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History

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Colonial Philosophy and Religion (17th/18th century)

Religious Diversity in British Colonies (recap):

- Anglican Church
 - Established by Henry the 8th after he broke away from Catholic Church
 - Also called Church of England
 - Protestant
 - Majority of colonists from England follow Anglican church
- “Anglican” from Anglo-Saxon
- Congregationalism
 - MA, Connecticut, New Hampshire → Puritan
 - Much less diversity (dissent was kicked out)
- Segments of NY were Lutheran
- Maryland was Catholic
- Pennsylvania → Quaker
- Baptists
- Jewish
- Reform churches (also Christian)
- All except Catholic and Jewish religions were Protestant Christianity

The Enlightenment:

- New philosophical ways of thinking in Europe
- Gradual process
- Led to growing anxiety (next slide)
- Enlightenment → philosophy, way of thinking
- Core beliefs
 - Ability to reason is what defines humanity/separates from other creatures
 - If all men/women are defined as such, none should be denied liberty + equality
 - Goal is to progress towards perfectionism
 - Steps towards being perfect
 - Tolerance of other modes of existence/viewpoints (could include religion)
 - Religious beliefs grounded in reason
 - Was not antithetical to religion
 - If God gave humans ability to reason, religion should be based on reason
 - Opposite of blind faith
 - Could make Pope's position slightly less

- They are not any different from regular people

Growing Anxiety:

- Worried about how enlightenment fits in previous religious beliefs
- Do they need to rethink their trust in Pope?
- Can they still be Catholic?
- Eternal damnation if they are no longer Catholic is scary
- Deism → not atheism
 - Believing there is divine power, but more hands-off
 - God existing does not define everyday behaviors
 - Don't have to go to church everyday
 - God does not have too much relevance
- Deism leads to lack of engagement in religion
 - Less reading the Bible, less going to church, etc
- The more religious diversity, the less colonies can enforce engagement
- Anxiety about greed for material wealth
 - Even in congregationalist communities, people are anxious about greed
- Think God is angry with them because of disasters
 - Natives attacking, environment

The Great Awakening (first one) 1730s-1740s:

- New movement about religious feeling
- Backlash to enlightenment, very emotional
- Some refer to it as Pietism
- Reaction to rational reasoning of Enlightenment as an emotional argument
- Tenets
 - Relationship with God (intense emotional relationship)
 - Emotional appeal to God vs rational appeal to God (enlightenment)
 - Choice → not about what the Pope/leader says, personal relationship with God dictating your actions
 - Religious hierarchy doesn't matter
 - Don't have to listen to religious leader, decide for yourself
 - Emotional relationship → conversion to Protestant Christianity improves society

Prominent Leaders (will not be an ID! Might be useful though):

- John Wesley + brother Charles
 - Initially Anglican
 - Focus on working class
 - Established Methodist church → direct product of Great Awakening, emotional
- George Whitefield
 - Very emotional
 - Practiced religious speeches to emphasize feeling

- Celebrity, people came to watch him speak, people would crowd, basically Taylor
 - Anglican
- Jonathan Edwards
 - Stresses conversion experience
 - Need to have the feeling → fear of damnation to convert
- Gilbert Tennent
 - Takes George Whitefield's speaking style
 - Does not write his speeches, talks about whatever he feels like
 - Also celebrity, popular
 - Have to be "very converted" to be church leader

Responses:

- Lots of conflict → created own churches
 - Church splits
 - Arguments over who is converted/not converted
 - How do you tell who is?
 - Who is authority?
 - When they argue, they just make their own church
- New Lights vs Old Lights:
 - New Lights believe in Great Awakening, thinking Old Lights are not really converted
 - Old Lights retaliate and think New Lights are crazy, have overly emotional reactions → emotional appeal excuses bad behavior

Historical Importance of Enlightenment and Great Awakening:

- How much do things matter?
- Very important:
 - Widespread throughout colonies
 - Thinking for themselves is ground work for American revolution
- Not very:
 - This is very localized, only in small places (lower new England, south going their own way)
 - Very brief period of time
 - Not completely new, people were already looking for different churches and making new ones
- Historians don't agree on these things
- Both Great Awakening and Enlightenment are trans-Atlantic (in Europe and in the colonies)
- Enlightenment vs Pietism
 - Which version of Christianity are you supporting?
 - Rational vs emotional versions of religious beliefs