believed that blacks could attain knowledge equal to whites if given an adequate education, and he promoted the importance for slaveholders to permit their slaves to become literate so that they could become more familiar with the instructions of the Bible.[87]

The emotional worship of the revivals appealed to many Africans, and African leaders started to emerge from the revivals soon after they converted in substantial numbers. These figures paved the way for the establishment of the first black congregations and churches in the American colonies.[88] Before the American Revolution, the first black Baptist churches were founded in the South in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia; two black Baptist churches were founded in Pete rsburg, Virginia.[89]