



The great radical awakening

by [Carmen DeLaCruz](#) - Wednesday, October 17, 2018, 9:25 PM

I agree with Patricia J. Bonomi that the Great awakening was key to the American revolution. While the expression of religion seemed radical, the Great awakening provided essential change for the future. People's attitude changed about religion and the government. The Great Awakening serves as an American revolution in its own right as it allowed people to renew their religious devotion and individual piety.

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Re: The great radical awakening

by [Ian Epperson](#) - Thursday, October 18, 2018, 8:40 PM

I can agree that the great awakening enriched some of the settlers with a sense of personal and religious freedom that had not been experienced as of yet in their lives. In the spirit of discussion however, I humbly disagree that it was the sole cause of the revolutionary war. On the last page of the article, Butler explains something important, "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." What I get from that is in regards to the revolutionary war, even at the great awakening's most influential location in Virginia, the old institutions united against monarchy rule when the time came for revolution. Both ideologies seemed to be in agreement about the revolution despite their differences, rendering the correlation of great awakenings in America's soul obsolete.

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Religious Freedom in Virginia & the Roots of a National Identity

by [Christine Macfarlane](#) - Thursday, October 18, 2018, 11:57 PM

Respectfully, I disagree with this analysis of Virginia's revival and the perceived lack of causal effect it had on the American Revolution. Virginia was at the heart of the Revolution with key figures such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington both from the state. In the referenced article Butler states that the relationship between the baptist revival and the Revolution is "weak everywhere except in Virginia," attesting to the argument that one did precipitate the other. (Was the Great Awakening a Key to the American Revolution?)

One result of this so-called Great Awakening was greater political interest in religious freedoms in Virginia and beyond. Galvanized by decades of religious persecution in the colony, James Madison and Patrick Henry wrote into Virginia law the right to freedom of religion. Subsequently, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Virginia Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom, ensuring "full religious freedom and no state support for religion" for the people of Virginia. (https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Great_Awakening_in_Virginia_The#start_entry) Jefferson's push for religious freedom was opposed by powerful members of the Church of England but it was too late. The early seeds of American identity had already taken root, spurred by the growing desire to pull away from the Anglican trappings elucidated during the Great Awakening.

The endurance of Jefferson's and Madison's revolutionary philosophy of American freedom from religious tyranny in the sociopolitical identities of Americans for many generations to come speaks for itself. It absolutely inspired the passion of American revolutionaries and today, well over 200 years later, it remains an institution not only of American democracy, but also our national identity.

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Re: Religious Freedom in Virginia & the Roots of a National Identity

by [Ian Epperson](#) - Friday, October 19, 2018, 8:28 PM

In some ways I believe you are correct, but using an example from our book, events during the French and Indian War could have just as much spurred on a revolt against Britain as religious free thought in mainly Virginia. Butler did say these words, (to reiterate) that even in Virginia places Anglican churches also joined the revolution. There are plenty examples as well of protest and revolt against the harsh British forces during the French and Indian war. One of these examples was the Knowles riots of 1765 (pg.144), where British sailors seized unwilling recruits in Boston and were met with protest and rioting due to unfair liberties taken by English sailors in Boston, where hostages were even taken. Another example of a need for autonomy comes with America's infantry troops (including Washington). During the war "Loudoun ordered New England troops to serve directly under British officers and to accept the harsh discipline of the British army, an arrangement that, New Englanders insisted, violated their enlistment terms. They refused to cooperate." (pg.154). The British ended up having to bend to their American counterparts and institute fair treatment and almost equal rank. It's true that American citizens, on a whole, were not prepared to completely sever ties to England like what happened with Benjamin's Albany act to institute an early form of presidency, but to say religious freedom is the main cause for independence would negate earlier examples of when abuse. In my opinion this was the prevailing sentiment leading up to the revolutionary war.

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Re: Religious Freedom in Virginia & the Roots of a National Identity

by [Christine Macfarlane](#) - Sunday, October 21, 2018, 9:46 PM

On the contrary, I don't see "religious free thought" as the focal legacy of the Great Awakening. The legacy of the revivals was the new sense of unity it created amongst what had once been extremely segregated religious communities. The Great Awakening was a time when these diverse communities (as diverse ethnically, culturally, geographically, and socioeconomically as they were spiritually) converged to hear revival sermons (Liberty, Equality, Power, p. 134), and ultimately began to acknowledge that some of their beliefs and goals were not entirely dissimilar. I don't think the renewed focus on individual religious experience during the Great Awakening was what led to the American Revolution; rather the unification of different ethnicities, genders, and classes for the first time in colonial history (Liberty, Equality, Power, p. 133), was the main precipitous factor. The Great Awakening brought these diverse populations together for the purpose of worship, but ultimately what it did was allow these groups to realize a shared cause of another nature-- independence from colonial oppression-- as well as a newly forming cultural identity as American citizens, rather than European colonials.

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