

Lecture IV - **Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Mother Ann**

Introduction: the Great Awakening had a big if disputed effect on American religion. Starting before the Revolutionary war, it affected all Protestant denominations in the days when Catholics were few and far between. It occurred between 1735 and 1745 involving evangelical preaching, often open air, huge crowds, emotional responses, and the sermons were mainly about human depravity and the subsequent wrath of God. Inhabitants of New England got the hell scared out of them. Part of the requirement to be fully saved was the need to experience 'new birth' or as we later called it 'be born again'. Personal relationship with Christ was also fundamental. Intense emotional reactions to this were seen including bursting into tears, fainting, convulsions, visions, and trances. The GrAw established revivalism as a principal characteristic in American religions life. It was to an extent heart over head and heat over light. It has even affected secular life. A few years back William Sergeant wrote *Battle for the Mind* about the techniques of revivalism and persuasive techniques such as police interrogations, communist cell groups, and it can be applied to sales methods too. The film 'Elmer Gantry', which is set in the early 20th century, picks up a lot of themes of this sort of revivalism and has people barking like dogs, sliding into home plate [baseball] for Jesus, and dancing uncontrollably. It gave church pot luck suppers a new dimension. But of course they didn't have pot then. It also started to separate America off from Europe. The Great Awakening appearing was seen by Edwards to be the start of a new world order. The Reformation would come to a completeness it did not have in England, and there was a celebration of the 'almost miraculous taking of *Cape-Breton* in 1745 that helped dry up one of the main sources of the wealth of the chief papist nation, France.

Jonathan Edwards [1703-58] was considered by many to be ‘America’s theologian’ [Jenson - OUP] and some say the greatest. I wouldn’t. He was an intellectual, made of stern stuff, and not a bad pastor. His **revivalism** was crucial for the rise of evangelicalism, but I will try to show some links to modern day fundamentalism as well. His major concern was to help lead people to their eternal salvation. He held a Calvinist predestination approach common at the time. The preacher was there to proclaim so that the people could hear, repent, and believe to be saved. Good works should automatically follow, with the grace of God leading the faithful to fullness of life and blessings beyond. Edwards was also concerned about the morals of the young, and their need for salvation. A quote: ‘Just after my grandfather’s death [Rev Mr Stoddard, 2d minister of the town after Rev Eleazar Mather in Northampton] it seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion: licentiousness for some years greatly prevailed among the youth of the town, there were many of them very much addicted to night-walking, and frequenting the tavern and lewd practices, wherein some by their example exceedingly corrupted others. It was their manner very frequently to get together in conventions of both sexes, for mirth and jollity, which they called frolics; and they would open spend the greater part of the night in them, without regard to any order in the families they belonged to, and indeed family government did too much fail in the town. It was become very customary with many of our young people, to be indecent in their carriage at meeting, which doubtless would not have prevailed to such a degree, had it not been that my grandfather, through his great age ... was not so able to observe them.’

There was a titanic change in the offing. Conversions started to happen.

‘When awakenings first begin, their consciences are commonly most exercised about their outward vicious course, or other acts of sin; but afterwards, are much more burdened with a sense of heart sins, the dreadful corruption of their nature, their enmity against God, the pride of their hearts, their unbelief, their rejection of Christ, the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills, and the like. In many, God makes much use of their own experience, in the course of their awakenings and endeavors after saving good, to convince them of their own vile emptiness and universal depravity.

Very often under first awakenings, when they are brought to reflect on the sin of their past lives, and have something of a terrifying sense of God’s anger, they set themselves to walk more strictly, and confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, with a secret hope of appeasing God’s anger and making up for the sins they have committed ...but these affections are but short-lived, they quickly find that they fail ...

God might justly cast them into hell at last, because all their labors, prayers, and tears cannot make atonement for the least sin, nor merit any blessing at the hands of God ... That calm of spirit that some persons have found after their legal distresses, continues some time before any special and delightful manifestation is made to the soul of the grace of God.’¹ There was lots of shrieking, rolling on the floor, rushing the pulpit for mercy.

An example he cites is Abigail Hutchinson, ‘now dead.’ She was from a good, rational family and education. Not an extreme person, and sober and inoffensive conversation; a still, quite, reserved person. She had long been infirm of body, but not notional or fanciful and not a religious melancholy. She was first awakened in the winter season, on Monday, by something she heard her brother say about seeking regenerating grace. The news stirred up a spirit of envy in her. She started to read the Bible and continued thus till Thursday, and then there was a sudden alteration by a great increase of her sense of sinfulness. The blackness grew, and for three days she felt nothing but the fear of God’s wrath. She flew to the minister for refuge, and was so bad that her friends thought it best that she should not go to church [*I hear you*]. The words came to her –

¹ Smith, Stout, and Minkema; *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*; Yale; 1995; pp 72-4

‘the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.’ The sufficiency was there. She told her brother in the morning that she had seen (realizing views by faith) Christ the last night. She had great longings to die to be with Christ, but was willing to live to do His will. She had long been infirm, and soon began to die. On her deathbed, she would exclaim ‘God is my friend’ and expressed a desire that the world might be converted. The same week she died.

Edwards had **post-millennial ideas**. The study of Daniel and Revelation shows us that we are in the last of the stages, or close to the beginning of “success.” The Kingdom of God on earth is a utopia of great “temporal prosperity.” Others said ‘we are a nation peculiarly favored of Heaven ... the USA are now his vineyard. No more ‘holy poverty.’ Poverty is evidence of alienation from God – just as in the OT. The Scottish commentator David Brown said the Awakening at Northampton was the advent of the millennium. Edwards agreed and believed that they were approaching the last times.

Samuel Hopkins, one of the major theologians the US has produced, composed *A Treatise on the Millennium* 1791. He has some big ideas. First, Christ deserves vengeance. Secondly, the millennium will be the age of benevolence and it is on earth, not in heaven. There will be useful learning. Self-love will be less. Ownership of property will continue, the charity of the primitive church will be revived. There will be better farming practices. War will cease. There will be a universal language. There will be centuries yet to go when there will be the final Armageddon. Hopkins wrote at the time when the secular theory of progress was only getting started. In the next century, however, the contrast between it and the millennialist ideas will be of crucial importance, and the ‘liberals’ will win then.

Historically the Great Awakening paralleled revivalism in British life, and there was the general emergence of 18th century piety throughout Western Europe. It was the English evangelists John Wesley and **George Whitefield** who made it happen. Whitefield (1714-1770) was the immediate catalyst. An Englishman with a Calvinist Anglican background, he had established himself here before going to the Colonies. Gifted with a powerful, sonorous voice, he was capable of being heard at great distances according to all who heard him. He was apt to use dramatic gestures and illustrations to depict vividly the terrors and horrors of damnation and the wonders of conversion. He traveled all over the colonies. Sometimes he would preach to 30,000 at a time. A woman from Pennsylvania walked 40 miles to hear him preach. Afterwards she told her friends that she had never been so spiritually awakened – and this was a German woman who spoke no English! Whitefield's voice and presence had been enough.

They split over who was right in the coming Revolutionary War – Wesley supporting the British had to leave his Savannah church in 1777. Whitefield became the best known orator and preacher of the colonies, and even Benjamin Franklin, not a religious person on these terms at all, became his friend. He provoked frenzy across New England. In Boston, the meetinghouse was packed so tightly that 5 people died in the crush. Ending his tour, Whitefield's farewell sermon drew 20,000 to Boston Common – some 4,000 more than the city's population.

At first New England embraced him, but he had a powerful subversive current in his message. The evangelical faith does not easily fit into the Puritan hierarchy. There was no preparation, no careful study, and no ministerial texts for aspiring saints; a proper minister or a regular congregation was not required. Redemption came in a rush. A blinding flash of light as on the Road to Damascus sent ecstatic sinners flying from their pews or fainting in the pastures.

[Show English cartoon of Whitefield OHP – one young woman said ‘I wish his spirit was in my flesh’ and ‘His poor eye sparkles with holy zeal.’ Whitefield was cross-eyed]

Other dandies of the revival fared less well, but cause a storm and a ruckus. James Davenport’s bazaar revivals were wild, angry, and emotional. A top graduate of Yale, he was almost out of control. He led singing mobs into the streets, disrupting or waking up the towns. Better to drink rat poison than listen to the local clergy he said. Davenport lit a bonfire and urged the people to burn their vanities. Books, cloaks, then as the prayer and psalm and hymn frenzy grew – he striped off his trousers. A colleague intervened – and just in time said a critic or the preacher would have had to “strut about bare-arsed.” A Connecticut court found Davenport insane and threw him out of the colony.

These practices still exist – almost – on television. You got to see it yourself. Jimmy Swaggart was caught with his trousers down, but in a motel with a hooker.

Manifest Destiny

It is important to grasp the notion of Manifest Destiny that emerged from this period. The term wasn’t invented until 1845, but it should have been. What it means is complex, but refers to the idea that America has a special millennial mission to fulfill to redeem the world. It is widely used in Washington at present, and it has deep roots. I referred to Bishop Berkeley and others who started this idea about America in the previous lecture claiming that much of it began in England, but ended in America where it still resides. The grandson of Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight’s 1771 anonymous *America: or, A Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies: Addressed to the Friends of Freedom, and Their Country*. Dwight was a tutor at Yale. His theme was that Columbus, who

would be surprised to know he was being adopted as a hero of the Reformation along with Wycliffe and Luther,

At length (Columbus taught by heaven to trace Far-distant lands, through unknown pathless seas) America's bright realms arose to view, and the *old* world rejoic'd to see the *new*.

It goes on at great length to show how this works out and the new replaces the old in God's dispensation. The culmination of the vision is not simply empire for empire's sake, but is for the world's glory.

And every region smile in endless peace;
Till the last trump the slumbering dead inspire,
Shake the wide heavens, and set the world on fire

Hence o'er all lands shall sacred influency spread,
Warm frozen climes, and cheer the death-like shade'
To nature's bounds, reviving Freedom reign,
And truth, and Virtue, light the world again.

Exodus traditions were brought into play. America was a new Eden; a Promised Land as of old. David Austin, another Yalie, wrote in 1793:

'Behold, then, this hero of America, wielding the standard of civil and religious liberty over these United States! Follow him, in his strides, across the Atlantic! See him, with his spear already in the heart of the beast! See tyranny, civil and ecclesiastical, bleeding at every pore! See the votaries of the tyrants, of the beasts, of the false prophets, and serpents of the earth, ranged in battle array, to withstand the progress and dominion of him, who hath commission to break down the usurpations of tyranny – to let the prisoner out of the prison-house; and to set the vassal in bondage free from his chains – to level the mountains – to raise the valleys, and to prepare an highway for the Lord.'

Tuveson remarks that one could see the American intervention in WWI as the accomplishment of this prophecy. The eagle in Revelation and the heraldic eagle of the US are as one. They agreed that this is a kind of national religion, but not national church. 'The American Constitution has a moral meaning, a sacredness, over and above what political science and civil compacts can ever give to the organic law of a commonwealth.' [Harpers 1858]

Mother Ann [1736-84] was a totally different creature. Born in Manchester as Ann Lee, and raised in poverty, she became part of the Shaker movement [United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming], a branch of the Quakers, and she came to America in 1774. Because they didn't believe in sex, the sect died out in the 20th century after there weren't any orphans to adopt. (It has re-opened at Sabbathday Lake in NH recently with a few believers, but still no sex). But their effect was big, even though they were small. Not only were they practical, non-theological, hard working and self-sustaining, but they made a lot of joyful noise when they danced and worshiped, much to the annoyance of their neighbors. [George Rapp in Harmony and Economy in PA - German]

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
 And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
 When true simplicity is gained,
 To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
 To turn, turn will be our delight till by turning, turning we come round right.

The persecutions were quite horrific. Horrendous types from all over came to scorn and burn. The abuse was terrible. Earlier we had the same with the Penitentes and later with the Mormons. It continues in too many places, though in America more subtly now.

.

This enthusiasm translated into the later Pentecostal movement, which need not be fundamentalist, but often is. Many Pentecostals would not want to trace their origins to anyone or any group except the Holy Spirit, but as historians we are bound to ask more complex questions of origins and influences, knowing that is a delicate task of investigation and judgment.

This relates to Quakerism too, but I don't want to spend much time on that. They are not fundamentalists and had little of those roots within themselves. Their influence on later America is more to do with democracy, openness – Pennsylvania was the first colony to open its borders to all religious comers – and local and world wide social service. Penn called Pennsylvania the 'holy experiment' and living there as I'm afraid I do I don't see much of that anymore. The lines between liberals and conservatives are pretty firmly drawn and the culture wars are getting hotter. It is not experimental – it is investigational with the Patriot Act and Rick Santorum in the driving seat. Gov Tom Ridge, from my home town, has been moved out of Homeland Security after losing every turf battle to John Ashcroft, who now is out of office replaced by Speedy Gonzales 'the torture-memo man'.

They were strong believers in a millennial doctrine that excelled in literality. The Second Advent had occurred with Mother Ann, the complementary form to Christ that is similar to female 'Wisdom.' The coming of 'Sophia' Ann inaugurated the millennium. At least this was an early nod to women's equality.

What does all this tell us about the present state of religion and life in America?

1. The spread of **individualist revivalism** across America was exceeding great.²
2. Revivalist culture now permeates a lot of the Red States. A class phenomenon?
3. **Sin, Forgiveness & Eternal Salvation** in distinction with **Liberation & Justice** are the main themes, with obvious social [national & local] and personal costs. Contrast and compare with Wesley in England. Possibly the Awakening can be understood as a ‘pacifier.’³ Krugman’s current economic analysis is relevant:

***Poverty in America & the American Dream for the World** –Can you justify 1% of Americans having 40% of US wealth and Americans as 4% of the world’s population consuming 40% of its resources? What moral force does America now have with the rest of the world?*

This data is notoriously difficult to establish, as any economist or statistician will quickly tell you. I am using Paul Krugman’s article in the New York Times Magazine October 20, 2002 for my data and most of the major ideas: *For Richer – How the permissive capitalism of the boom destroyed American equality*. One sees the bias from the title right away, but everyone has a bias.

Krugman’s argument is that during the 50’s and 60’s, we were largely a middle class country. There was poverty and wealth at both ends, but for the most part we all were in the same boat. The top executives had a sense of corporate, community and even national responsibility. But:

² ‘I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.
And he walks with me and talks with me, and he tells me that I am his own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.’ [*C. Austin Miles 1868-1946*]

³ i.e. thwarting people asking questions about the economy, social justice, and marginalization

Over the past 30 years most people have seen only modest salary increases: the average annual salary in America, expressed in 1998 dollars (that is, adjusted for inflation), rose from \$32,522 in 1970 to \$35,864 in 1999. That's about a 10 percent increase over 29 years – progress, but not much. Over the same period, however, according to Fortune magazine, the average real annual compensation of the top 100 C.E.O.'s went from \$1.3 million – 39 times the pay of an average worker – to \$37.5 million, more than 1,000 times the pay of ordinary workers ... The Congressional Budget Office found that between 1979 and 1997 the after-tax incomes of the top 1% of families rose 157%, compared with only a 10% gain for families near the middle of the income distribution. [OHP]

But doesn't everyone win in a ship that rises? That is what some politicians and conservative think tanks would have us believe. The facts are just the opposite. The bottom 20% of Americans are worse off than they were 30 years ago, and poorer families must have two incomes to make ends meet, and sometimes those ends don't meet very well especially if illness strikes.

Even when it comes to the top 10%, only the top 1% are the hefty winners.

In 1998 the top 1% started at \$230,000. In turn, 60% of the gains of that top 1% went to the top 0.1%, those with incomes of more than \$790,000. And almost half of those gains went to a mere 13,000 taxpayers, the top 0.01%, who had an income of at least \$3.6 million and an average income of \$17 million.

Some say that C.E.O.'s must be paid these huge salaries because they 'bring home the bacon.' But they also did so in the 50's and 60's, and managers were as effective then as now. What has changed? According to Krugman, it is the moral and spiritual atmosphere than has gone awry. There used to be a constraint on managers not to screw their corporations. But look at what has happened with all these recent revelations. Those executives who have bled their companies dry and run off with the corporate jewels have taken us all for a mighty bumpy ride, especially the stock market. Though the looting was well camouflaged, they finally were caught. Or at least some were. I suspect there are a lot more out there creaming it off for themselves. [Here is a Jewish Princeton professor recapitulating old Amos morals].

How did they do it, which makes some of our minor criminals look almost virginal?

Yes, a great executive can make a big difference – but those huge pay packages have been going as often as not to executives whose performance is mediocre at best. The key reason executives are paid so much more now is that they appoint the members of the corporate board that determines their compensation and control many of the perks that board members count on. So it's not the invisible hand of the market [a la Adam Smith] that leads to those monumental executive incomes; it's the invisible handshake in the boardroom. But then why weren't executives paid lavishly 30 years ago? Again, it's a matter of corporate culture. For a generation after WWII, fear of outrage kept executive salaries in check. Now the outrage is gone ... 'If it feels good, do it.' ... 'Greed is good – greed works.' ... What happened in the 80's and 90's was that those [previous] norms unraveled, replaced by an ethos of 'anything goes.' And a result was an explosion of income at the top of the scale.

This way of thinking is often defended by conservatives using religion and OT models of wealth from Calvin etc. That is what many today call 'moral values.' Come back, Liberation Theology [define]. Come martyrs ML King Jr, Malcolm X & Bobby Kennedy.

There is the area of ‘moral values’ that we discussed before, and this takes us back to the Bush presidency. It is the ‘us or them’ question of binary thinking and absolute certainty of their cause, and we see it in all three of our champions here today. After the 2004 election, a major American fundamentalist who is president of Bob Jones University [describe], Rev Bob Jones III, wrote to President Bush following the election:

In your re-election, God has graciously granted America – though she doesn’t deserve it – a reprieve from the agenda of paganism. You have been given a mandate ... Don’t equivocate. Put your agenda on the front burner and let it boil. You own the liberals nothing. They despise you because they despise your Christ ...

Undoubtedly, you will have opportunity to appoint many conservative judges and exercise forceful leadership with the Congress in passing legislation that is defined by biblical norms regarding the family, sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom, freedom of speech, and a limited government. You have four years – a brief time only – to leave an imprint for righteousness upon this nation that brings with it the blessings of Almighty God ...

If you have weaklings around you who do not share your biblical values, shed yourself of them.

Summary - So what I am saying is that some aspects of individualism and fundamentalism breed a society that concentrates on his/her personal sins and ‘Personal Savior.’ This leads to a neglect of the great social issues societies must face and forces America to have the highest difference in the industrial world between rich and poor.

It also leads to a style of cognition that is very prevalent in America at the present moment which is binary thinking – *we is right, and you is wrong. You are either for us or against us.* This has caused great difficulties with America’s allies, who don’t want to be put in that strait-jacket. It has also caused huge disruptions in the Muslim world, with many more Muslims originally supporting America than Al-Qaeda. But now it seems America might be losing it with much of the Arab world, let alone the rest of the globe – all on account of this binary thinking spawned by the genie of Fundamentalism.

Partial Book List

- Andrews, Edward Deming *The People Called Shakers*, NY, 1963
- Bushman, Richard L., ed. *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion 1740-1745*, NY, 1970
- Butler, Jon *Enthusiasm Described and Decried: the Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction*; JAH 69.2; 305-325
- Chase, Gilbert; *America's Music – from the Pilgrims to the Present*; U of Illinois; 1992
- Francis, Richard. *Ann the Word – The Story of Ann Lee*, Fourth Estate, 2000
- Gaustad, Edwin Scott, *The Great Awakening in New England*, NY, 1957
- Goen, C.G. ed, *Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, Yale, 1972
- Heimert, Alan, *Religion and the American Mind, From the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, Harvard, 1966
- Heimert, Alan, and Perry Miller eds, *The Great Awakening: Documents illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences*, Indianapolis, 1967
- Jenson, Robert W, *America's Theologian – A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, OUP, 1988
- Krugman, Paul; *For Richer – How the permissive capitalism of the boom destroyed American equality*; New York Times Magazine October 20, 2002
- Lambert, Frank, “*Pedlar in Divinity*”: *George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770*, Princeton, 1994
- *Inventing the ‘Great Awakening’*, Princeton, 1999
- Miller, Perry, *Jonathan Edwards*, NY, 1949
- Morone, James A; *Hellfire Nation – the politics of sin in American history*; Yale; 2003
- Sergeant, William *Battle for the Mind*
- Smith, Stout, Minkema [eds] *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, Yale, 2003
- Stout, Harry S, *The New England Soul*, OUP, 1986
- *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelism*, Eerdmans, 1991
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee; *Redeemer Nation*; U of Chicago, 1968