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The Great Awakening ▶

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Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Joe Escobar - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 7:47 PM

This thread is for continuing this week's discussion on the The Great Awakening, but now with new evidence (video and website now visible on the forum materials webpage, linked above) and with new questions.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

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The Great Awakening: Unifying or Dividing?

by Kenzie Slocum - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 10:45 AM

The historians in the extra video and website seem to hold the view that the Great Awakening did greatly impact the Revolutionary War. Under the section entitled “Religious Uniformity” on the extra website, the following is stated: “Unlike England, which after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had become spiritually stagnant under the Church of England, the colonists adhered to no single denomination.” The Great Awakening occurred in England as well, so how could these authors claim that England was spiritually stagnant?

Although this quote is one of many valid points explaining how the the Awakening motivated the colonists to break away from England, I also find, on page 142 of Liberty, Equality, Power, that “the revivals created new cosmopolitan links with Britain and between colonies.” This would indicate that the Awakening helped unite the colonists and the British together, especially with their common ground of spiritual revival. Also, in the section entitled, “The Great Awakening” in our textbooks, it is clearly stated that this religious revival affected England, Scotland, and Ulster as well as New England and other colonies. George Whitefield and John Wesley, two of the most influential revivalists, began their meetings in England before later holding these revivalist meetings in the colonies.

It seems odd to me that the Awakening would possibly promote the incredibly dividing Revolution, or as stated at the 6:27 mark in the video clip we were given, “Religion can be seen as a kind of backdrop or pre-cause of the American Revolution,” when essentially the same revivalist movement took place in England. How could England and the colonies come to such differing conclusions and views during the War, if the Great Awakening, which occurred in both, played such a vital part in the colonists’ engagement in the Revolutionary War? Instead of joining the English and the colonists with a religious bond, shouldn’t these revivals have been dividing the two from the start if the Great Awakening caused such a major impact on the Revolution?

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Religious Aspects

by Kyle Schneider - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 7:43 PM

The First Great Awakening Video in my opinion was obviously more focused on the religion aspects of the Great Awakening as well as certain individuals including Jonathan Edwards a preacher, revivalist, philosopher, and George Whitfield a founder of Methodism and possibly the most famous religious figure of the 18th century. The historians from the video I think support Patricia J. Bonomi from the handout “Was the Great Awakening a Key to the American Revolution”. For example she explains in

the handout, "In exhorting their followers to make personal decisions for God, and then to act on those decisions regardless of their effect on the larger society, the revivalists gave sanction to a new dynamic in human relationships." (pg.5)

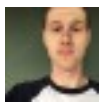
On page 131 of our text book the very first paragraph of "The Great Awakening" in the first sentence states that "...an immense religious revival swept across the Protestant world." (Liberty, Equality, Power pg.131) So I would say that the historians of our book are taking the influence of religion of the Great Awakening.

All the experts seem to be presenting their historical interpretations truthfully, although I can see that some of them are very biased and can't wait to talk about how they think history was written.

Murrin, John M. "Chapter 4 The Great Awakening." *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2015. 131.

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The Great Awakening Video

by Jacob Parris - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 8:43 PM

In the video about The Great Awakening, many professors suggest that the social aspects of the revival were the back drop to the Revolution. I would argue that this video agrees with Bonomi more based on what Bonomi says in her article. At the end of page three, Bonomi says, "**The Great Awakening created conditions uniquely favorable to social and political, as well as religious, reform by piercing the facade of civility and deference that governed provincial life to usher in a new age of contentiousness. By promoting church separations and urging their follower's to make choices that had political as well as religious implications, the Awakeners wrought permanent changes in public practices and attitudes.**" This is exactly what the professors in the video were talking about, especially in the last sentence of the video. The idea of individuality is what sparked the separation from Britain.

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Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Jeremy Goodwin - Friday, October 21, 2016, 10:39 PM

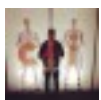
The historians from the video seem to support the yes side. At (6:19) in the video. A man who's name was not mentioned specifically claimed, "And so people speak up, they get energized, they participate, they overthrow administrators they don't like. And in that deeper more cultural or social way, religion can be seen as a kind of back drop or precause of the American Revolution."

The historians from the textbook seem to support the no side. Although never really do the authors mention the idea that the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution, they do give it some credit. According to the textbook, "Partly in reaction to the revivals, thousands of men became Freemasons, often instead of joining a church." (Pg 134). "The revivals shattered the unity of New England's Congregational Church." (Pg 134). "The revivals created new cosmopolitan links with Britain and between colonies." (Pg 135). "The Great Awakening created several new colleges." (Pg.135). "The revivals transformed American religious life." The authors of the textbook give awfully a lot of credit to the Great Awakening, but they never even mention the question of the debate. I think if they were on the yes side they would've shared their stance, or put tittle it in blue subheadings.

I think the historians from the textbook provide the most truthful interpretation because they share how the Great Awakening was key in other events other than the American Revolution. Obviously the Great Awakening is important to American history, as well as the original thinkers present in that time. There is no yes or no answer to the debate. You cant grasp an answer for the question, so to me to only share information and evidence that says, "Yes the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution." is absurd and not a truthful interpretation. Rather the interpretation sharing many other examples of how the Great Awakening was key in other events as aforementioned is more truthful.

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Website discussion

by Jeremy Goodwin - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 9:11 AM

The historians from the website seem to support the yes side. According to the webpage, " The chain of authority no longer ran from God to ruler to people, but from God to people to ruler. The children of revivalism later echoed this radicalism and popular self-righteousness in the American Revolution, when self-assertion turned against the tyrannical ways of George III. It was not to any church that the signers of the Declaration of Independence appealed to, but directly to the "Supreme Judge of the World". It was through the revivalism of the first half of the Eighteenth Century that the colonists were finally able to step out from under the protectorate of the established Christian churches and assert religious control over their own nation's destiny." At the end of the article there is a "further reading" sub heading that suggests the reader to read, "God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution, by Thomas S. Kidd." That seems pretty bias towards the

yes side to make your readers read something about the yes side.

I am going to have to stick with the no side, however the yes side still makes a good case. The Great Awakening was a key to many other historical events but not to the American Revolution. For example, "The revivals created new cosmopolitan links Britain and the colonies." (Pg 135). That claim can be easily backed up and proven. You can't really prove an answer for the yes or no debate. I have heard good arguments from both sides. I believe the textbook shares the most truthful interpretation by not even mentioning the debate question, but rather only mentioning keys it did play. Which is important because the authors should not teach biased history, but rather true history. At the end of John Butlers argument when addressing revivals, he claims, "Their social and political effects were minimal and usually local, although they could traumatize communities in which they upset, if only temporarily, familiar patterns of worship and social behavior. But the congregations they occasionally produced usually blended into the traditional social system, and the revivals abated without shattering its structure. Thus, the revivals of religion in prerevolutionary America seldom became proto-revolutionary,, and they failed to change the timing, causes, or effects of the Revolution in any significant way." (Pg. 11). As I mentioned before there is not a for sure right or wrong answer, just good points like John makes. But for the purpose of this forum I stand with the no side. Can someone from the yes side persuade me?

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Plenty of Other Motivation

by Kenzie Slocum - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 1:01 PM

As you explained, our textbooks are not trying to deny the occurrence of the Great Awakening or its impact on any other part of history, so this view seems more reasonable, and likewise, a more historically truthful interpretation than some of the other views that have been presented to us.

Also, besides the fact that Liberty, Equality, Power is not trying to erase or diminish the Awakening from its historic level of importance, this textbook does a very comprehensive job of giving other reasons for why the colonists were drawn into the Revolutionary War. These reasons, which are explained and discussed in Chapter 5, are proof that the colonists did not need to rely on the events and effects of the Great Awakening to motivate them to engage in the Revolution. One of these reasons include the many taxes and acts established by England (explained throughout Chapter 5) that angered the colonists. Also, on page 182, we find that the Townshend crisis and the Wilkite movement caused colonists to worry that "a conspiracy existed to destroy ... colonial liberty." Page 202 reveals that the pamphlet, Common Sense, was instrumental in convincing some of the colonies to be loyal to the patriot cause.

One could still argue that the Great Awakening helped motivate the colonists to make this move, but our textbook authors' other reasons, all in themselves, clearly justify this important decision to engage in war.

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Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Quan Cheng - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 11:52 AM

The historians from video support the yes side of the "Was the Great Awakening a key to the American Revolution?" debate. Basically, the historian gave the opinion of significant influence about the Great Awakening. "You've got slave and free, black and white, educated and uneducated. You've got all these different kinds people standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the same crowd cheering in the same gospel that God is no respecter of persons that if you're going to be saved. You've got to come to Jesus the same way everybody else does. You know down on your knees with your hands open. You got nothing to bring accept your need of God forgiveness and mercy." (video 5:10) At the end of video, the historian said, "'People Speak up, they get energized. They participate, they overthrow ministers they don't like. And in that deeper more culture or social bay religion can be seen a kind of backdrop or pre cause of the American Revolution.'" (video 6:19)

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Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Quan Cheng - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 12:28 PM

The historians of our textbook seem to be taking regarding the influence of the Great Awakening on American Revolution on yes side. Not obvious, there are two sides I think that will show the position of our textbook. First, "This 'Great Awakening' shattered some denominational loyalties in the colonies and enabled the Methodist and the Baptists to surge ahead of all Protestant rival after 1780." (P131) Broke some denominational loyalties from settlers makes one of the reason that cause American Revolution. Second, "The movement peaked during the American Revolution and for a few decades after it." (p134) The textbook author mentioned the American Revolution at this part. That shows the significant influence of the Great Awakening to American Revolution.

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Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence



by Quan Cheng - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 12:58 PM

I agree with professor Jon Butler. What he said “Fourth, the link between the revivals and the American Revolution is virtually nonexistent. The relationship between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is weak everywhere except in Virginia, ” (P11) Yes, the connection between the Great Awakening and American Revolution was weak. We also can see from the time period. The great Awakening ended at 1760, American Revolution started at 1765. Professor Jon Butler also said, “ Their leadership was local and, at best, regional, and they helped reinforce—but were not the key to—the proliferation and expansion of still-regional Protestant denominations in the colonies.” (P11) The reason cause American Revolution would be the oppression from British, unfree trade and so on. The Great Awakening was not the ket point. “ Thus, the revivals of religion in prerevolutionary America seldom became proto-revolutionary,, and they failed to change the timing, causes, or effects of the Revolution in any significant way.” (P11)

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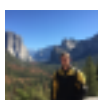
Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Eric Brackett - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 5:48 PM

After reading the additional article and watching the video, I still stand by my original thought , that Americas gravitation towards self governance was due to the English tendencies toward revolution. However, after watching the video I will admit that the role of religion can be argued to be a mitigating factor in the revolution, albeit a small one. I believe, if anything, that the role of religion only solidified the idea of individuality, and a greater sense of religious duty to ones community rather than that of a royal authority. As the author of the text (great -awakenings.com) states "The older groups that dominated the early colonies – the Puritans and the Anglicans – eventually began a drastic downward trend in popularity. Although they accounted for about 40% of American congregations as late as 1760, that number eventually dropped to under 2.5% by 1790" . This, I believe, shows a trend for the common man to not fall into line with his neighbor just because he happens to live in a certain area. The idea of individuality was springing forth, you no longer needed to be one of the herd to be a valued member of your society.

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Re: Continuing the discussion with new evidence

by Mitchell Olive - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 6:04 PM

After seeing the new material, I think that the great awakening had more of an impact than I previously thought. It seemed to have brought people together from different denominations. When talking about whitefield in the video, the historians were saying how he had thousands of people of different denominations coming from all over the place and how he did "over 18 thousand sermons on American soil from Maine to Georgia" one of the historians said that "people would come from all denominations to hear him." This impact that he alone seemed to have was profound. Another historian says that "And I think some of the religious associations that had come out of the Great Awakening was one of the first times that people in these desperate colonies had, sort of, been on the same page." Having all of these people together, slave and free, of all denominations, seemed to have brought the people together and really gave them a cohesive voice that they hadn't necessarily had before. Another historian says "And so people speak up, they get energized, they participate, they overthrow ministers they don't like, in that deeper, more cultural or social way, religion can be seen as a kind of backdrop or precause of the American revolution." The voice that the American people now had was impactful and made it so that they had more of an impact than their leaders, and, naturally, the people aren't going to want tyranny and rule from England. In the article, under the heading "Religious Uniformity", it is stated that "Eventually, this religious zeal turned to revolution and sentiments of self-governance. That the religious spirit of the colonists was a necessary component to the drive for independence is confirmed in the sentiments of those who lived during the period of fighting." It seems that the Great Awakening was about more than religion, because they were finally brought together by something and had an opportunity to voice their opinions and become a cohesive unit. It seems that it was a time that they were able to get their opinions out in a way that they hadn't before, and that they were finally powerful over any rulers or church because they were together in the same space and had the time to get their opinions together and their voices cohesive.

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From God to people to ruler

by Mitchell Olive - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 7:18 PM

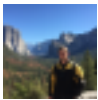
Something that I didn't realize about the Great Awakening was how the people were able to make their own deciphering of God's will instead of the monarchs or bishops doing it. I think this is a huge indicator of power transitioning from the rulers and from England, whatever power they had at the time, to the people. In the article, the historian states, in the section "Towards an American Identity" that "The chain of authority no longer ran from God to ruler to people, but from God to people to ruler."

The empowering of the people seems to be the notion that came out of the Great Awakening and carried forth into following decades and is what America is founded upon but seems to be losing today as people are wanting bigger government with movements like Bernie Sanders. It seems that this idea stated by the historian may

be the first big change to this mindset and it started with religion. It seems that the bringing together of people first started as breaking away from religious leaders and this mindset of liberty along with the togetherness that they had formed spurred them into the revolution. In the article, under the heading "Religious Uniformity", British spokesmen William Knox is quoted as saying "Every man being thus allowed to be his own pope, he becomes disposed to wish to become his own king." This clearly has religious connotations but this mindset seemed to carry forward and the people seemed to have a voice together because of how the movement brought crowds of thousands of people together.

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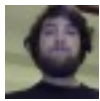
by Mitchell Olive - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 8:11 PM

It seems that the colonists break away from larger institutions was a general mindset that they had, being scared by the taxes of England and the ways that England was trying to impose themselves on the colonies, break away from large religion was an indicator of what was to come and how they were fed up with being taken advantage of, used, and coerced into a mindset of obedience. Talking of the Puritanical covenant theology, the historian in the section "Government as Contract" of the article states that "Under this theory, implicit in the declaration, disassociated individuals in the "state of nature" agree to live and be bound together under consensual government. With the frequency by which believers broke away from large churches to form splinter groups, the colonists must have been accustomed to separating themselves from larger institutions." It seems that the colonists grew fond of the idea of separating from the larger institutions. In the section "Towards an American Identity" of the article, it is stated that "Revivalism in the colonies did not form around a complex theology of religious freedom, but nevertheless the ideas it produced opposed the notion of a single truth or a single church. As preachers visited town after town, sects began to break off larger churches and a multitude of protestant denominations sprouted." It seems that this idea of opposing a single authority or a single church, as shown in the anti-catholic and anti-pope movements, was becoming a widespread way of thinking around this time. It is interesting to think that this splintering off from larger institutions into smaller ones was what unified people, but it seems that people were inspired and unified under the idea of opposing large institutions and they realized that their own conception of God didn't necessarily have to be the same, but they were united in the idea that they could follow whatever religion they wanted while growing to hate England together. In the section of the article "Towards an American Identity", it is stated that "The social effect of multitudes of new denominations was not, however, a fracturing of communities, but a unifying drive which helped to create a "national consciousness". This national consciousness seems, to me, to be the first break away from the idea that religion had to separate people since they had been in America. It seems to be a widespread change of view from churches separating people and instead

focusing on their own religious beliefs while being unified in their growing hatred of England and large institutions. This seems to be proven by how talks from people like Whitefield brought thousands, and at times tens of thousands of people of all different sects together to listen to what he had to say. After so much time of being separated by religion, the colonists began to see that there were bigger things to worry about, such as England, and they finally had the assemblies of tens of thousands of people of different denominations to come together in and to see that they didn't have to be separated anymore because of religion, at the first time when they were in crowds of thousands of people that didn't share their same denomination. This seems, to me, to be what the Great Awakening was, and this mindset continued throughout the 18th century.

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The Video's Hypothesis and Information are Basically the Same as Bonomi's
by Skye Lipson - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 11:47 PM

The historians in the provided video clearly supported the idea that the Great Awakening was indeed the “pre-cause to the american revolution.” The textbooks position regard to the event as important but I do not believe that it specified or made such claim as to say that it was in fact a pre-cause to the revolution or not. I do not think the textbook hypothesized in that manner at least that is what I got out of reading it, perhaps I missed the line if it did mention that.

Well I would say that the historians in the presented video do more talking than explaining the factual basis of where their talk comes from, they claim in the video that because it was the “first time that people in these disparate colonies had been on the same page”, and that the event spread “from Maine to Georgia”, that it was key in creating “the emerging ideal of American independence and American individualism.” I have to admit although this is a convincing argument just as Bonomi's, it is not new evidence, Bonomi basically said all of this in her essay in more flowery wording and with reference to lightning storms. This video is far from being new evidence rather it seems more like evidence of more historians coming to the same conclusion as Bonomi, who's argument, at least to me in my reading of the essays, was fairly dismantled by Jon Butler's, as I have so far written a few posts arguing.

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