

Week Five Handout

“Christian History in America: Visions, Realities, and Turning Points”

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Class 5: The Second Great Awakening and the Movement for Reform

Class 5 Goals

Explore the origins of the Second Great Awakening.

Learn about the story of the Cane Ridge Revival.

Look at the relationship between the Second Great Awakening and the resulting Reform Movements.

Examine what lessons can be learned for influencing the culture for Jesus Christ.

Opening Question

Can human beings create a religious revival through human effort?

Is a revival solely the work of God that we can pray for, but not bring about?

The Cane Ridge Revival

Consider it as retold by *God in America*

<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>

Episode 2: A New Eden starting at 19:15.

Characteristics of the 2nd Awakening

Phase I (1790s) on the frontier KY, TN

Lengthy camp meetings with multiple preachers.

Strange physical manifestations: jerks and barks

Atypical of the Awakening

Phase II 1820s-1830s (The Age of Finney)

Adapted new evangelical methods from Methodists.

“Anxious seat,” lengthy meetings, public prayer for women.

Emphasized the ability of people to repent and perfect both themselves and their society.

People could hasten the Millennium by converting people to Christ and engaging in social reform. (PostMillennialism)

Finney on Revival

Sinner! instead of waiting and praying for God to change your heart, you should at once summon up your powers, put forth the effort, and change the governing preference of your mind. . .

Sinner! your obligations to love God is equal to the excellence of his character, and your guilt in not obeying him is of course equal to your obligation. You cannot therefore for an

hour or a moment defer obedience to the commandment in the text, without deserving eternal damnation. . .

Charles Grandison Finney

The preeminent revivalist of the 2nd Great Awakening.
Began as a lawyer but began to plead the cause of Christ.
Was particularly effective among the Middle Class.

For Table Discussion

Once someone is converted what obligation do they have to help convert others?
Should the work to change society to make it more like the Kingdom of Heaven?
If you decide to promote social change, do you use moral suasion (urging people to reform) or do you push for the passage of laws?

The Rise of the Circuit Rider

The Rise of the Voluntary Society

American Board for Foreign Missions (1810)
American Bible Society (1816)
American Sunday School Union (1824)
American Tract Society (1825)
American Home Missionary Society (1826)
Together these new movements help to institutionalize the Second Great Awakening

Which Societal Reforms?

End Sunday delivery of the mails?
Eradicate the custom of dueling?
Stamp out prostitution in New York City?
Work to abolish smoking?
Promote better treatment of prisoners?
Petition to preserve Cherokee land rights in the East?
Abolish slavery?
Promote women's rights?

Which Christians?

Evangelicals, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians tended to support reform movements.
Liturgical Believers (Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans) tended to oppose the reform movements as unjust forms of social coercion and often directed at them.

Temperance

Alcoholism was a major problem at the time - 3 times the consumption of today.
American Society for the Promotion of Temperance used revival techniques and political coercion to curb alcohol.
Washingtonians held meetings where members "confessed" past sins, but remained non-religious and non-coercive.

Conflict developed between prohibitionists and moderationists, between Whigs and immigrant Democrats with Irish bars and German beer halls.
Maine adopted prohibition in 1851.

Moral Reform or Economic Coercion

Scholars studying places like Rochester, NY and Worcester, MA have found massive pressure by elite Protestants to control the drinking of their workers.

Bars and Pubs were shut down

Alcohol sales banned on Sundays

Some workers were fired for not joining the temperance crusade.

Other workers were promoted for joining the movement and the churches of their bosses

Evangelical Economic Message

According to Daniel Walker Howe, Evangelical values promoted responsible personal autonomy.

Work hard, be, thrifty, save your money, don't go into debt. Be honest in business. . .”
and “don't oppress your workers free or enslaved.”

Challenge Application Question

How can we promote Christian Values in the world and in the work place?

How do we show compassion and extend grace and truth to the lost while not succumbing to the temptation to use political or economic power to change others into our likeness?

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