

C. Major Events Impacting the American Church in the National Period

Once again we are surveying in rather rapid fashion. My syllabus notes will necessarily be augmented by oral discussion and you will see many "fill-in-the-blanks" sort of pages. It is also a matter of selection and some of the influential elements are well beyond the mere boundries of this continent. So, hang with us and we will all hang together.

1. Religious determinations: those events that are chiefly religious in character and thereby are more properly in the province of the church.

a. Revivalism:

Always a part of the calling and work of the church, this general heading covers two main ideas: evangelism and renewal. The first of these is the taking of the Gospel on a wider sphere to an increasing number of persons while the second is the stimulation of religious life within a community. We lump them altogether in the place for the sake of ease of consultation:

(1) the Second Great Awakening...1798-1804

This followed the dearth of religious expression that came with the close of the Revolution and the great increase in deism and practical agnosticism (see the syllabus notes under "Unitarianism" on page 54 etc.). It began on the frontier and crept backwards, so to speak, into the more highly "civilized" east. While not of such gigantic impact as the first Great Awakening, it was still a move of great force and it gave us a few things that have been strengthening factors in the church. Among these are:

(a) the Camp Meeting, forerunner of the Bible Conference ministries.

(b) an increased appreciation for the printed literature that would become so much a part of the renewal and evangelistic work in the rest of our history.

(c) the social concern that would lead shortly to the Gospel Mission efforts. (Discussed later)

The impact did not exactly turn the nation around but it had a very salutary effect on the general health of the new nation. Its leaders were less strongly pronounced than those of its predecessors although in the east the leadership of Timothy Dwight at Yale was crucial and in the west, the presbyterian pastor/evangelist James McCready was one of the prime movers. In general we may say