

# 1st great awakening of the 18th century

Religion



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## 1st Great Awakening of the 18th Century

As early as the 16th century the church was established when the Virginia legislature made governmental support of the Anglican Church in America. However, many people by that time lacked interest in religious matters and only a few portion of the population attended church services. It took almost twenty years later after the establishment of the church in the state of Virginia for the creation of the first local clergy. The '1st great awakening' refers to the revitalization of religion-piety that swept across the America States in the late 17th -18th century. The events in America were prompted by the religious activities and upsurge occurring on the other side of Atlantic in England, Scotland, and Germany. A new faith rose out of the Protestant culture that believed more in the Bible than normal human reasoning. The new class of preachers and evangelist perpetrated the spread of this new faith.

The first instances of the 'awakening' in America occurred in the states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The William Tennent family led it; the clergymen not only initiated religious revivals but also organized seminars and established seminary known today as the Princeton University. The England preacher George Whitefield liaised with other Anglican clergies and reformed the Church of England leading to the birth of the Methodist church. Whitefield traveled widely across the American states of Virginia and the Atlantic holding a massive religious meeting. His preaching style was more of a theatrical performance; gesturing dramatically, thundering out threats of hell fire and devil salvages and even weeping openly. Their teaching mainly focused on repentance and retrieving social norms to the society. They

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resorted to preaching from open places as they attracted great followers. The great awakening had a polarized effect to the colonizers who were divided across religious lines. They also had a great influence on the governments by seeking legislative laws that favored their operations. Their religious views condemned the evils in the society as at this time slavery was at its peak. They threatened to hell fire and brimstone for those who did not repent (Gaustad & Noll, 2003). They also brought division in the Church of England leading to the emergence of the Methodist church. It also saw the formation of the first African Baptists churches in states such as southern Virginia. It also resulted in a better reflection of God and salvation through Jesus Christ. The great awakening played a vital role in the upcoming religious revolution. Many people developed a greater sense of God and were passionately and emotionally connected to him through salvation. It also led to a greater appreciation of women in the society although they were not allowed to preach as at that time (White, 2006). The leaders such as Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards kept the memoirs and diaries of their preaching as they traversed across the great Atlantic and American states. The 1st great awakening, therefore, created a more passionate relationship with people and God. It also led to a better understanding of salvation and establishment of the Baptist church. A new seed had been planted in which religion thrived. The future of religion seemed promising, yet polarizing individuals on religious lines. Additionally, the preaching was meant to bring more people to Christ and condemn the evil in the society resulting to fear among the colonizers.

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