

When Jesus Came to America

A Look at the Evangelical and Oxford Movements in the Church

Part 2

The Enlightenment - 1

- Enlightenment Period
 - ca 1688 to about 1789
 - Descartes's *Discourse on the Method*, 1688
 - French Revolution, 1789
 - The faculty of reason was advocated as primary source and legitimacy for authority.
 - Europe broke through the "sacred circle" that had circumscribed thinking.

Enlightenment Views vs. Earlier Views

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| ■ Enlightenment Period | ■ Early Medieval Period |
| ■ Principle movements included | ■ Religious authority |
| ■ Reason | ■ Absolute state power |
| ■ Centrality of freedom | ■ Censorship of ideas |
| ■ Individual rights and liberties | ■ Guild-based economic systems |
| ■ Common sense | ■ Renaissance Period |
| ■ Democracy | ■ Divine right of Kings |
| ■ Separation of powers | ■ Oligarchy/aristocracy |
| ■ Principles of deism | ■ Theocracy |

The Enlightenment Effect on Religion

- Protestants not only critiqued Catholicism, they also produced a bewildering array of churches each claiming the exclusive path to salvation.
- Religious wars fueled skepticism and questions about the certainties of Lutheranism and Calvinism (the reformed churches). In time, enlightenment thinkers rejected orthodox Christianity.

The Uniqueness of America

- The enlightenment came to our shores with the colonists, and later politically via Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and others. Inspired by the work of John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jeaques Rosseau, Voltaire, they promoted a culture in which religious tolerance *had* to be the norm, lest the struggles of Europe be repeated here.

The Rise of Evangelism

- Evangelicalism probably had its roots in the pietism of Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) of the German Lutheran Church. Spener's followers looked to "re-birth" and individual holiness.
- The elevation of "self," of reason, personal experience, and personal revelation that developed out of the Enlightenment helped move Protestantism toward evangelical expression.

A Definition of Evangelism

- Evangelical Christians are those with “a dedication to the gospel that is expressed in a personal faith in Christ as Lord, an understanding of the gospel as defined authoritatively by scripture, and a desire to communicate the gospel both in evangelism and social reform.” [Robert K. Johnson. *The Variety of American Evangelism*, 1991]

The Evangelical Movements

- The Great Awakenings (England and Colonies)
 - First: 1730-1740
 - Jonathan Edwards (England), *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*
 - George Whitefield (Colonies)
 - John and Charles Wesley (England)
 - Second: 1800-1840
 - Charles Grandison Finney (United States)
- The Revival Movement (America)
 - Arose in the decades after the revolution
 - Camp meetings

Evangelical Characteristics

- A formalized pursuit of spiritual renewal; mass conversions.
- Exercising of miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy).

The Great Awakening in America - 1

- In New England, the Great Awakening was influential among many Congregationalists.
- In the Middle and Southern colonies, it was influential among Presbyterians.

The Great Awakening in America - 2

- In the southern Tidewater and Low Country, Baptist and Methodist preachers converted both whites and blacks, enslaved and free. The Baptists welcomed blacks into active roles, including as preachers.
- Before the American Revolution, the first black Baptist churches were founded in the South in Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia; in Petersburg, Virginia, two black Baptist churches were founded before any white church.

Did Religion in America Contribute to Wars?

- Joseph Tracy, the minister and historian, who coined the term “The Great Awakening,” said in his 1842 book *The Great Awakening*, that the First Great Awakening was a precursor to the Revolutionary War, and that the abolition movement, part of the wider Second Great Awakening, contributed to the crisis over slavery which led to the Civil War.

Responses to the Evangelical Movements

- One of the greatest effects of the evangelical movements was to promote religious tolerance. This was handily accomplished in America, but more slowly in England.

The Oxford Movement as a Response to Government - 1

- In 1829 the English Parliament passed the Catholic Emancipation Bill admitting Catholics to Parliament.
- Other changes included transferring some functions of the church to the civil service.
- In 1833, the Whig government also attempted to reduce the number of Bishops in the Church of Ireland.

The Oxford Movement as a Response to Government - 2

- John Henry Newman and others opposed the fact that such changes were instituted by the Government and not by the church itself.
- He thought that the Church of England could only defend itself by renewing its doctrine of the Church.



The Tractarians

- 1833-41: The Group at Oxford College began to write tracts (*Tracts for the Times*).
- Over a decade, the tracts turned more theological. They feared the new evangelical movement with its stress on adult experience would become a new form of "works-righteousness" theology. They stressed the importance of "Baptismal regeneration" as opposed to "adult renewal."

The Oxford Theology

- Newman stated that the Church was not a mere national institution, but a divine society with its foundation in heaven.
- He affirmed apostolic succession.
- He insisted on three-fold ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon.
- Defined Anglican ecclesiology in continuity with the undivided Catholic church (before 500).
- Authority of the Church rested on scripture, ministry, and creed. Anglican tradition was only secondary.

Oxford Doctrine in Practice

- Catholic liturgical traditions were restored.
- Gothic churches built with neo-medieval architecture.
- Restored a "beauty of holiness" to church through revival of religious orders.
- Evangelized to the poor in urban and rural areas.

Effect of Oxford Movement on Evangelical Movement

- Anglican High Churchman (followers of Newman) were alarmed by the fast growing evangelical dissenting churches in England, and applied Newman's ecclesiology to deny the ecclesial character of every Protestant church except their own. (Sound familiar?)
- The idea was that "Rome was a church, however corrupt; Geneva was not a church, whatever good might be found there." [Sheridan Gilley, 2000].

Oxford in America

- At the 1844 convention, the Episcopal bishops were split: evangelicals vs. Oxford sympathizers. The evangelicals feared that the Oxford movement undermined the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- However, because the Oxford movement endorsed the case for the historic episcopacy, the House of Bishops could not outright suppress Oxford sentiments.

The American Solution

- Because consensus between those favoring and disapproving of the Oxford movement could not be achieved in the House, the debate moved into educational circles:
 - Nashota House, Berkeley, and Seabury seminaries were formed by pro-Oxford graduates of General Seminary.
 - Philadelphia Divinity School, Episcopal Divinity School, and three missionary societies were formed by the Evangelicals.

The Episcopal Mix

- Before and after the civil war, two camps emerged: Evangelical catholicism and Anglican catholicism. Both distanced themselves from American revivalism.
 - Anglo-catholics rejected ecumenism, and felt more aligned with R. Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.
 - Evangelical-catholics were more ecumenical, more "protestant."

The Episcopal Mix

- In time, the Episcopal Church began to see itself as a denomination that could speak to both "Catholic-like" traditions and protestant traditions, and evangelical traditions – a trend that continues today as the Episcopal Church forges ecumenical ties with the ELCA and the UMC.
- By the 20th C, the Episcopal Church was more identifiable for its social ministry and worship than for its doctrine.

So Where Are We Today?

