

Faith of Our Fathers; United States Church Records

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Religion in Europe

- For hundreds of years during the medieval time period, England practiced Catholicism.
 - Protestant beliefs began to enter the country during the early 1500s.
 - Began to point out the excesses of Catholic clergy and monasteries.
 - Demands were made for the Bible to be translated so the people could read it in English.
- **The Break** – when King Henry VIII conflicted with the pope.
 - Wanted to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who produced no male heir.
 - After several years of bickering, Henry VIII broke away from the **Church of Rome** to form the **Church of England**.
 - Essentially the Catholic Church without the Pope and the monasteries.
 - Conservative with the king at the head.
 - Dissension brought a new group – **Puritans**.
 - Felt the Church of England was too much like Catholicism.
 - Adhered to Calvinism.
 - Preaching, supreme God, believe in scripture, worship without rituals, crosses, ornate churches.
- Catholics and Protestant national persecuted or forbade each other's religions.
 - British colonists followed suit; restrictions against Catholics.
- Great Britain, the Protestant Anglican Church split into bitterness.
 - Traditional Anglicans
 - Reforming Puritans
 - Result was an English civil war - 1600s.

Religion in Colonial America

- Religious groups attempted to enforce strict religious observance through both colony governments and town rules.
 - Laws mandated that every attend church and pay taxes.
 - Taxes paid the salaries of ministers.
- Eight of the thirteen original colonies had an official religion.
 - If you dissented, you were persecuted.
- Between 1680 and 1760. Anglicanism and Congregationalism (offshoot of Puritans) established themselves as the main denominations.
- In the 17th and 18th centuries, new movements began.
 - “Dissenters” began to arise.
 - Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Unitarians.
 - New congregations were seen as unfaithful and troublemakers.

- Ordinary Anglican American parishes stretched 60-100 miles in sparsely populated areas.
 - Women accounted for ¼ of the population.
 - Shortage of clergymen.
 - Religious life was haphazard.
- Astrology, alchemy, and witchcraft caused people to fear.
 - Think of the Salem Witch Trials.
 - Alchemy = magical transformation.
- Colonies eventually became more settled.
 - Clergy and churches grew.
 - The Sabbath became more important.
- Slavery was also shaped by religion.
 - Violence against slaves, their inequality, contempt for anything not Christian.
 - Baptists attempted to convert slaves, but often instruction came from their owners.
- Established churches were learning to exercise tolerance as immigration increased.
 - French Huguenots, Catholics, Jews, Dutch Calvinists, German Reformed pietists, Scottish Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, etc. all making their mark.
 - Rhode Island and Pennsylvania became havens.

New England

- Predominantly Puritans leading strict, religious lives.
- Clergy was highly educated.
 - Protestantism was integrated into the political structure.
 - Divine guidance and civil authority should be used to enforce conformity.
- Every town had a Congregational meetinghouse.
 - Small, wooden buildings in the center of town.
 - Sat on hard wooden benches for most of the day.
 - Eventually grew bigger, steeples erected, bells were added.
 - Some held 1,000 worshippers.
- Newborns were baptized by the church.
- Attendance was about 70% of adult population.
- Operated differently from the Anglican system in England.
 - Massachusetts and Connecticut – no church courts to levy fines.
 - Left to civil magistrates.
 - Congregational churches owned no properties (owned by the town).
 - Town meetings and religious services held in the same building.
- Civil governments did deal harshly with dissenters.

Mid-Atlantic and Southern Colonies

- Church on the Sabbath was nearly all day long.
- After 1760, the frontier began to open up more.
- Middle colonies were a mixture of Quakers, Catholics, Lutherans, Jews.
- In the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland, Church of England was recognized by law as the state church.
 - Tax revenues went to support the parish and the priest.
- Virginia imposed laws for all to attend Anglican services.
- After 1750, Baptist population grew.
 - Baptist preachers were often arrested.
 - Mobs attacked members, broke up prayer meetings.
- Anglicans never reached a majority in the Carolinas, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware.
 - Struggled to accept Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Dutch Reformed, and German pietists.
- Maryland was founded by Cecilius Calver, 1634 as a safe haven for Catholics.
- Quakers founded Pennsylvania.
 - Tender toward Native Americans.
 - Issued public condemnation of slavery.

Great Awakenings

First Great Awakening (1730s and 1740s)

- 1730s and 1740s, religious revival swept the colonies and Great Britain.
 - Evangelist George Whitefield toured America.
 - Jonathan Edwards delivered sermons stirring up religious fervor.
- Massive open-air sermons – 15,000 in attendance.
 - Challenged the clerical and colonial practice by focusing on individual sins. “Born again”. Most pastors had read their sermons before this.
- Questioned the right of clerical and civil authority to intervene.
 - Clarified objections to British civil and religious rule.
 - Began to favor separation of church and state.
- The first time African Americans began to embrace Christianity.

Second Great Awakening (late 1700s – mid 1800s)

- Occurred in all parts of the United States, especially Northeast and Midwest.
- Church attendance had dropped.
 - Some believed God didn’t play an important role in everyday life.
 - Felt God was unconcerned with a person’s church attendance.

- God would judge on how you lived your life.
- Particularly affected the less wealthy and less educated.
 - Camp meetings would last for days.
 - Most affected the “Burned-over district” in western New York.
- Many new religions, communal societies, and reform were produced.
 - Free black churches, which ran independently.
 - African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E. Church, or AME) established by African Americans in Philadelphia – 1816.
 - Several black Methodist congregations in the Mid-Atlantic area wanted independence from white Methodists.
- Reform movements – temperance, abolition, women’s rights began to emerge.

Third Great Awakening (1850s – 1900s)

- New denominations, missionary work, YMCA, Chatauquas, etc. emerged to help with social issues.
 - Dwight Moody, religious work carried on during the Civil War.
 - Freedmen’s Societies were begun.

Fourth Great Awakening (late 1960s – early 1970s)

- Protestant denominations weaken in membership and influence.
- Conservative denominations (Southern Baptists and Lutherans) grew.

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