

Sahana Sarangi

History

18 October 2023

Reading Response #2

~~As presented in these texts,~~ key characteristics of the Great Awakening included an intense emotional relationship with God, the independence of decisions regarding religion, and conversion to Protestant Christianity. In ~~Document A,~~ Jonathan Edwards writes that he wanted “to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him.”¹ This emotional connection to God that Edwards describes is key to differentiating the Enlightenment from the Great Awakening. While the Enlightenment was a reason-based approach to God, the Great Awakening was rooted in the strongly emotional, non-rational expression of religion. Gilbert Tennant, known for preaching this emotive expression of religion, explained how another key aspect of the Great Awakening was the freedom of choice when following religion. He writes that “To bind Men to a particular Minister, against their Judgement and Inclinations, when they are more edified elsewhere, is...a cruel Oppression of tender Consciences, a Compelling of Men to Sin.”² His argument that restricting men of their choice of religious ministry is sin characterizes ~~how~~ the Great Awakening encouraged people’s personal choice of Church and religious leaders. Their own relationship with God would dictate which leaders they followed and which church best suited their religious values. However, while supporting autonomous decisions in religious ministry, another element of the Great Awakening

¹ Jonathan Edwards, Doc. A, 4.

² Gilbert Tennant, “Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry,” 1740, 15.

was the emphasis on converting to Protestant to Christianity. The Great Awakening was partly based off of the idea of an emotional conversion to Christianity. Edwards, while reflecting on his “sinfulness” before his conversion, writes “I felt a burning desire to be, in every thing, a complete Christian” and “I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart, than ever I had before my conversion.”³ His recounts of his conversion represents how converting to Protestant Christianity was integral to the Great Awakening; conversion was an absolute must to separate one from the Enlightenment. Doc. E, by Gilbert Tennant, being titled “Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry” also shows how prominent leaders in this ideology believed that not converting to Protestant Christianity was against the beliefs of the Great Awakening—emphasizing how conversion was a major characteristic of it. Conversion of religion, the freedom of choice in religious aspects, and emotional connections with god are all key ideas that embodied the Great Awakening.

³ Edwards, 3-4.