Chapter 3: AWAKENINGS AND ENLIGHTENMENT:
Objectives:

- We will examine the impact of religious life with focus on the Great Awakening upon the American Colonies.
- We will examine the impact of the Enlightenment on the colonies especially in education and law.
2Ti_2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
Introduction:

- Two powerful forces competed in American intellectual life in the eighteenth century.
- One was the traditional outlook of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with its emphasis on a personal God intimately involved with the world, keeping watch over individual lives.
- The other was the new spirit of the Enlightenment a movement sweeping both Europe and America which stressed the importance of science and human reason.
Introduction:

• The old view supported such phenomena as the belief in witchcraft.
• Placed great value on a stern moral code in which intellect was less important than faith.
• In contrast, the Enlightenment suggested that people had substantial control over their own lives.
• That the world can be explained and structured along rational scientific lines.
Patterns of Religious Life

- Religious toleration flourished in many America to a degree unmatched in any European nation, not because Americans deliberately sought to produce it but because conditions virtually required it.

- Settlers in America brought with them so many different religious practices that it proved difficult to impose a single religious code on any large area.
Patterns of Religious Life

- The Church of England was established as the official faith in Virginia, Maryland, New York, The Carolinas, and Georgia.
Patterns of Religious Life

• But with few exceptions the law establishing the Church of England as the official colonial religion were largely ignored.

• Even in New England where Puritans were thought of as a single faith, there was a growing tendency for different denominations.

• Especially Congregationalism and Presbyterianism.
Patterns of Religious Life

• New York and New Jersey Dutch settlers established their own Calvinist denominations.

• American Baptists (considered to have been introduced to America by Roger Williams) developed a great variety of sects.

• All Baptists shared the belief that baptism, usually by total immersion, was necessary when believers reached maturity.

• Some Baptists remained Calvinists (believers in predestination) others came to believe in salvation by free will.
Patterns of Religious Life

• Protestants extended toleration to one another more readily than they did to Roman Catholics.

• Many Protestants in America, like many in England, feared and hated the Pope.
Patterns of Religious Life

- New Englanders, in particular, viewed their Catholic neighbors in New France (Canada) not only as commercial and military rivals but also a dangerous agents of Rome.
- In most of the English colonies, however, Roman Catholics were too few to cause serious conflict.
- They were most numerous in Maryland and even they numbered no more than 3,000.
Patterns of Religious Life

• Catholics ironically suffered their worst persecution in Maryland.
• After the overthrow of the original proprietors in 1691, Catholics in Maryland not only lost their political rights but also were forbidden to hold religious services except in private houses.
Patterns of Religious Life

- Jews in provincial America totaled no more than about 2,000 at any time.
- The largest community lived in New York City.
- Nowhere could they vote or hold office.
- Only in Rhode Island could they practice their religion openly.
Patterns of Religious Life

• By the beginning of the eighteenth century, some Americans were growing troubled by the apparent decline in religious piety in their society.

• The movement of the population westward and the wide scattering of settlements had caused many communities to lose touch with organized religion.
Patterns of Religious Life

• The rise of commercial prosperity created a secular outlook in urban areas.
• The progress of science and free thought in Europe and the importance of Enlightenment ideas to America caused at least some colonists to doubt traditional religious beliefs.
• Ministers were alarmed and began to preach on the lowering of Christian standards.
The Great Awakening:

- By the early eighteenth century, concerns about declining piety and growing secularism were emerging in other regions and among members of other faiths.
- The result was the first major American revival: The Great Awakening.
The Great Awakening:

- This revival began in earnest in the 1730s reached its climax in the 1740s.
- Brought a new spirit of religious fervor to the colonies.
- Revival appealed to women who were the majority of the converts.
- And to younger sons of the third and fourth generation settlers
- those who stood to inherit the least land and who faced the most uncertain futures.
The sermons emphasized the potential for every person to break away from the constraints of the past and start anew in his or her relationship with God.

Such beliefs may have reflected the desires of many people to break away from their families or communities and start a new life.
Powerful evangelists from England helped spread the revival:

• John and Charles Wesley founders of Methodism visited Georgia and other colonies in the 1730s.
• Georgie Whitfield a powerful open-air preacher and for a time an associate of the Wesley brothers, made several evangelizing tours through the colonies and drew tremendous crowds.
Jonathan Edwards a Congregationalist who was a deeply orthodox Puritan but a highly original theologian attacked the new doctrine of easy salvation for all.

He preached traditional Puritan ideas of the absolute sovereignty of God, predestination, and salvation by God’s grace alone.

His vivid description of hell could terrify his listeners.

Powerful evangelists from England helped spread the revival:
(Mal 4:1) For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.
• The Great Awakening led to division of Congregationalists.
• New Light: Revivalists and Old Light Traditionalists differed.
• It also affected areas of society outside of the churches.
• Some of the revivalists denounced book of learning as a hindrance to salvation and some communities repudiated secular education altogether.
• But other evangelists saw education as a means of furthering religion and they founded or led schools for training New Light Ministers.
The Enlightenment:

- Enlightenment also brought a cultural upheaval in society.
- The enlightenment was a product of the great scientific and intellectual discoveries of seventeenth century Europe.
- Natural laws that many believed regulated the workings of nature was discovered.
- This era celebrated the power of human reason and scientific inquiry.
The Enlightenment:

• Enlightenment thinkers argued that reason, not just faith could create progress and advance knowledge.

• They argued that humans had moral sense on which they could rely to tell the difference between right and wrong.
The Enlightenment:

• They did not always need to turn to God for guidance in making decisions.

• They insisted that men and women could, through the power of their own reason, move civilization to ever greater heights.
The Enlightenment:

• In celebrating reason, the Enlightenment slowly helped undermine the power of traditional authority, something the Great Awakening did as well.

• But unlike the Great Awakening, the Enlightenment encouraged men and women to look to themselves and not to God for guidance as to how to live their lives and shape society.
The Enlightenment:

- Enlightenment thought, with its emphasis on human rationality, encouraged a new emphasis on education and heightened interest in politics and government.

- For through governments, the believers in reason argued, society had its best chance for bettering itself.
The Enlightenment:

• Most enlightenment figures did not challenge religion but insisted that rational inquiry would support, not undermine, Christianity.

• But they challenged the notion of some religious groups that the answer to all questions about human society should or could come directly from God.

• In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment ideas came abroad from Francis Bacon and John Locke.

• Later Americans such as Franklin, Madison, and Jefferson made their contributions.
Education:

• Colonists placed a high value on education despite the difficulties they confronted in gaining access to it.

• Some families tried to teach their children to read and write at home.
Education:

• In Massachusetts in 1647 law required every town to support a public school, and while many communities failed to comply a modest network of educational establishments emerged as a result.

• Elsewhere the Quakers and other sects operated church schools.

• And in some communities widows or unmarried women conducted “dame schools” by holding private classes in their homes.
Education:

- By the Revolution, well over half of all white men could read and write; a rate substantially higher than in most European countries.
- Most children received education till the primary level.
- The large number of colonists who could read helped create a market for the first widely circulated book in America other than the Bible: almanacs.
- Girls also had a substantially higher literacy rate than in Europe thanks to home based education.
- Although schools for girls were almost nonexistent.
Education:

- For African slaves there was almost no access to education.
- There were strong social and ultimately legal sanctions developed to discourage any efforts to promote black literacy lest it encouraged slaves to question.
- Indians as well but it was mostly by choice.
- Some white missionaries and philanthropists established schools for Native Americans and helped create a small but significant population of Indians literate in spoken and written English.
Education:

• Enlightenment and traditional religiosity was most apparent in the colleges and universities that grew up in colonial America.

• Of the six colleges in operation in 1763, all but two were founded by religious groups primarily for the training of preachers.

• Yet in almost all, the influence of the new scientific rational approach could be felt.
Education:

• Harvard, the first American college, was established in 1636, by the General Court (legislature) of Massachusetts at the behest of Puritan theologians, who wanted to create a training center for ministers.

• The college was named for a Charlestown minister, John Harvard who died and left his library and half his estate to the college.
Education:

- In 1701, conservative Congregationalists, dissatisfied with what they considered the growing religious liberalism of Harvard founded Yale (named after one of its first benefactors, Elihu Yale) in New Haven, Connecticut.

- Out of the Great Awakening emerged the College of New Jersey, founded in 1746 known as Princeton.

- One of its first presidents was Jonathan Edwards.
Education:

• Despite the religious basis of these colleges students could derive something of a secular education from the curricula.

• This included not only theology but logic, ethics, physics, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek.
Education:

• Harvard attempted not only to provide education for the ministry but also to “advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity.”
• The university sought to disseminate new scientific ideas particularly the ideas of Copernican astronomy to a larger public, often publishing their ideas in larger almanacs.
• They sought to stamp out astrology which they considered pagan superstition that was popular in the colonies.
Education:

- Kings’ College in New York later renamed Columbia University was even more devoted to spreading secular knowledge.
- Although it was founded in part by the Anglican Trinity Church in New York, it had no theological faculty and was interdenominational from the start.
Education:

• The University of Pennsylvania was a completely secular institution founded in 1755 by a group of laymen under the inspiration of Benjamin Franklin.

• This university offered what is seen now as a traditional liberal arts education.
The Spread of Science:

- The clearest indication of Enlightenment spreading in America was an increasing interest in scientific knowledge.
- Astronomy, Newtonian physics and science was of emphasis.
- Leading merchants, planters, and even theologians became corresponding members of the Royal Society of London the leading English scientific organization.
The Spread of Science:

• Benjamin Franklin won international fame through his experimental proof of nature of lightning and electricity and his invention of the lightning rod using the kite.

• The high value in science was demonstrated in the most daring and controversial scientific experiment of the eighteenth century, inoculation against small pox.
The Spread of Science:

• The Puritan theologian Cotton Mather practiced this to his own slaves of deliberately infecting people with mild cases of small pox in order to immunize them against the deadly disease.

• Although he believed that small pox was a punishment of sin, he urged inoculation on his fellow Bostonians during an epidemic in the 1720s
Pro_9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.
Concepts of laws and politics:

• The lack of English lawyers made America to evolve into a different system of laws than England.

• Although the American legal system adopted most of the essential elements of the English system, including trial by jury, there was significant differences.
Concepts of laws and politics:

- Pleadings and Court procedures were a lot different in England.
- Punishment was different as well because labor is scarce it was not the best interest of communities to execute or incarcerate potential workers.
Concepts of laws and politics:

• Crimes were redefined.

• In England a printed attack on a public official, whether true or false was considered libelous.

• In 1734-35, trial of New York publisher John Peter Zenger resulted in criticisms of the government were not libelous if factually true, a verdict that removed some restrictions on the freedom of the press.

• In legal philosophy: some colonists came to think of law as a reflection of the divine will; others saw it as a result of natural order. In neither case did they consider it an expression of the power of an earthly sovereign.
Concepts of laws and politics:

• Significantly, differences developed between the American and British political systems.
• Because the royal government was so far away, Americans created group of institutions of their own.
• This gave them a large measure of self-government.
Concepts of laws and politics:

- In most colonies, local communities grew accustomed to running their own affairs with minimal interference from higher authorities.
- Communities also expected to maintain a strict control over their delegates to the colonial assemblies,
- And those assemblies came to exercise many of the powers that parliament exercised in England (even though in theory Parliament remained the ultimate authority in America).
Concepts of laws and politics:

• Provincial Governors appointed by the crown had broad powers on paper, but in fact their influence was sharply limited.
• They lacked control over appointments and contracts; such influence resided largely in England or with local colonial leaders.
• They could never be certain of their tenure in office; because governorships were patronage appointments, a governor could be removed any time his patron in England lost favor.
Concepts of laws and politics:

- And in many cases, governors were not even familiar with colonies they were meant to govern.
- Some were native born but most were English men who came to colonies for the first time to assume office.
- The result of all this was that the focus of politics in the colonies became a local one.
The provincial governments became accustomed to acting more or less independently of parliament,

Colonists developed a set of assumptions and expectations that the policymakers in England did not share.

These differences caused few problems before the 1760s because the British did little to exert authority they believed they possessed.

But in the beginning of 1763, the English government began to exert control and conflict would ensue.
Recap:

- English colonies grew steadily between the 1650s and the 1750s, in population, in the size of their economies and in the sophistication and diversity of their cultures.

- In many ways the colonies had become more like England by the mid-nineteenth century.
Recap:

- Many distinct societies developed be the greatest distinction between North and South.
- North was dominated by relatively small family farms and by towns and cities of growing size.
- A thriving commercial class was developing and, with it an increasing elaborate urban culture.
Recap:

• The South was dominated by large plantations cultivating tobacco, rice, indigo, and cotton for export. By the late seventeenth century, the colonies were relying on African slaves.

• There were few significant towns and cities in the South and little commerce other than the marketing of crops.
Recap:

• Both North and South believed in racial inequality.

• Most Americans both white and nonwhite were deeply religious. And most white colonists shared a belief in certain basic principles of law and politics which considered embedded in the English constitution.