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Teaching Notes

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A.C.T.S. Church History Seminar

America: Puritans, Two Awakenings, Slavery (1609-1900)

I. Period Overview

I. Colonial Era (1609-1789)

A. The New World

1. Roman Catholic Missions
2. English settlements: Jamestown, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay Colony

B. New England Puritanism

1. Bay Colony: “City on a Hill”
2. Characteristics of N.E. Puritanism
3. Key leaders: John Cotton, John Winthrop, Increase Mather, Cotton Mather
4. Key critics: Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams
5. Key developments: congregationalism, missions, toleration
6. Decline of N. E. Puritanism: Half-way Covenant, Salem witch trials, Stoddard, Harvard

C. The First Great Awakening (1740-1745)

1. George Whitefield (1714-1770)
2. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)
3. Baptist roots in the Great Awakening

D. The Rise of Deism

1. Thomas Paine: “Rights of Man,” “Age of Reason”
2. Thomas Jefferson:

II. The National Era (1789-1900)

A. The Second Great Awakening (1800-1830)

1. Periods of revival
2. Characteristics: Arminian, frontier, “revivalism”, populist
3. Methodists and Baptists
4. Key events: Great Western Revival, Logan County, Cane Ridge
5. Key people: Barton Stone, Alexander Campbell,
6. Charles Finney: Central figure of “revivalism”

B. Theological Developments

1. “New Divinity”: Nathaniel Taylor
2. Unitarianism and Unbelief
3. Liberalism

- C. Mormonism
 - 1. Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon
 - 2. Sect grows and moves
 - 3. Brigham Young and the move to Utah
- D. The Rise of the Missions Movement
 - 1. Adoniram Judson
 - 2. Luther Rice
 - 3. The Triennial Conference
- E. The Struggle Over Slavery
 - 1. Origins of American slavery
 - 2. Origins of the abolitionist movement
 - 3. The Baptists split: The origins of the “Southern Baptists”
 - 4. The Civil War

II. New England Puritanism

- A. Massachusetts Bay Colony: “City on a Hill”

Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”

- 1. Between 1630-1643: 20,000 colonists arrived from England
- 2. Highly educated, wealthy English Puritans (compared w. lower-class Separatists of Plymouth)
- 3. John Winthrop was first governor; ruled for 14 years
- 4. Made covenant with God to be “a city on a hill”; Covenant read a lot like Mosaic Cov.

Sermon aboard the *Arbella*, “A Model of Christian Charity”: “Thus stands the cause between God and us, we are entered into Covenant with Him for this work...; If the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this Covenant...; but if we shall neglect the observation of these Articles... the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us... and make us know the price of the breach of such a Covenant.... [If we are obedient] we shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand.... [W]e must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.”

- B. Characteristics of N.E. Puritanism

- 1. Deep piety: saw the providence of God in everything; constant focus on pleasing Him
- 2. Importance of the idea of covenants: PATTERNED AFTER OLD TESTAMENT
 - a. troubles seen as covenant curses (e.g. King Philip War, 1675)
 - b. ministers seen to be covenant prophets
 - c. “Jeremiad” a common sermon style: “God is judging us for breaking the covenant”

d. personal salvation not accomplished by works, BUT national covenant was!!

3. Political organization: church and state intertwined...THEOCRACY
4. For the individual: Regeneration essential for salvation
5. Regulative principle in worship:

"They hold and maintain that the word of God contained in the writings of the Prophets and Apostles is of absolute perfection, given by Christ the Head of the Church, to be unto the same the sole canon and rule of all matters of religion, and the worship and service of God whatsoever. And that whatsoever cannot be justified by the said word is unlawful." William Bradshaw, 1605

"They vowed to limit all church policy and worship practices to what could be directly based on statements or procedures found in the Bible, except in 'things indifferent'..." Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints*

6. Church organization: congregational
7. Theology: Calvinistic
8. Love for learning: Harvard College (established 1636 to train ministers)

C. Key leaders:

1. John Cotton (1584-1652)

Fled persecution under Archbishop Laud, landed in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1633; ordained 'teacher' of First Church, Congregational in Boston. Defended exile of both Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson

2. John Winthrop (1588-1649) First governor of Bay Colony; came in 1630; somewhat aristocratic and authoritarian; governed wisely and well
3. Increase Mather (1639-1723) Born in Massachusetts, educated at Harvard College; lead development of the Half-Way Covenant; helped end executions for witchcraft; pastored Second Church (Old North Church), eventually w. his son
4. Cotton Mather (1663-1728) entered Harvard at 11, took B.A. at 15, preached first sermon at 17; became assistant to his father (Increase); conservative Puritan, strove to maintain theocratic rule which was then in decline; had a huge library of 450 books, largest in continent

D. Key critics:

1. Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) daughter of a minister; mother of 14 children; began to read nursing mothers the sermons, then added her own interpretations to them; criticized Puritan leaders for adding works to justification by faith alone; spread "antinomian" doctrine of "covenant of grace"; gained a large following, was expelled from the colony & fled to Rhode Island

2. Roger Williams (c. 1603-c. 1683) founder of Rhode Island and of the first Baptist church in America; came to Mass. Bay Colony in 1631, seeking the liberty of the conscience; moved away from Boston b/c of conflicts w. Puritan leaders, settled down in Plymouth; 1633, moved to Salem, began to agitate about sep. of church & state; authorities gave him six weeks to leave colony; kept preaching that civil magistrates had no right to interfere in church

E. Key developments: congregationalism, missions, toleration

1. Congregationalism

- a. def'n: each local church is the final human authority for the life, doctrines, decisions of that church (no ecclesiastical structure over the local church)
- b. makes sense in the "howling wilderness" of New England... miles away from nearest church, an ocean away from England's flawed hierarchy
- c. tried to influence English church during English Civil War with Cambridge Platform

2. Indian missions:

- a. "Come over and help us" (Massachusetts State seal... changed in 1971)
- b. David Brainerd (1718-1747) Worked among Indians at Crossweeksung near Newark, N.J.; journal has become a devotional classic; died young from TB

3. Toleration: Baptists persecuted, eventually led to tolerance

- a. Baptists' ideas of separation of church & state opposed the theocracy
- b. rejection of infant baptism opposed the covenant ideal (circumcision)
- c. Roger Williams a powerful voice for toleration which eventually came

F. Decline of New England Puritanism: Half-way Covenant, Salem witch trials, Stoddard, Harvard

1. Half-way covenant (1662):

- a. voting in civil elections open only to church members
- b. children were "members of the covenant" since they had been baptized as infants
- c. BUT many second generation Puritans were unregenerate (i.e. unbelievers) and could give no testimony of the "new birth" in their hearts (required for church membership); now they were asking for their children to be baptized
- d. Christian commonwealth threatened with dissolution
- e. solution: Halfway covenant: to maintain membership in church (thus voting rights) adult children had to 1) assent to historic Christian doctrine; 2) live outwardly moral lives... they could baptize their children, but no one could participate in Lord's Supper unless they were "full members"
- f. 100 years later: Jonathan Edwards opposed this vigorously, lost his church over it

2. Salem witch trials (1692)

- a. European churches frequently burned witches (5000 in Alsace, France in 1600's)
 - b. only twelve in New England until 1692
 - c. societal conditions (changed charter w. England) create climate of fear
 - d. accusations began flying with some adolescent girls who suffered convulsions
 - e. twenty persons were executed
 - f. Cotton Mather wrote against use of "spectral evidence" (seemingly supernatural accusations which could be counterfeited by Satan to accuse the innocent)
 - g. by 1697, the court publicly repented for their activities in shedding innocent blood
 - h. result: weakening of authority and influence of Puritan vision and ideals
3. Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729) Believed the Lord's Supper had converting power, advocated opening Lord's Supper to all (undoing Half-way Covenant, leading to great dilution of churches)
 4. Harvard College: went Unitarian in 1805

III. The First Great Awakening (1740-1745)

A. Preparations

1. A Decline of Piety

- a. "Jeremiads" were right; people were losing interest in God
- b. Samuel Willard, *The Peril of the Times Displayed* (1700)

"That there is a form of godliness among us is manifest.... But the great enquiry is, whether there be not too much of a general denying of the power of it?"

- c. Willard listed: immorality, Sabbath neglect, drunkenness, small success of the gospel, few signs of genuine conversion, contempt of ministers, neglect of family worship, growing children poorly trained in faith

"It is still a solemn enquiry to be made by us, namely, whether God's holding back his correcting hand, and the opening of his bountiful hand to us, be because He is reconciled to us, or because his patience is wearied with our insensibleness of and stupidity under His judgements..."

2. Precursors: Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards, Gilbert Tennant... all saw small revivals break out before the Great Awakening

B. Edwards and The Itinerants

1. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

- a. preached one of the most powerful revival sermons ever; "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
- b. also the Awakening's most astute and careful critics (see below)

2. George Whitefield (1714-1770)

- a. one of the Oxford “Holy Club” (“Methodists”) with Wesley brothers
- b. great innovator, began “field preaching” in England, saw thousands of conversions
- c. tireless preacher, crossed Atlantic Ocean thirteen times in a sailing vessel
- d. raised money for orphanage in Georgia
- e. powerful voice, dramatic presentation

Illus. Benjamin Franklin, measuring out the radius

- f. controversial: preached *On the Danger of an Unconverted Clergy* “The reason why congregations have been so dead is, because they have dead men preaching to them. O that the Lord may quicken and revive them! How can dead men beget living children?”

Readings: *Journals*, Wednesday, May 14, 1740; Sermon: *Marriage of Cana*, 1742

3. Others: Eleazar Wheelock, James Davenport

C. The New Birth: the central doctrinal issue constantly emphasized by Awakening preachers... “You must be born again!!”

- 1. Deep conviction of sin, deep passions stirred
- 2. Crying out to God for salvation... long period of distress that salvation would never come
- 3. Deep fear of eternal fires of hell
- 4. At last!! Vision of God and assurance of salvation

D. Trouble in the Churches

- 1. Much controversy... especially over the issue of “unconverted clergy” [Gilbert Tennant preached this sermon in 1740, as also George Whitefield had done]
- 2. Some zealots began to interrupt sermons!!

Joseph Griswold, February 10, 1745

- 3. Also problems with Separatism: many Baptist churches began at this time

E. Assessments

- 1. Jonathan Edwards: *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1742)
 - a. written to help sort out phenomena, bring order out of chaos
 - b. careful division:

- i) Negative signs (what are no signs, and what are no evidences that a work is NOT from the Spirit of God)

He would say: "It is no sign either way that..." (e.g. great disturbances of the body, great imaginations of divine things and emotional reactions to them, etc.)

- ii) Positive signs (what are distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God)

These were as follows: 1) growth in love for Jesus Christ, God in the flesh; 2) men's fleshly lusts are slayed, their love for the world diminishes; 3) greater regard for the Holy Scriptures and yearning for their truth; 4) growth in a discerning spirit making ones ability to distinguish between truth and error; 5) growth in obedience to the two great commandments... love for God and love for neighbor

IV. The Second Great Awakening & Finney's "Revivalism" (1800-1830)

A. "Kentucky Ablaze" 1801... then other regions

1. James McGready (1758-1817) & Barton Stone (1772-1844)
2. Organized large camp meetings at Gasper River & Cane Ridge
3. Cane Ridge meeting lasted a full week; drew crowds of between 10,000 and 25,000!!

Amazing! The largest city in the areas was Lexington, only 2,000 string!

4. Reports of Cane Ridge Revival spread like wildfire
5. Soon other pockets of revival sprang up patterned after Cane Ridge
6. Revival spread to North & South Carolina, Virginia
7. Tremendous increase in Baptist, Methodists, Prebyterians alike
8. Moral issues took center stage... especially drunkenness

B. Characteristics

1. Simple, lively, persuasive preaching
2. Common folk turning to evangelical faith with untamed emotions
3. Denominations cooperated, all reaped benefits from revivals
4. Potent controversy between supporters and opponents of revival

C. Charles Finney's "New Measures"

1. 1825-1830: series of revivals along Erie Canal: Rome, Utica, Troy, Rochester

2. Basic concepts: “Religion is a work of man; a revival is not a miracle”... revivalism became a technique which could be studied; if revival didn’t come, it was the revivalists’ fault

“A revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle in any sense... It is a purely scientific result of the right use of the constituted means.” Charles G. Finney, 1832

3. Revival is the exciting of sinners, and bringing of excited sinners into contact with truth
4. Series of “New Measures” to ensure revival: protracted nightly meetings, exhortations by women, the “anxious bench,” (to which seekers were invited for counsel and prayer), the use of publicity to ensure large crowds; speaking style that was tough, direct, popular, unmistakably based upon the free will of the hearer; invented the “Invitation system” still used today of long choruses and “coming forward” at the meetings