

The Age of Denominationalism, Rationalism, and Revival

From 1648-1789

Week #8 – August 2nd

Church history after the reformation really becomes a little more challenging and a lot more varied. Largely for the very reasons that we are going to talk about tonight (denominational splits and the colonization of the Americas). The way we are going to break the material up is by pointing to three movements that took place during this time period (Denom. Ration. Rev.), somewhat concurrently, but each revealing a little more about what the church was like and went through during this stage of history in Europe and in America.

As you recall from last week, the Reformation led to the end of control by a universal church/ authority. The Reformers like Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin sought to reform the catholic (universal) church by seeking to turn it back to the Bible and by preaching a pro gospel (or protestant) message. They were not seeking to radically break from the church, but to reform it, to change it, to get it back on track from where it had fallen off track (away from Scripture, elevating papal authority, selling of indulgences, etc). As they read their Bible they saw many areas the church was missing the mark. They wanted to re-establish the Bible as the ultimate authority, rather than the church, and to root the faith in the 5 solas the Bible clearly proclaims (sola Scriptura – Scripture alone, sola Fide – through faith alone, sola Gratia – by grace alone, solus Christus – in Christ alone, soli Deo Gloria – for the glory of God alone).

The catholic church was not willing to reform and that resulted in a major divide, or break, that could not be repaired between the catholic church and what is known as the protestant church.

Move from unity (universal church) to diversity (national churches and even smaller localized churches)

Once the major break from the catholic (universal, central) church took place, the floodgates opened to different groups (denominations) based on their interpretations of Scripture.

“The Reformation unintentionally shattered traditional Christendom. It prayed and preached and fought for the true faith until no single church remained, only what we now call denominations.”
Bruce Shelley

There was no longer a sole authority to interpret Scripture. This is one thing that the Catholic Church feared, and to a certain degree they may have been right in being concerned about. Once you get the Word into the common vernacular, so that everyone can read and have access to it, you open it up to difference of opinions rather than a central authority interpreting it. While that may be perceived as a negative aspect of the Reformation by some, getting back to the Bible as the sole authority and getting the Word into the hands of people rather than a central authority teaching everyone, is worth any of the challenges that come with it.

- I. **Denominationalism (a denomination is simply a distinct religious group with a particular set of beliefs and practices they hold).**

“The seventeenth century was an age of religious change and slowly increasing freedom. In place of the one “universal” church, many denominations grew up. The Reformation taught

that the Bible alone ruled faith, but what interpretation of it should Christians accept? Differences flourished – all in the name of Scripture.”

Kenneth Curtis

These may not have been major doctrinal differences, for instance, the majority of the protestant groups, or denominations, that formed early on all held to the 5 Solas Brian talked about last week. They agreed on doctrines like the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ the God-Man, salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, the authority of the Word, etc. But the interpretations of other things the Bible talks about but is not necessarily as clear on, things like, church organization and structure (elder led or congregational led, or via a form of presbytery, or a combination), liturgy (order of service, common books of written prayers, hymns), communion (consubstantiation or symbolic), baptism (believer baptism, infant baptism, who can baptize), became issues that people began to separate over.

Here is what the denominational / church landscape looked like leading up to our time period:

Catholicism still had a Holy Empire and was quite strong in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Hungary

Eastern Orthodox was a significant force in Russia and parts of Poland and the Ottoman Empire

Lutherans (adherents to Martin Luther’s teachings and the Augsburg confession) were dominant in Germany and Scandinavia
(Pietists a smaller branch off of the Lutherans)

Calvinism (adherents to the teaching of Calvin, Reformed/ Presbyterian) had strong followings in Switzerland, Denmark, Scotland, Holland, France, Bohemia, and Hungary

Anabaptists - opposed to the institutionalized church and clergy laity distinction. Named for re-baptizing of adults. were strong in Holland, northern Germany, and Switzerland

Anglicans (similar to the Catholic church in many ways, without the power structure of Rome – instead given to the king) had the state church in England

From the Anglicans you had the development of the Puritans who objected to the Anglican church of England and sought to purify it. They opposed elements of the Church of England such as the use of the cross, priestly garments, methods of celebrating communion – the necessity of kneeling at the altar. They rejected the use of the book of common prayer thinking that reciting written prayers led to insincerity. Opposed to anything that had the air of being elaborate or ostentatious.

Another branch off the Anglicans were the “Separatists” or “Congregationalists” were those who thought that each congregation should answer only to their body and be independent of others.

George Fox and the Formation of the society of friends (1648 AD)

- Taking off another branch from the Puritans, was a dissenting faction against the Anglican Church in England who George Fox felt as though was still too much like formal religion and still caving to government pressures.
- He had stringent teachings like – no oath taking, dietary restrictions, simple and modest dress, no participation in warfare, and others.
- People responded and societies of “friends” began to spring up throughout England.
- They had no clergy, everyone spoke as they felt led by the Spirit.
- George Fox urged a judge to tremble at the Word of God, and the judge thus called them Quakers, or tremblers, and it stuck.

This move toward denominationalism is what the religious situation in Europe looked like from the time of the reformation and all the way up until our time period (1648) and an event known as the...

A. The Peace of Westphalia (1648 AD)

- Religious tensions throughout the reformation and the years following were quite high. Religious wars continued to be fought in places like Germany where both Catholics and Protestants wanted the powers that be to allow them to practice their beliefs without persecution. The Peace of Augsburg (1555), or the Augsburg settlement, had temporarily alleviated some of the tension by allowing the princes and rulers of each territory to decide the religion of their own territories and that those who didn't like what their ruler decided could move elsewhere. This really only granted religious freedom to the rulers and the agreement still called most protestant lines heresy, so it really did not accomplish a whole lot.
- Religious Tensions built as you still had rulers and princes then choosing their religious views and then forcing them upon the subjects of their land with violence at times. Some rulers building armies for the purpose of forced conversions.
- In 1608 protestants banded together to form an Evangelical Union which was setup to defend (with force) against the attacks levied against them. The Catholics responded by forming a Catholic League that was much greater in strength. You could see where this was headed. It just needed a trigger for it to blow up.
- **The trigger was the Defenestration of Prague.** Prague (Czech Republic) had many Reformed Protestants and German Calvinists which were heretics to the Catholics. Ferdinand, king of Bohemia, was a staunch Catholic and would not listen to the people's objections to his religious policies. In 1618, The Bohemian Protestants revolted, throwing two of the king's advisors from a window and onto a garbage heap. This defenestration of Prague sparked the 30 year's war, which some would argue was the bloodiest and most devastating European war prior to the 20th century.
- The Bavarians (southern Germany) and the Catholic League invaded Bohemia and took over power for the Catholics.
- Protestants responded by forming alliances with England, Denmark, and the Netherlands, and invaded Germany, albeit unsuccessfully. Thousands died and thousands were forced to convert to Catholicism.

- They re-grouped under the Swedish ruler Gustavus Adolphus who, for both religious and political reasons, invaded Germany along with the protestants and won many victories.
- It went back and forth like a chess match (years of battles and skirmishes ensued) Until a final major blow to the Catholic League's army was dealt on the fields of Lutzen and everyone was ready for peace. Finally, many Catholic leaders were willing to agree with the Swedish King regarding religious tolerance for both Catholics and Protestants in the land and agreed to return of Bohemia to its people.
- Being tired of war on all sides, and after much negotiation, the Peace of Westphalia, or Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648.

Why is this significant?

It was agreed that all – rulers and subjects – were free to follow their own religion (as long as they were Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed). There were other political aspects to the peace agreement but the religious is our focus. This gave a beginning to the notion that tolerance of other's religious beliefs was necessary and that religious convictions should be a private matter rather than the decision of civil and political leaders.

The war convinced people that settling religious issues by force with arms only led to brutality and atrocities and they were tired of it. Nor did it ever really resolve anything. Their thinking shifted to more of a separation of church and state and thus the modern secular state began to take shape. Where rulers should be guided by the interests of the people rather than religious considerations.

Matters of religion shifted to the individual (largely) and, coupled with the changes brought forth in the Reformation, now the individual could seemingly decide for themselves what was right and true.

"The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 is a dividing point between religious patterns developed in the Reformation and tendencies in church history since that time."
Earle Cairns

This marked a significant change.

Side note on tolerance in England. In England, you still had very little toleration for those who defied the Anglican church (like the Puritans) with things like the Act of Uniformity in 1662 which led to two thousand Puritan preachers being removed from their churches. This lasted until 1689 with the Toleration Act, so it was a little slower to adopt the attitude of toleration that came out of the Peace of Westphalia, but it would come nonetheless.

This move of tolerance most certainly only furthered the denominationalism that was alive and well in Europe. Legalized the splintering of religious groups and being tolerant of them.

- B. These same denominational movements in Europe were now moving west to the America's during a time of exploration and discovery. Because generally the country

who explored and colonized had the opportunity to establish the religion of that location.

Roman Catholics – Latin America and Canada (Spain and Portugal)
Protestants – North America in the 1600-1700s. (Largely England)

Because that is what you did. Up until this point you still had such a close connection, for good or bad, between people's religion and their governance of societies. National identity and religious identity were inseparable, as they still are for many nations. They didn't feel as though they could separate that out, or at least hadn't up until this time period. But a shift is beginning to take place. Especially in America where there is the notion of having a pluralism of religion, a freedom of religion, without compromising national identity.

As England continued to settle on the lands of North America (specifically the east coast) they brought with them the church of England (the Anglican church or the Puritan brand of the Anglican church)

- The Anglican church became established church in Virginia 1624, Maryland 1702, South Carolina 1705, North Carolina 1715, Georgia in 1758.

This was how it was until the American Revolution.

- In other colonies, like Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, etc – there was a pluralism that allowed for more religious freedom and toleration there.
- Congregationalists landed at Plymouth in New England via the Mayflower in 1620 and so congregationalism was the established religion of New England.
- In 1639 you had the first Baptist church established in Rhode Island under the leadership of Roger Williams and others. Of course, being called Baptists because of their stance on believer baptism.
- There were smatterings of Roman Catholic pockets throughout the newly discovered lands as well, certainly as certain portions of the continent were discovered by Spain (parts of Florida, later New Mexico, Arizona, California). Wherever the Irish and Germans landed there was likely to be a strong Catholic influence, or German Reformed
- Quakers setup up shop in Pennsylvania mostly because they were not allowed to be in other Puritan controlled areas like New England because of their beliefs on church structure and some doctrinal differences.
- You had Scottish Presbyterians migrating over and establishing a church by the mid 1700s in places like New York, New Jersey, and Pittsburgh. It became quite strong, ranking up there with the largest branches of Protestantism in America.
- Methodists began to have a strong presence through the various missionaries sent out by guys like John Wesley to preach on the frontier lands, which they did with pretty good success.

- Lutherans has a strong presence in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and pockets elsewhere.

Initially, there really never was a strong sense of a national church in early America. The Anglican church still had some support from the Anglican Church in England and was ruled by their authority, but other than that there wasn't much of a connection between church and state. It was a hodgepodge. Lutherans had a strong presence in the middle colonies. You had a strong Anglican presence in the southern colonies. You had a strong Congregationalist presence in the northern colonies. And a number of other denominations spread out in between.

This would be amplified all the more through the American Revolution, because one of the significant outcomes of the Revolution was a more clear separation between church and state and a freedom of religion.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that it is during our time period that America becomes an Independent nation declaring our independence from British rule in 1776. It would be an interesting study just to look at how the protestant churches handled the issue of the Revolution, whether or not they supported it and if they did how and why. Or why not if they didn't. Some were neutral, like Methodists, some were against participation in the war, like the Quakers and Mennonites. Others heartily espoused the effort and participation in it, like the Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and even the Roman Catholics. The church had a lot to gain and a lot to lose in the Revolution. It was the amazingly strong desire of so many that came to America to have the free exercise of religion (due to their experiences) that led to the setting forth of the 1st amendment to the constitution.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

At that time, if any states had an established church of any sort began to be disestablished and a separation between church and state was set forth. We bear the fruit of that as a church today. How thankful we are for the freedom of religion that we have currently and we pray that it remains despite the efforts of some in our country.

Once that happened it triggered a series of national denominations to setup what would be national organizations.

1784 – Methodists established the Methodist Episcopal Church

1789 – Anglicans established the Protestant Episcopal Church

1788 – Presbyterians established the first National General Assembly

1792 – the Dutch Reformed became a national organization

1793 – the German Reformed

The second movement in this time period was the development of Rationalism.

II. Rationalism (The Age of Reason, The Enlightenment)

This period focuses on the time between the end of the 30 years war (1648) and the French Revolution (1789)

At the same time that the denominational movement was transpiring, you had another movement taking place largely in Europe, but a movement that would alter the landscape of religious thinking throughout the world, and is still even felt today. That movement is known as rationalism, the enlightenment, or the title given this time period as “The Age of Reason”. It was an intellectual movement, or philosophical movement, during this time period that focused on man’s ability to reason as the way to decide truth, as opposed to following the dogmatic religious teachers of the day that argued they had the truth. Man’s mind took on an elevated state and became the ultimate authority on seemingly all matters..

“The Spirit of the Age of Reason was nothing less than an intellectual revolution, a whole new way of looking at God, the world, and one’s self. It was the birth of secularism.”
Bruce Shelley

Up until the Reformation reason always served faith. For Catholics reason always served the church leadership’s authority, for Protestants reason always served the authority of the Word of God.

The Age of Reason (Enlightenment) – saw a shift from reason serving faith to faith serving reason. Following the mind, rather than faith, became the way people thought they could find truth, happiness, and fulfillment.

Baron von Holbach (representative of the enlightenment, maybe described it best) –
“Let us endeavor to disperse those clouds of ignorance, those mists of darkness, which impede Man on his journey...which prevent his marching through life with a firm and steady step. Let us try to inspire him...with respect for his own reason – with an inextinguishable love of truth...so that he may learn to know himself...and no longer be duped by an imagination that has been led astray by authority...so that he may learn to base his morals on his own nature, on his own wants, on the real advantage of society...so that he may learn to pursue his true happiness, by promoting that of others...in short, so that he may become a virtuous and rational being, who cannot fail to become happy.”

Denis Diderot – “We think that the greatest service to be done to men is to teach them to use their reason, only to hold for truth what they have verified and proved.”

Reason became the trump card. The heart of the rationalistic mindset was – What could not be proven by reason should be repudiated.

What led to this movement?

A. The renaissance

I think a strong case could be made that this rationalistic line of thinking stems back to the renaissance (i.e. a high view of man as opposed to God, a newfound confidence in man and his abilities, a positive estimate of the human nature). It seems like a natural outworking of the renaissance.

B. The Cold Intellectualism and Religious Dogmatism of the day

Rationalism took place primarily in Europe where religious dogma had gained a resurgence after the reformation and at times took on a cold intellectualism and scholasticism rather than a vibrant faith. In response to this cold intellectualism and dogmatism within the religious realm, there was a movement to be more tolerant of the religious opinions of others and a hatred for any perceived religious bigotry developed. Reason rather than religious dogma mattered.

C. The prior Religious Wars

The move toward reason and tolerance was, in part, the result of major religious conflicts that had happened in the centuries prior. (English Civil War, persecution of French Huguenots, the 30 years war in Germany between Catholics and Protestants). People were tired of the fighting and brutality over religious differences.

“Religious prejudice seemed like a far greater danger than atheism.” Shelley

Between the cold intellectualism and the religious wars, led to shift in focus during this time period from religious dogmatism to a more open toleration. There was a renewal of desire to get along, reason together, to find truths that are common to all men and celebrate those.

“What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly - that is the first law of nature.” Voltaire

D. The Scientific Discoveries and Advancements

Part of this stemmed from scientific advancements in prior years—
Copernicus (and his theory that the sun was the center of our universe rather than the earth)

Kepler (who theorized that the sun emitted magnetic force that kept the planets moving on their course)

Galileo (created a telescope that could track planets movements and proved that the acceleration of fallen bodies was constant), changing the way people thought about the universe.

Isaac Newton in 1687 publishes his monumental work “Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy” in which he laid out the laws of motion and gravitation that explained so much in physics). The idea that the universe is a great machine operating according natural laws.

A deeper understanding of the mysteries of the universe elevated human reason in the minds of many. It was believed that man could now find truth by using the senses and reason rather than religion. Scientific method and empirical data became the way to gather knowledge.

It was the shift toward reason, rationalism, and tolerance that led to the rise of deism. It was not unreasonable to most to think that a supreme being existed, reason in their minds could prove that. It was unreasonable for them, however, to think that this supreme being would interact with man through any means, be it the written Word, the incarnate Word, or any other revelation.

Rise of Deism –

What is deism? – “a system of belief in a transcendent God who left His creation after He had created it to be governed by natural laws discoverable by reason. God thus becomes the absentee God.”

Example of the watchmaker – a watchmaker makes the watch, winds it up, and lets it run.

Deism was the religion that seemed to allow for the natural (or reason) and the scientific. In fact, it was often referred to as the religion of reason in that day.

The Deist position was that people did not need, nor have, any revelation from God apart from what can be perceived through natural law and the moral law within. They believe there is a God, He is purely transcendent above the universe He created and really has nothing to do with it now that He has set it in motion. As such, miracles (Christ becoming man), prophecy, revelation, have no real place. Although the Bible does provide some ethical standards by which men should abide – but only as human reason interprets them.

Maybe the most influential deist was a man named **Voltaire**.

He popularized Newton’s science and reason through plays, pamphlets, essays, novels, and whatever via whatever means he could get his hands on. He was a propagandist. He relentlessly criticized the established churches and pushed an atmosphere of tolerance. He, and others like him, equated religion with oppression and felt that only a return to a rationalistic deism could man break free from its bondage.

He called Christianity the “infamous thing” and pushed deism strongly.

It gained momentum everywhere. In America, Deism gained traction as well with men like Franklin, Jefferson, Allen, and Paine being leading advocates.

This Deism that was gaining traction in the age of reason served to separate culture from Christian influence, to secularize it. The deists and the proponents of rationalism wanted religious neutrality and they achieved that to a large degree. At least in the sense of religious tolerance that would play a key role in human history since this time period.

III. Revival

“Revival or renewal was a Protestant trans-Atlantic (both sides of the pond) movement...to bring believers to repentance for their sins and to engage in a godly walk, witness, and work. It often occurred spontaneously in different areas at the same time, resulting in the conversion of many, who became godly churchgoers and lived godly lives in their homes and work.” (Earle Cairns – 365)

Since the beginning of the church there have been a number of periods of revival (or spontaneous and extraordinary times where the Spirit brings many to conversion and there is a sense of renewal and revitalization spiritually). God has used these periods as His means to build His church in extraordinary ways. These periods of revival have been a mark or characteristic of the protestant church in a number of different countries over the last several hundred years. North America and the British Isles (which we will talk about in a second), Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. One such example would be the Great Awakening (both in America and Europe).

A. The Great Awakening (1735 AD) - look at it through 3 figures primarily.

Start by looking at this revival on the American side of things.

The religious culture in America was varied and complex. It had a number of things going on, some advocating total religious freedom (they didn't want to be persecuted), others advocating the need for a state religion to maintain order. They felt the impact of rationalism and deistic thinking. There wasn't much coherence to what was transpiring especially from region to region and this led many to really lose sight of what was most important in God's Word. They were losing their joy in their salvation.

But the Lord was about to do something extraordinary in revitalizing people spiritually and bringing thousands to faith in Christ in a short time.

“The Great Awakening was a series of simultaneous, spontaneous, unorganized, rural or village congregational awakenings led by godly pastors such as Jonathan Edwards.”

(Earle Cairns – 365)

There were some that had been faithfully preaching the good news and looking to restore the joy of salvation to many prior to Edwards but we are going to focus our attention on him.

1. **Jonathan Edwards** – On the American side of things
 - 1703-1758, his dad Timothy was a pastor for 56 years in the same place. 5th of 11 children.
 - Graduated from Yale in 1720, if you do the math that is 17 years old. It may have been around this time that the Lord really grabbed hold of his heart and drew him into saving faith.
 - Well read, loved reading Newton's scientific findings, but instead of turning to rationalistic thinking, it prompted him all the more to see God's beauty in the universe.
 - Became associate pastor in Northampton in 1727, sole pastor on 1729.

He described the spiritual state of the body in Northampton as suffering from “extraordinary dullness in religion.”

- His preaching became a significant part in the Great Awakening that took place in the New England area. Really beginning in 1734 and reaching its climax around 1740. Those who were unconcerned in spiritual matters before were now very much concerned.

Edwards said, “There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world...The work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner; souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ.”

This revival began to spread and reached New Jersey, Connecticut, and Virginia. He preached in various regions, one famous sermon delivered in a church in Enfield, Connecticut titled “Sinners in the hands of an angry God” had a profound impact on the hearers. Sobs and gasps were so loud that he had to stop on occasion to let it settle down.

“His sermons were not exceptionally emotive, although they did underscore the need for an experience of conviction of sin and of divine forgiveness.”

Justo Gonzalez

- Lost his pulpit in 1750 and became a missionary to the Indians until 1758.
- Many great works – maybe the greatest American theologian who ever lived. Keen psychologist, 3rd president of Princeton. Faithful Pastor. His Resolutions (70 plus resolutions for his life written when he was around 19) – Hanging on my wall
- Books (some 26 major works, but thousands of notes, letters, essays, etc.) Charity and its Fruits, Pursuing Holiness in the Lord, the Experience that counts, Freedom of the Will, Life and Diary of David Brainerd (massive impact on missions), A treatise on Religious Affections, A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God

It is said that during the revival “the Great Awakening, tens of thousands of people came to Christ in the colonies. It is estimated that 30-40 thousand people in the New England area alone were added to the church, sparking the need for an additional 150 churches in that area. That is out of an estimated 300,000 population.

Colleges were started to train pastors for the work of the ministry, like Princeton where Jonathan Edwards would become president just before his death. Missionaries were being sent out – like Edward’s himself and David Brainerd for work among the Indians.

The waves that spread from Edward’s and his works were enormous and an integral part of the Great Awakening.

2. John Wesley – Around the same time on the European side of things

It has been said that there were three prior “awakenings” or revivals leading up to the Great Awakening in Europe. You had the Reformation which was a grand awakening throughout Europe, then you had the Puritan awakening of the 17th century where there was a great movement to purify the resulting Anglican church, and separation from it if it would not be purified. There had also been a movement in the late 1600s among the Lutherans of Germany known as the Pietest movement (reforming the cold scholasticism of the Lutheran church that did not seem to apply the Word).

Now you come to another revival or awakening during in Europe about the same time as the great awakening in North America. This awakening is largely associated with a man named John Wesley and Methodism (although I would contend you can add Whitefield to that list as we will see in a moment).

Environment –

According to Bruce Shelley “In the early decades of the eighteenth century, England was a most unlikely place for a nationwide revival of vital faith.”

Deism and rationalistic thinking are alive and well in Europe as we already talked about. Especially among the elites. The church was feeling the impact of that in a number of ways, between leadership adopting those lines of thinking (thus sermons suffering greatly) plus the loss of people (both physically leaving the church but also being impacted mentally by the reason of the age). Morals were suffering in many parts of England and other countries. Gambling, drunkenness, and other vices had gained strongholds. There was a suspicion of all things theological and church related.

And along comes John Wesley.

- Born in 1703 to Samuel and Susanna Wesley (15th of 19 children).
- Referred to himself as the “Brand Plucked from the Burning” after being saved from a house fire in his childhood.
- Sometime around 1730 after a number of years serving in the Anglican church with his dad, returned to his place as a fellow at Oxford and became the leader of a group called the “Holy Club” who were nicknamed the “Methodists” because of their methodical study of the Bible, prayer, serving others, and generally pious living. (12-13 holy clubbers and none of them were actually saved)
- But, quite interestingly, he would say that he was not saved at this point. It wasn’t until 1738 that he would come to faith in Christ alone for his salvation. This came after hearing read the preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on the book of Romans and he would say his heart was strangely warmed to the gospel and he trusted in Christ alone.

"I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." John Wesley

- Shortly thereafter two things happened that lit a fire in him that would spark the revival in England.

- 1). He read Jonathan Edward's account of the Great Awakening in America,
- 2). A man named George Whitefield invited Wesley to engage in field preaching with him around Bristol England.

That started Wesley down the road of preaching in the field, "Open air. His first known open air sermon preached before some 3,000 people whom Wesley said he was shocked by their response and it lit an even greater fire in his soul to preach the Word.

"I look upon all the world as my parish; I judge it my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation." Wesley

This passion led him over 250,000 miles by horseback throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland (the equivalent of 10 times around the world). Sometimes preaching to crowds as large as 30,000 people. It is estimated that he gave 42,000 sermons, wrote a couple hundred books, and organized a Methodist society all during this time period.

(unfortunately this came at a cost of his wife who broke down and could not take all of his traveling. It was said that she married a man who was wed to his mission)

He preached boldly the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone and the resulting life of love and fleeing from sin that necessarily followed that faith. The gospel impacted all of life and society was Wesley's mantra had an enormous impact in awakening the people of England.

Thousands of people were coming to faith in Christ and he began to realize he need some organization to the movement so he began training preachers and divided England up into 7 circuits where these preachers were to take the gospel. He formed Methodist societies where these folks came together to confess sin, pray, sing, and talk together. They still attended church at their Anglican parishes generally, but felt more connected to these Methodist societies. Wesley was opposed to breaking from the church of England but there would eventually be a separation.

This revival also sparked a movement in the Anglican church that would really gain momentum in the evangelical revival of the 19th century. By God's grace through his life, Wesley renewed the vigor of religious life in England and her colonies. What could have easily been swept away by the failures of the Anglican Church, coupled with the thinking in the Age of Reason, was renewed through the preaching of the Word.

He also sent men over the big pond to supervise the Methodist movement in America (Thomas Coke) and The Methodist denomination became official in America in 1784, and in England in 1791 (after Wesley was dead). In 1795 the Methodist church became fully separated from the Anglican church even though it still maintained Anglican elements.

Shortly after his death it was estimated that there were some 79,000 followers in England and 40,000 in America as a result of his ministry.

3. **George Whitfield** – on both the American and European side of things

“Like lightning from a cloudless sky, Whitefield stepped onto the world stage as the most prolific herald of the gospel since the days of the New Testament.”
Lawson

- Lived from 1714-1770, sixth and youngest of the Whitefield children.
- His dad died when he was two and he was raised by his mom alone until she remarried when he was 8. But that marriage ended in divorce.
- George got involved in stealing, lying, fighting, cheating, cursing.
- Went to Oxford at age 18. Met the Wesley brothers, Charles and John.
- Upon invitation by Charles, he a member of the Holy Club that Wesley headed up.
- At age 21 Whitefield placed his faith in Christ.
- Just over a year later, he began preaching in churches in London, Bristol, and Bath and then in the open air in Bristol England (early in 1739) prior to John Wesley (preaching to open-air crowds of an estimated 650,000 people monthly. So his impact was felt on the European side of things as the revival began to sweep through the lands there. He would make his way to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the Netherlands, Gibraltar.
- But then he came over to America in late 1739 and began making his way all throughout the colonies.
- Between 1739-1769 he traveled back and forth from America to the British Isles and all throughout the colonies preaching the gospel powerfully (starting in Philadelphia with 6,000 of the 13,000 population attending, then to New York, Georgia, New Jersey, the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut).

Essentially doing what his counterpart (Wesley) was doing in England, Wales, and Scotland.

“The whole world is now my parish. Wheresoever my Master calls me, I am ready to go and preach the everlasting gospel.”
Whitefield

People were coming in droves to hear him preach. Even those espousing deism (Ben Franklin) could not deny the power of his preaching.

Quotes about His preaching:

“Other men seem to be only half-alive, but Whitefield was all life, fire, wind, force. My own model, if I may have such a thing in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield. With unequal footsteps must I follow his glorious track.” Spurgeon

(Spurgeon – known as the prince of preachers – referred to Whitefield as the chief of preachers)

Hymn writer John Newton said, “As a preacher, if any man were to ask me who was second-best I had ever heard, I should be at some loss; but in regard to the first, Mr. Whitefield so far exceeds every other man of my time that I should be at no loss to say.”

- Shelley said “Whitefield’s preaching was unforgettable. Using startling images he could make listeners feel the pain of sin and the terror of hell. Then with tears in his voice he could describe the love of Christ until his audience cried with him for forgiveness.”

Simonetta Carr wrote of Whitefield’s preaching, “He used large gestures and spoke with such a loud voice that as many as twenty-five thousand people could hear him without a microphone. He also spoke with so much expression that he could move some people by the way he pronounced a simple word like Mesopotamia. The best thing about Whitefield, however, is that he preached the gospel – the good news of salvation by grace alone, only through faith in Christ.”

As a result of his powerful preaching, steady and thick streams of people flowed in to hear him preach. (Potentially 80% of the population in the colonies heard him preach).

Unified much of the revivals that were going on in different regions of North America. By 1740 he had linked up with the revival that was going on in New England and the surrounding areas under Jonathan Edwards. He even preached four times in Edwards’ very own church, which it is reported that Edwards’ was found weeping in response to Whitefield’s preaching.

“Before Whitefield, there was no unifying intercolonial person or event...But by 1750 virtually every American loved and admired Whitefield and saw him as their champion.”
Yale Historian Harry Stout

Partly because of the revival in and of itself, but also due to efforts like Whitfield's there began to be a sense of unity in the colonies and a sense of commonalities in culture and morality. This was the first movement that would involve and embrace all 13 colonies and a sense of commonality was developed. It is the sense of commonality (couple with growing sentiments about the nature of government) that many say got the ball rolling toward revolution all the more.

It is estimated that between his time preaching on the British Isles, and his time in the colonies (some 34 years), he preached a somewhere around 30,000 sermons. It is conservative to estimate that he preached over a thousand sermons a year for 30+ years. Some 10,000,000 people hearing him preach at some point (in the days prior to radio broadcast).

"Whitefield was the greatest English preacher of all time... His influence in England, his influence in Wales, his influence in Scotland, and his influence in America, is beyond calculation."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

What made him so effective, God using him for his glory. But he was a man saturated in Scripture, deeply devoted to prayer, profoundly humble, and always focused on Christ.

*Side note, he and Whitfield had a break from each other in 1739 over theological issues as Wesley had a problem with Whitfield's Calvinistic beliefs – the Methodist church having adopted and retained Arminian theology ever since). He was really the only prominent leader in the great awakening that held to Arminian beliefs. (note also – both had great impacts for the gospel, the caricature of Calvinists is wrong)

Negative side of the Great Awakening -

The Great Awakening had many great things but also led to further division of denominations as groups split off in many different directions, each with their own hobby horse issue or doctrine. The Unitarians come as a split off of the New England Congregationalists around this time period for example. You had people leaving their parishes and organizing their own church bodies.

Because of the unique working of God and the often emotional response to what God was doing, some began to equate an emotional experience with true faith in Christ. Something Edwards in particular tried to warn people about and spoke of even in his book – Religious Affections.

After hearing men like Whitfield preach, many began to be dissatisfied with their local pastor's preaching. Some of that was good because it lit a fire under some preachers who had maybe been slacking off, but some of it was unhelpful as many faithful pastors who were preaching the Word were considered to be less desirable to sit under because they did not have the emotion and oratory power of a Whitfield.

*Note about the Great Awakening, in each of the lives of the men that the Lord used mightily in the Great Awakening, there is a pattern of prayer. These men prayed fervently for the Lord to work amongst a people who were spiritually dead and the Lord honored that. This seems to be the case in the many periods of revival and renewal over the years. Great times of God's hand moving in extraordinary ways always seem to be preceded by great times of prayer.

My guess is that we all long to see a spiritual revival, a renewal, in what is quickly becoming a spiritually sleeping, if not dead nation. We long to see it nationally, on statewide level, on a county level, and surely we long to see it in our city. Since this is what we long for, then let us be a people who are fervently praying for it. Individually and Corporately. Prayer meeting on Friday mornings.

Great revivals are preceded by great times of prayer. God so chooses to work this way in order that He might be glorified.

They prayed and they faithfully preached the good news. May we be found doing the same and may the Lord build His church through us.

Other Notable people and events during this time period -

Rembrandt - (Protestant painter who effectively combined faith and art - Return of the Prodigal Son 1662, The Raising of the Cross)

John Bunyan – Pilgrim's Progress published in 1678

Other Puritans – Thomas Manton, John Flavel, John Owen, Richard Baxter

German composers Johan Sebastian Bach and George Frederic Handel – Born in 1685 and composed during this time period. (Messiah around 1742)

Isaac Watts – published "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" in 1709. (When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)

Robert Raikes begins the Sunday School movement (1780)