

# EXPONENTIAL

## Spiritual Awakenings

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### Session 6: The Second Great Awakening #1

#### The Revival of 1800

- The Revival of 1800 was two-pronged with revivals on the east coast and the frontier.
- A series of revivals lasting from 1792-1842. Two Periods:
  - 1792-1812 (stifled by the War of 1812)
  - 1822-1842
- More of a grass-roots effort by local pastors
- Religious decline after the First Great Awakening:
  - Design and growing secularism
  - Spiritual state of colleges
  - Unitarianism

#### The Revival in the Eastern Church

- The churches in the eastern states began witnessing revival in 1791 when local revivals sparked once again among New England Congregationalists.
- Since the FGA had been criticized for its negative elements such as fanaticism and delusions, ministers in the east preferred to appeal to the mind instead of the emotions.
- Prayer was revisited.
  - Isaac Backus and Stephen Gano (both Baptist) and a score of other New England ministers issued a circular letter entreating ministers and churches to commit themselves to a concert of prayer for spiritual awakening. It was suggested that people dedicate the first Tuesday in January 1795 to prayer and then once a quarter continue in public prayer until God answered their prayers for spiritual awakening. All the major denominations supported this call to prayer. This great Concert of Prayer in 1795 marked the emergence of the general awakening.
- Local revivals continued

#### Revivals in the Colleges

- Most of the college revivals took place after the turn of the century.
- They were the result of earnest and sincere prayers, not discussions and debates.
- Hampden-Sydney College
  - Spiritual anemia had seized the school until 1786.
  - September 1787 – when the college resumed after the summer, one student had become a Christian and two more were earnestly seeking.
  - That fall, three or four of the students began to meet for prayer on Saturday afternoons in the woods some distance from the school. One Saturday, due to the threat of rain, the students changed the meeting place to a room in the college.



- Thankfully, the President of the School, John Blair Smith, having witnessed revivals himself, rejoiced over this first evidence of spiritual awakening in his students. Instead, the mob was soundly rebuked. With this decision, President Smith would help the revival stay the course.
- Yale College
  - President Timothy Dwight (1752-1817)
    - Born in Northampton, Massachusetts.
    - Child prodigy
    - In 1765, at 13 years old, he entered Yale College. He struggled for two years with college life. However, at the beginning of his junior year he rededicated himself to the purpose of preparing himself for the future.
    - Upon graduation Dwight taught students and then in 1777 joined the army as a chaplain. He attracted large crowds to his sermons in which he encouraged his listeners to fight off fear and put hope in victory based on the Scriptures. In 1778 he had to resign the chaplaincy to return home to console and assist his recently widowed mother.
    - May 1783 he was invited to pastor a church in Greenfield. Dwight remained in Greenfield for 12 years before assuming the Presidency of Yale College.
  - When he arrived Dwight faced the challenge head-on. He challenged the students to ask any question regarding the truth of the Scriptures, and he responded to it in a series of poignant sermons in chapel.
  - In 1802, two seniors professed faith in Christ, quickly dozens were powerfully awakened. Of the 230 students enrolled, about half the seniors entered the ministry, while 63 students were converted.
  - Significant leaders of the awakening eventually came from Yale:
    - Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844)
      - Never pastored a great church, wrote a book, or led an organization. He was an itinerant evangelist who visited churches upon invitation. His preaching during the awakening led to the conversion of well over 30,000 people.
      - Was converted during a period of revival. By 1805, Nettleton had committed himself to pursue missionary service. He enrolled at Yale and completed his academic training. While he was not an impressive student, Timothy Dwight observed, "He will make one of the most useful men this country has even seen."
      - While waiting for a call from one of the missionary societies, Nettleton ministered as pastor for a brief period in the "waste places" of southeastern Connecticut.
      - In the fall of 1812 Nettleton received an invitation to preach in South Salem, NY. On his way to New York, he stopped to spend a week in South Britain, Connecticut. It was here that his fame as an evangelist began.
      - From this time in 1812 until 1822, Nettleton saw revival fire spread through his ministry.
    - Lyman Beecher (1775-1863)
      - While putting in a post-graduate year at Yale, Beecher had his first religious experience.
      - After his baptism, he accepted the position to preach at a Presbyterian church in the village of East Hampton, Long Island. He says he preached every sermon with his on the gun to hit somebody.
      - One year after ministering to the town, Beecher preached his first revival. In six weeks, 80 were won to Christ and 50 were added to the church.
- The Haystack Revival at Williams College
  - Samuel Mills – had received a call to missions and gone for training to Williams College in Massachusetts. At the college several students with similar callings joined Mills in establishing the Society of Brethren, a group that gathered in a grove of maples near the campus to pray and discuss about missions.
  - On a warm August day in 1806, a rainstorm drove the group to seek shelter at a large haystack. Sheltered from the wind and rain at the haystack's side, the men continued in prayer. While there, Mills proposed a mission to India.
  - In June of 1810 American foreign missions was born.
- Other revivals happened at other schools as well.