

18th Century Anglicanism and the Great Awakening



An Exemplary Life: John Wesley (1703-1791)

Early Life

Son of High Church Anglicans

Samuel Wesley (1662-1735)

Susannah Wesley (1669-1742)

Nurtured Piety & High Expectations

Education

1720: Entered Christ Church, Oxford

1726: Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford

1727: M.A.

Early Ministry

1725: Ordained deacon

1727-1729: Curate, St. Andrew's, Epworth

1728: Ordained priest

1729: Return to Oxford and the Holy Club

1735-1738:

SPG missionary to Georgia

Encounters with the Moravians

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An Exemplary Life: John Wesley (1703-1791) Methodist Revival

Inception

May 1738: Aldersgate & Fetter Lane Society

Summer 1738: Herrnhut, Germany

September 1738:

Return to England

Poor reception in Anglican pulpits

May 1739:

Whitefield: open-air preaching in Bristol

Wesley persuaded to assist; 'converted'

1740:

Break with Moravians

Stillness/quietism

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An Exemplary Life: John Wesley (1703-1791)
First Decade (1739-1749)

Most decisive period

Formation of 'United Societies':

'rule of life'

Association, nurture, discipline, care, service

Persistence: organization & (lay) preachers

'Sermonic theology': doctrine for Societies

Tensions:

Moravians: faith & good works

Calvinists: predestination

Church of England: irregularities; enthusiasm

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An Exemplary Life: John Wesley (1703-1791)
Second Decade (1749-1759)

‘Grounded’ in the Church of England

‘Special messenger’ & ‘special assistants’

Resists calls for separation

Preaching houses under Act of Toleration

John stays the course

Unique perspective?

Idiosyncratic balance?

John’s vision

Not shared by C of E

Not shared by ‘special assistants’

Not shared by Charles

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An Exemplary Life: John Wesley (1703-1791)
Third Decade (1759-1769)
Growing, Consolidating, Winning Respect
Strained relationship with C of E
Tensions within Methodism
Professing Christian Perfection
Guarding against 'enthusiasm'
Last 'Twenty' Years (1770-1791)
Doctrinal Controversies
American Independence
American Methodism
American nation
Ministerially active until death

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Relationship to Anglicanism

Development of Movement

Not 'programmatic'

'Responsive'

Eclectic, nimble, provisional, reasoned

Pragmatic:

Unable to recruit many Anglican clergy

Lay preachers

Male

Female (eventually)

Trustees & *preaching* houses

Liturgical alternatives

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Consequences, Intended & Otherwise

(‘Ecumenical’) Admission:

“a desire to flee from the wrath to come ...”

“... and to be saved from their sins”

Doctrinal focus:

Not justification by faith alone

Sanctified holiness: ‘Christian Perfection’

Non-Separation Strained

Anglican reluctance/hostility

‘Ecumenical’ Pragmatism

Mixing Conformists & Nonconformists

Legal organization v. Sacraments

Ordinations, real & imagined

‘Experience’

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening Anglicans Abroad: Continuing Struggles An episcopal Church without Bishops

No confirmations

No ordinations

Limited governance

Limited discipline

Challenges & Successes of Experimentalism

Organization of vestries (esp. Virginia)

Growth without Establishment (esp. NE)

George Whitefield in America (1740-1741)

Second visit to Colonies (Savannah)

Goes north to New England; works south

45 days in New England

2 months in Mid-Atlantic (Philly & NYC)

South through MD, VA, NC, SC, to GA

Large crowds (up to 15,000)

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening George Whitefield in America (1740-1741)

‘Ecumenical’:

Congregationalist: Jonathan Edwards

Presbyterian: Gilbert Tennant

Reformed: Theodore Frelinghuysen

Whitefield initially celebrated by Anglicans

Welcomed into pulpits

Upon hearing him, parishes had misgivings!

Extemporaneous prayer

Denied necessity of apostolic succession

Strife: Whitefield & American Anglicans

Closing of doors

Commissary Alexander Garden

Refused Whitefield communion

Attempted to suspend him

Relatively good terms in Virginia

Whitefield capitalizes on the controversy

If given access to a pulpit

Attacked Anglican doctrine

Denounced bishops

If denied, complained of persecution

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening
George Whitefield in America (1740-1741)

Religious Affections v. Reason

Religious Affections ('Authenticity')

Sentiment

Extemporaneity in prayer, preaching

Understanding/Reason ('Artifice')

Intellectual conviction

Studious cultivation

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening
Taking Sides in the Great Awakening
New Side/New Light v. Old Side/Old Light
Divided loyalties

Congregationalists

Presbyterians

Resolutely “Old Side”: Anglicans

Book of Common Prayer

Anglican style of Covenant Theology

Apostolic succession

Baptismal regeneration

Unintended Outcomes in New England

Anglican alternative to prolonged revivalism

Timothy Cutler: “Enthusiasm has had a long run ... so that many are tired of it, and if the Door were open would take refuge in our church from Error and Disorder.”

Anglican Education: Anti-Awakening

Not explicitly Anglican colleges

Strong influence on new foundations

King’s College (Columbia University)

College of Philadelphia (Penn)

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening Later Developments

Whitefield's Subsequent Tours

Fifth (1754-1755); Sixth (1763-1765)

New openness among younger Anglicans

Clergy

Laity

Whitefield's diminished anti-Anglicanism

“New birth” doctrines

No longer shockingly new

More routinized; increasingly rationalized

Changes

Not to liturgy or doctrine

Absorption of sentimentality, experience

Aesthetics:

Church architecture: Pulpits

Church music: New hymnodies

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening Taking Stock of 18th Century Revivalism Itinerancy and the Parish System

A Response

‘Solutions’

Addressed needs

A Nuisance

‘Interference’

Irregularities

Parish priest could easily feel “undermined”

Itinerants sometimes contributed to this

Divide: alive/dead; awakened/asleep

‘Special’ ministry of itinerants

Open-Air Preaching

Not unprecedented, but out of use & fashion

Wesley

Initial discomfort

‘Pragmatic’ change of heart

Theological justification: Jesus’ own ministry

Inadvertent message:

Revivalists are like Jesus

Churchmen are like...

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening Taking Stock of 18th Century Revivalism Ministry to the Marginalized

In truth, *not* exclusive province of revivalists

Maybe *especially* their venue

Even *before* Aldersgate, Wesley committed

Theological Content

Repentance:

Emphasis on subjective conviction

Feelings of one's sinfulness & need

Faith:

Turning to God in need

No self-justification, excuses, delay, sloth

Justification

Objective theological counterpart

To subjective experience of spiritual rebirth

Sanctification

The Christian's continued growth in grace

Received, not achieved

Christian Perfection = Perfection in Love

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18th Century America: The Great Awakening Taking Stock of 18th Century Revivalism Great Contributions

Personal Faith:

Conversion

Assurance of salvation

Holiness of life

Improvement of life

Social Religion:

Responsibility not only for self

But for neighbor, for society

Addressed many needs of the era

Energized laity; expanded Christian ministry

Hymnody!

Criticized shallow C of E practice

Conscience, Tolerance, & Ecumenism

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Liabilities

Subjectivism

Voluntarism

Criticism, Cynicism, Separatism,
Sectarianism

Persuasion & Its Limits

Autocracy, 'Cults of Personality'

Optimism, Confidence

Experience

Begins to trump doctrine

Practice tended to superficiality