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The Great Awakening

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The Great Awakening

by Joe Escobar - Friday, October 14, 2016, 8:54 PM

This thread is for discussions on the The Great Awakening topic.
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Re: The Great Awakening

by Eric Brackett - Sunday, October 16, 2016, 5:56 PM

John Butler is correct...mostly

While I personally feel that both authors take a bit too much liberty with their arguments, and neither have convinced me either way, I do believe that Butler's argument is the stronger of the two. As Butler states "Seldom has an "event" of such magnitude had such amorphous beginnings and endings" leading the reader to believe that the "Great Awakening" was not as widespread a movement as someone such as Bonomi would have you believe.. Backing up his arguments he states "The revivals also touched only certain segments of the population in the colonies where they occurred. The best example of the phenomenon is Pennsylvania. The revivals there had a sustained effect among English settlers only in Presbyterian churches where many of the laity and clergy also opposed them". Furthermore Butler goes on to argue that "revivalists and evangelicals continued to draw sharp distinctions between the rights of ministers and the duties of the laity", showing that outside of the church, the citizenry was very much of one mind set which may differ from that of the churches.

I personally would argue that while yes religion certainly played a role in the development of revolutionary tendencies in America, that the very notion of being English was what set things in motion. From the Danelaws to the signing of the Magna Carta to the trouble caused by Oliver Cromwell, England has always been a land of constant political upheaval. The only difference now is that those who would rise up no longer resided in the Monarchies back yard, but were months away and left to their own machinations. All it took was a large enough population to find those who would agree that something wasn't inherently correct with they way they were being governed.

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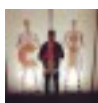
Well put

by Kyle Schneider - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 5:32 PM

Much of what you said resonated with how I felt. I as well leaned more to Butler's argument. Religion clearly played a role in the development of the revolution as you said. Religion and liberty seem to be intertwined/blended throughout the revolution and as these historians in their arguments need to be unbiased but also to translate the fine line of religion and liberty can be quite hard. I think the changes that happened with the traditional Europeans and their government made America a safe haven to them and their religious freedoms.

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No

by Jeremy Goodwin - Sunday, October 16, 2016, 9:51 PM

After reading both sides of the argument "whether or not if the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution." I have come to the same conclusion as John Butler, no. John makes a number of good points and refutes to his side. One that I found intriguing and would like to highlight is found on page 8, "Yet even if one were to argue that "the Great Awakening" persisted through most of the eighteenth century, it is obvious that revivals "swept" only some of the mainland colonies. They occurred in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia with some frequency at least at some points between 1740 and 1770. But New Hampshire, Maryland, and Georgia witnessed few revivals in the same years, and revivals were only occasionally important in New York, Delaware, North Carolina, and South Carolina." I would be persuaded to say that Yes indeed the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution if revivals really did "sweep" through the 18th century as historians on the opposing side would exaggerate.

Revivals did "sweep" through a lot of colonies. The term sweep is not accurate though. A more appropriate term would be "breezed" because a majority of revival attempts did just breeze through colonies leaving no impact. The correlation between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is strongly weak. According to John, "The relationship between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is weak everywhere except in Virginia, where the Baptist revivals indeed shattered the exclusive, century-old Anglican hold on organized religious activity and politics in the colony. But, their importance to the Revolution is weakened by the fact that so many members of Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution." (Pg. 11). Now if revivals everywhere had the same strong relationship between prerevolutionary political change and revivals like Virginia demonstrates, where baptists shatter the exclusive century-old Anglican hold on organized religious activity and politics in colonies, and did not have a majority of its Anglican aristocracy lead the revolution, then it would be 100% logical to say that yes indeed the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution.

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No: How Jon Butler's arguments damage Patricia U. Bonomi's hypothesis

by Skye Lipson - Monday, October 17, 2016, 3:59 AM

It is complicated, I liked the first author, Patricia U. Bonomi's writing style much more and felt that she was making good points, but then after reading the second author Jon Butler's essay I had a hard time sticking with the first because he seemed to poke holes in the support for her entire hypothesis. One point that John Butler makes is that "the revivals provided little focus for intercolonial unity", because they "appeared too erratically in too few colonies under too many different auspices to make such generalizations appropriate." Well I am am not sure what "too few colonies" means to Professor Butler but according to our book when "Whitefield

made his second trip to America," he brought his message through "Delaware", "Philadelphia" (the most populated city in Pennsylvania, and most populated in the colonies), "New Jersey", "New York city" (the most populated city in New York, and if I remember correctly the second largest among the colonies), "the Chesapeake colonies" (which suggests that he was in Virginia and passed through Maryland to get there), and "South Carolina" (which means that he would have had to travel through North Carolina, as the book did not specify marine travel). (Liberty Equality Power, Pg 133) If I am not mistaken this information suggests that "too few colonies" is actually the number eight, and that is only taking into account the most popular person in the movement. Besides that one problem I felt may have been wrong with Professor Butler's point, I think the rest of what he said concerning the scattered nature of the movement is good evidence supporting his argument against Professor Bonomi's essay. You could say that the sentiment against the orthodox anglicans was a key factor in starting the Revolutionary war, and perhaps you would be right, but another point made by Professor Butler is that "Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution" which implies that that can not be the primary cause for the conflict otherwise the movement would lack the cohesion needed for "Anglican aristocracy" and the New revivalist sects to work together to defeat the British empire's control of the colonies, which they ultimately did. Not only that but Professor Butler also cared to mention that even in Connecticut, a colony that "most historians describe ... as being thoroughly absorbed by the revivals", there was as Butler put it "extraordinary Anglican growth" as well. I think the relevance of that point is not to say that Connecticut was unaffected by the revival, but rather to express how some historians can phrase things in ways that make them seem more impressive or relevant than they actually might have been. Another strong point I would say Professor Butler provides in his essay is that "the expansion of the leading evangelical denominations, Presbyterians and Baptists, can be traced to many causes, not just revivalism or "the Great Awakening." The growth of the colonial population from fewer than three hundred thousand in 1700 to over two million in 1770 made the expansion of even the most modestly active denominations highly likely".

Overall given the points made by Professor Butler I feel that I feel swayed in thinking that perhaps the "great awakening" was not a likely addition to the reasons for the American Revolutionary War.

Citations

Jon Butler, from "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," Journal of American History (September 1982)

Liberty, Equality, Power -- our textbook, which given the condition that everyone in the class has the source at hand I think falls into the category of common knowledge as far as citations go.

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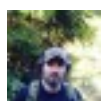
No Connection: Revivalists-Revolution

by Kenzie Slocum - Monday, October 17, 2016, 9:22 AM

Both Patricia U. Bonomi and Jon Butler presented convincing and equally fascinating points on the subject of whether the Great Awakening had any effect on the colonists in regards to the Revolutionary War. However, I am, at this point, more inclined to agree with the conclusion that this great spiritual revival did not have very much, if any, impact on the War. One of the topics that historian Jon Butler addressed on page ten of the reading is, "Nor is it possible to demonstrate that specific congregations and denominations associated with the revivals originated anti-British protest that became uniquely important to the Revolution." If the Great Awakening did have a profound and major effect on the Revolutionary War, why would no connections be made from the new churches and religious gatherings that were established to important organizations supporting the war? Why would the revivalists not gather together to support the Revolutionary War? Perhaps this absence is an indication that there was not much of a connection between the two. Our textbooks mention how revivalists founded new colleges (p.142), but makes no mention of revivalists banding together in such a way to support the war. If the only impact that carried over was in regards to individuals, which could still be possible, I am not so inclined to deem this as a "major" impact.

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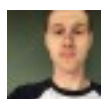
Re: No Connection: Revivalists-Revolution

by Eric Brackett - Tuesday, October 18, 2016, 5:47 PM

I came to the same conclusion. While religion certainly played its part in the founding of our moral compass as a state, I do not believe it had that great of an impact on or eventual gravitation to self governance.

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Re: No Connection: Revivalists-Revolution

by Jacob Parris - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 9:59 PM

I agree with you Eric, as we have seen in many videos and the textbook, there was definitely as larger sense of community in the colonies. As time progressed into the Great Awakening, people started to form a sense of individuality.

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The Great Awakening and its Relevance

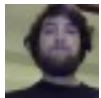
by Brian Schireman - Monday, October 17, 2016, 4:18 PM

I believe Patricia Bonomi is the one that I most agree with because I agree with her theory that the Great Awakening was a key to the American Revolution in the way that it fostered challenge and opposition to the system of established authority and promoted people acting on individual conscience . An example I would use is "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."

Something from the textbook that goes along with this and I think backs it up is this quote on pae 134 of chapter 4 where it says, "The revivals shattered the unity of New Englands Congregational Church. Evangelicals seceded from dozens of congregations to form their own "Seperate" churches."

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Bonomi's Essay Is Perhaps a Bit Misleading

by Skye Lipson - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 2:25 PM

I see nothing wrong with anything you stated but the conclusion you came to with the given facts. As you quoted "The revivals shattered the unity of New England's Congregational Church" (Our Book, Pg 134) which only one religious group splitting into sects. I do not believe that just because one or a few groups creates for themselves an atmosphere of social upheaval that suddenly implies that this is the condition that can be associated with the rest of that times society.

Patricia Bonomi makes several great points toward her argument, but when compared to Jon Butler's they seem less likely to be the largest or even a relevant inspiration for the American Revolution.

Patricia Bonomi does not lie at any point in her essay (or at least I don't think she does) and her writing style is most definitely persuasive (at least to me), but I also feel that her essay is misleading. She starts by generalizing the entire historical event in her first page constantly building emotional momentum for her reader as she tries to make a series of separate events seem a single grand one. She then moves on from there to her storm metaphors: "And as the electricity of a Tennent crackled, and the thunder of a Whitefield rolled, a storm broke..."; and after she has displayed with emotion and little reason that the topic she is discussing is just *that* important, she begins to describe the events of only a couple religious groups and how their division inspires the American revolution. She makes several vague points that sound quite convincing when taken out of the context that the movement was in only part of the whole population. For instance she writes that With the people, "[reformists] launched a mass movement that made bold assaults on established forms of **church government**, and traditional assumptions about deference and social order.", she also made statements like so: "[T]he revivalists claimed the **liberty 'to question and judge all, and refuse[d] subjection to every proper Judicature.'**" Notice in the first quote that it applied to church

government and even more specifically only the church government's in areas where the micro-movements took place and only in those of a couple of religious groups. In the second quote the liberty to question and judge all and refusing subjection to proper Judicatures does ring loudly of the revolution, but the author included the quote for that exact reason; it does relate to the revolution but rather in a more coincidental way, unless you are to believe that these sentiments were to have permeated the extreme opposition of these revivalist groups who the quote was applying to, because in Butler's essay and as I quoted in my first post, "Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution" (Butler), and I am pretty sure that they are not ones to take example by extremist religious groups with contrary views to theirs. I guess overall my point is that Bonomi makes it seem as if she is talking about a larger portion of the American population when really she is speaking of a few groups whose micro-movements caused profound impacts on their small communities in some areas. As I see it, Jon Butler's essay is less of an impassioned essay against the movement and rather more of a measurement device though with Butler provides information on how large the groups spoken of in the first essay actually were and how widely Bonomi's *thunder* storm actually reached.

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I agree with Joh Butler

by Kyle Schneider - Monday, October 17, 2016, 5:41 PM

I agree with historian Jon Butlers position on "The Great Awakening" solely based when he comments, "Historians should abandon the term "the Great Awakening" because it distorts the character of eighteenth-century American religious life and misinterprets its relationship to pre-revolutionary American society and politics"(pg. 10). In the name itself "The Great Awakening" does imply some religious praise or upbringing of religion to the colonies. Rather he states that the revival events only occurred in half the colonies and most significantly he states the revivals and the American Revolution were virtually nonexistent.

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Religious Revival

by Jacob Parris - Monday, October 17, 2016, 7:41 PM

I tend to agree with Jon Butler on this topic. I say this because he talks about how "the relationship between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is weak everywhere except in Virginia" (Butler pg11). His findings point to a time where the unrest was especially high in the Virginia colony. I think that when you have a lot of people all becoming more aware of a new religious concept, which was something different than what the colonists were used to, assuming that they actually bought

into what was being taught; I think this what would cause a people to want to rebel and become more independent from the things that they were tied down to beforehand.

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Re: The Great Awakening

by Quan Cheng - Monday, October 17, 2016, 8:28 PM

I read both professor Patricia U. Bonomi and professor Jon Butler's idea, I agree with professor Patricia U. Bonomi more. Yes, there was The Great Awakening in America. Not only what he said, but also on our Book Liberty, Equality, Power shows that they do have The Great Awakening. "Between the mid-1730s and the early 1740s, an immense religious revival swept across the Protestant world." (P131)

One of the reason for professor Jon Butler claim that The Great Awakening was actually not true because he think " 'The Great Awakening' also is difficult to date, Seldom has an 'event' of such magnitude had such amorphous beginnings and endings." (P7, The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction) I don't think that's a good reason.

For example, the actual date of Marco Polo Bridge Incident was start at July 7th 1937. As the war Japan started to aggress China during the Second World War, it was the exact date. I want to say before that date, there were many small wars happened.

There were no actual date, but the events were true. The same as The Great Awakening.

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Re: The Great Awakening

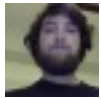
by Kenzie Slocum - Tuesday, October 18, 2016, 10:21 AM

I agree with you on the fact that there was a Great Awakening in America since, as you said, just because an event or section of history is difficult to date does not mean that the event did not occur. Even the fact that we have a 19 paragraph chapter entitled "The Great Awakening" in our textbook, Liberty, Equality, Power, is a great amount of proof that such an event really occurred in our history and is important enough to study. Even though this revival did not affect every state equally as Jon Butler explains on page 8 of our forum reading and our textbooks refer to on page 138, the event still occurred, just as in your example of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Also, although I do not think that the Great Awakening had a major impact on the Revolutionary War, this event did have an impact of the

establishment of new colleges such as the College of New Jersey and Queens College (p. 142-143 of Liberty, Equality, Power) and certainly impacted the amount of people joining different denominations (p. 143 under "The Denominational Realignment" in Liberty, Equality, Power). Even without a significant connection to the War, I believe the Great Awakening has impacted our history in other ways.

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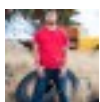
The Awakening Happened, but was it really relevant to the American Revolution

by Skye Lipson - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 2:50 PM

As Bonomi put it, "[there is] no reason to doubt that the tremendous stir of the great awakening altered the social and political equilibrium of colonial life." Now words like tremendous and great are to some extent relative and they make an essays point seem stronger while not actually having a substantive reason for the point being anymore accurate or effective. This event had as according to Bonomi "unsettled the lives of more Americans and disrupted more institutions than any other single event in colonial experience to that time". Well there a couple problem with this display of the events size in that, the event was arguably a collection of smaller events each considerably smaller than large events that had happened previously, and even if it was the biggest event up to that point that does not mean that it was big necessarily, it could also be suggesting that everything before was small (which I think may be very much a matter of historical opinion rather than absolute fact). Even if the event was small though or a collection of smaller events forming one large event that is not to say that it didn't exist. For a moment Butler does seem to question its validity as a real event (which I disagree with him on) but the argument we are supposed to be having is not whether or not the event was real (and it is in our text book so lets just say it is), but rather did this event lead to or inspire in some large way the American Revolution. I say it didn't because as Butler states these small events, "appeared too erratically in too few colonies" and they "provid[ed] little focus for intercolonial unity". And maybe I am just stuck on this point but Jon Butler mentioned as well that "Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution", which suggests that factors beyond this one collection of small religious branchings in isolated communities across the colonies, probably influenced the American Revolution a lot more.

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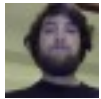
Religion shaping the world.

by Cameron McCord - Monday, October 17, 2016, 8:56 PM

According to Jon Butler religion did not shape or change the revolution in any way, and I would have to disagree with his thoughts. Religion has been a huge part in shaping this country ever since the first inhabitants. No matter how little the impact, religion will always have some type of affect. One big piece of evidence to prove Butler wrong is if we look at the teachings of George whitefield we will see that when George traveled to America he put on religious revivals known as "The Great Awakening". If that doesn't prove Jon wrong I don't know what does, because it says right there how religion was The Great Awakening.

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I Agree With You, now let me mold this conversation a little bit

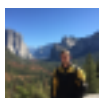
by Skye Lipson - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 3:06 PM

I agree with you in that Jon perhaps too harshly vetos the possibility of the event having any influence at all on the revolution. Obviously the people who took part in the revolution who had undergone this awakening would have seen the revolution through this lens. Therefore yes the revolution on a more individual level for some individuals may have been fueled by religious inspiration from this movement. On the more grand scale of things though, was the cause for rebellion against one of the most powerful empires in the world based on this one part of the American population's individual beliefs developed through the Awakening, or was it due to a more common ideal shared in all parts of American society?

Personally I choose the second. Although the Awakening includes undertones of American ideals I do not believe that those ideals were initially generated by the Awakening, but rather that the awakening was merely a small portion of the population testing them out, but also not on a level likely to influence the whole on a revolutionary scale. I think that these American ideals were grown more by the separation of the Americans from the mother nation and the "De Facto federalism" (in class powerpoint) that took place among the colonies, leading Americans to believe that consent of government was their "right".

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Jon Butler

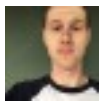
by Mitchell Olive - Monday, October 17, 2016, 11:50 PM

I think that this is an argument where you can argue either side and a good one for debate. I think Jon Butler made some good points. One of those points, on the last page of his essay that we were given, states that "The relationship between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is weak everywhere except in Virginia, where the Baptist revivals indeed shattered the exclusive, century-old Anglican hold on organized religious activity and politics in the colony. But, their

importance to the Revolution is weakened by the fact that so many members of Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution." I think this points out how there were a lot of different places people came from to have an impact on the Revolution and how it wasn't as black and white as it sometimes seems even though it is easy to make it out that way. I think that the wars around this time created tension and it is possible that this great awakening was a way to have people be able to get their opinions out there about the different things that were going on, but I think that there were already a lot of people around each other to be able to get their opinions unified and clarified.

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Re: Jon Butler

by Jacob Parris - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 10:51 PM

I like what you said about there being a lot of factors that led to the revolution. In Jon Butler's article, at the end of page 8, and the beginning of page 9, he talks about how a lot of the denomination building was linked to the revivals in New England. This idea of "separatism" is what led to the creation of the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations, which spread only in a small amount throughout the colonial geography. What I am trying to say, is that Butler provides very clear evidence again at the bottom of page 9/top of 10 where he says, "The eighteenth-century colonial wars are more appropriate candidates for the honor. They raised significant legislative opposition to the crown in many colonies and cost many colonists their lives, especially in the last and most "successful" contest, the French and Indian War".

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Re: The Great Awakening

by Quan Cheng - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 9:25 PM

I don't agree with Patricia U. Bonomi at the point " True, the floodtide of evangelical fervor soon subsided, but nothing could quite restore the old cultural landscape. The unitary ideal of the seventeenth century continued to be eroded in the post-Awakening years by further church separations." (P6) I don't think that the influence will still effect the American Revolution. Like what Jon butler said, "Historians also exaggerate the cohesion of leadership in the revivals. They have accomplished this, in part, by overstressing the importance of Whitefield and Edwards." (p8) This point of view have had the most influence on my decision.

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