

The Great Awakening

One of the most important things that happened in colonial America was the **Great Awakening**. The leaders of the Great Awakening have been called the spiritual Founding Fathers of America, and their teaching did much to shape the spiritual heritage of America.

Revival

The Great Awakening was a spiritual revival that swept through the colonies in the years around 1730 to 1760. It may surprise you that such faithful churchgoers as the colonists needed a revival, but the fact is, many of them had never been saved. They went to church and were good citizens and lived good lives, but many of them had never accepted Christ as their personal Savior. Many were depending on their good lives to save them.

How the Great Awakening Shaped America

The preaching of George Whitefield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and the other leaders in the Great Awakening helped the colonists to see more than ever that all men are equal in worth to God. *The preaching of the Great Awakening did more than perhaps anything else to draw the colonists together so that our country would truly become one nation under God.*

The colonists saw that since all men are equal in the eyes of God, then no man is better than any other man. Therefore, all men should be equal in the sight of the law. All deserve equal justice, no matter who they are and no matter what their religious beliefs may be. This truth paved the way for the colonists to write, just a few years later:

**We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal;
that they are endowed by their Creator
with certain unalienable rights;**

that among these are
life,
liberty, and
the pursuit of happiness.

Many years later, Calvin Coolidge, who was President of the United States from 1923 to 1929, said this:

America was born in a revival of religion.
Back of that revival were John Wesley,
George Whitefield, and Francis Asbury.

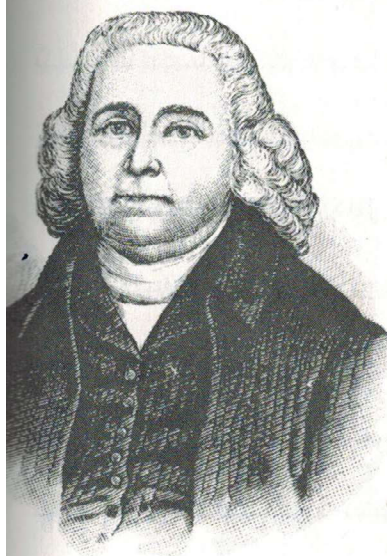
The Bible truths of the Great Awakening also paved the way to the most wonderful freedom in America—the freedom of religion.

Methodist churches grew up in our land, and Methodist circuit-riding preachers rode on horseback to preach

from town to town. Many Presbyterian, Congregational, and Dutch Reformed churches were brought back to preaching the gospel, and Baptist churches sprang up throughout the colonies. The Baptists were especially eager to bring freedom of religion to America, for they had often been persecuted for preaching the gospel in Europe, in England, and even in America.

The great idea of separation of church and state that Roger Williams and his Baptist friends gave to Rhode Island would soon be spread to the whole country, and America would be seen as a vast mission field, open for the free spread of the gospel.

People Worth Knowing More About



Isaac Backus

Isaac Backus—Defender of Liberty

One colonist who came to know Christ during the Great Awakening was **Isaac Backus**. He became a traveling evangelist. In 1756 he became pastor of the First Baptist Church in Middleborough, Massachusetts, and he was pastor there for fifty-eight years.

During those fifty-eight years, he preached to his congregation and helped many Christians in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and other colonies. He also worked very hard to make our country free from England and to bring religious liberty to America.

He especially spoke out against the religious taxes that all the people of a colony had to pay to support the Congregational churches. He said that people should be free to support their own churches, not a state church that they did