

# **“Church History: Heroes, Heretics & Holy Wars”**

## **Sunday School Notes**

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### **CLASS 16: Quakers, Methodists & The 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening**

Someone asked about **Salem Witch Trials** in the last class:

Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 & 93, around 200 people were accused of being witches, with 20 of them being put to death. It started with Reverend Parris’ daughters, who were 9 and 11, and had “fits” that they blamed on 3 women. Accusations and paranoia followed, and people were arrested, imprisoned and killed to keep the community safe. Eventually the Puritan father and son, Increase and Cotton Mather, pleaded that the courts not allow dreams and visions to be used as evidence. And Governor Phipp’s wife was questioned, so he started prohibiting new arrests, and soon pardoned everyone who was in prison. Within a decade the judges and courts declared the trials unlawful and confessed their error. 10 years after that they made restitution to the families of the victims.

Now, to put this into context, between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, there were tens of thousands of supposed witches put to death in a “witchcraft craze,” according to Smithsonian magazine.<sup>1</sup>

### **QUAKERS**

**George Fox (1624 – 1691)** – English, wandered all over England to attend worship services, but came to the conclusion that all sects and groups were wrong, and that the outward elements of their worship – hymns, sermons, sacraments, creeds, etc. - hindered rather than helped. They needed to look for the “Inner Light” for inspiration; a capacity to recognize and accept God. Every person could understand and hear from God in the same way that the writers of Scripture did. The Spirit in our hearts should guide more than Scripture. He was arrested for heresy and disturbing public worship, spending a total of 6 years in prison (during Cromwell’s Protestant years). His followers, the “Society of Friends,” formed orderly, peaceful fellowships. They were called Quakers as an insult because their meetings were in silence until they trembled when the Spirit moved them to pray or speak. They were pacifists and lived simple lives, rejecting the fashions of the world.

**William Penn (1644 – 1718)** – Englishman who had Anglican parents, but converted to being a Quaker as a young man. While working in Ireland, he was thrown into prison for his Quaker beliefs. When he went back to England (age 24) he wrote a tract that got him jailed in the Tower of London. He wrote *No Cross No Crown*, and was jailed several more times for his writings and preaching.

Charles II owed his family a large debt, so William asked for a large tract of land in the new world. In 1681, at the age of 37, he was granted Penn’s Woods. Pennsylvania was a “holy experiment”, a refuge for many kinds of Christians. He made peace with the Native Americans there. He was governor of the state for 2 years, but then it was taken over by the governor of New York. He went back and forth to and from England for the last 25 years of his life.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/?no-ist](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/?no-ist)

## **METHODISTS**

### **John (1703 - 1791) and Charles (1707 - 1788) Wesley**

We talked last week about George Whitefield and the Holiness Club at Oxford University. John and Charles Wesley were sons of an Anglican clergyman, but were unconverted when they started the Holiness Club. In 1735 (John was 32), the brothers undertook a mission to Georgia, though they were still unconverted! They did not stay long, and John felt it was a failure- the ministry to Indians went poorly and the white colonists resented their rigid high church ways. On the boat ride back to England, John talked to a Moravian who told him he needed to experience the new birth of Christ. Back in England in 1738, Charles was converted reading Luther's commentary on Galatians, and 3 days later John was converted listening to someone read Luther's commentary on Romans!

The brothers started preaching the gospel wherever they could in England; when Anglican churches closed their doors to them, they spoke in fields, hospitals, prisons, other public places. This was not done! The Church of England controlled all spiritual activities within its border, but Wesley went where they weren't. The poor, who were not ministered to in the stuffy Anglican Church, were their main listeners and converts. Estimates that John traveled 250,000 miles on horseback all over England and Scotland to spread the gospel in 50 years - "All the world is my parish." He would read and write sermons on horseback.

He formed new believers into circuits and societies, essentially giving the form for the new denomination; though they did not want to break from Anglicanism- they just wanted reform (like Luther and the Catholic church). They had been called Methodists by their critics because of their strict "methods" and devotional exercises that brought holiness, and now that Methodism was shown in this organizing.

Wesley took 3 new ideas that others had done first and organized them better:

- outdoor evangelism (Whitefield & Howell Harris had done before)
- small-group cells (Moravians had pioneered)
- voluntary reform agencies against social ills like slavery & drinking & educating children

The Methodist religion departed with Whitefield on Calvinism. John could not abide predestination. They focused much more on godly living than on doctrinal precision, even teaching that a Christian could be completely sanctified in this life.

Charles is known as the greatest hymn writer in the English language- he wrote 8,989 hymns! Isaac Watts and Johann Sebastian Bach were contemporaries (from @1680 to @1750), pushing sacred music in new directions. Charles wrote "O For A Thousand Tongues" "And Can It Be?" "Hark The Herald Angels Sing," "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus" "Christ The Lord Is Risen Today," "Arise My Soul Arise" "Rejoice The Lord Is King," among hundreds of others. 21 we still have in the Trinity Hymnal. Songs were a huge key to the Methodist revival.

You might have heard that John Wesley's big negative (besides Arminian theology) was his poor efforts at being a good husband. He was married to a woman named Mary (nicknamed Molly), who had tried to travel with John for their first 2 years, but couldn't handle it. She became very jealous for her husband's time and attention, neither of which he was willing to give her. He wrote letters to women and spent time with those attached to his ministry, and she accused him of adultery constantly. Supposedly when John left to preach in Ireland, his parting words to her were: "I hope I shall see your wicked face no more." Married for over 20 years, but she left him numerous times, and they were separated when she died; he didn't find out until 4 days later.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wesley's marriage info: <http://thecripplegate.com/john-wesleys-failed-marriage/>

But both of the Wesleys were amazing men. Only in his 70s did John stop travelling by carriage rather than horseback, and in his 80s he gave up preaching before dawn. Died at 88, with 40,000 followers in America and almost 80,000 in England.

**Francis Asbury** (1745 – 1816) – the man who put American Methodism on the map. He came up in the Methodist meetings, appointed a full-time teacher by age 21. By age 26, John Wesley asked for volunteers to help “our brethren in America who have called aloud for help.” Asbury volunteered, so they sent him to Philadelphia. There were @600 Methodists in America when he arrived; over 45 years he preached all over the colonies despite poor health. He had to remain neutral and hide during the Revolutionary War, and because he never denounced the American side, he was accepted after the war. Asbury was an excellent organizer who had huge success in spreading Methodism even to the frontier. He became the first bishop of American Methodism (though Wesley didn’t want to use that term). At his death, there were over 200,000 Methodists. He had ordained over 4,000 Methodist preachers.

## **BAPTISTS**

Baptists were often persecuted in the colonies. Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts for being a Baptist; John Clarke, the “Father of Baptists in America” was arrested for preaching Baptist doctrine. Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, was forced to resign for being a Baptist. In Culpepper, VA, a mob beat a Baptist man, and later 4 Baptists were jailed for denying baptism to their children. The Great Awakening helped the Baptist Church, though.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening** (see the chart on the back of the outline)

In 1801 in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, thousands of people gathered to hear the gospel; loud prayers, sobs, shrieks, shouts, barking, jerking and twitching bodies happened. Thousands were converted. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening had started, much more charismatic version, out in the frontier. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Awakening wasn’t all like that – some cults grew out of it, but also the Cumberland Presbyterian Church as some Presbyterians were awakened to evangelistic zeal.

“The Awakening in the west was quite different from the Awakening in the east. The east, for instance, had the scholarly, erudite Jonathan Edwards carefully reasoning out the wrath of God and the need for reconciliation. The west had a band of frontier preachers with minimal seminary training, who would stand on the back of a wagon to persuade sinners to get right with God. It was a difference of style to be sure, but also of theology. The eastern revival was more Presbyterian, the western more Methodist; the east was more Calvinist, the west more Arminian; the east was more ecclesiastical, the west more individualistic.”<sup>3</sup>

**Charles Finney** (1792 – 1875) was a big figure in this Awakening. He had left the Presbyterian Church because he emphasized people’s decisions more than God’s election (he had taken his Presbyterian vows knowing that he didn’t agree with them). He played up the emotional aspects of responding to the gospel; he developed techniques for conducting meetings that would produce the best response. The annual revival meeting was born out of this. Was a big proponent of the Underground Railroad and the abolition movement. His churches were in New York City, but he would preach all over the place if a church was willing to have him and do follow-up on any converts. Finney’s quote in *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*: “A revival is not a miracle, or dependent on miracle in any sense. It is the result of the right use of constituted means.” He taught theology at Oberlin College and became its president. Held revivals up to his death at the age of 83.

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<sup>3</sup> Curtis, Lang & Peterson, *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History*, pp. 144-145.

Sources Used:

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