

The Second Great Awakening

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- 1790s-1830s
- Period of religious renewal
- Fueled by anxiety that something was wrong in American society
- Dramatically expands number of Protestant Christian denominations
- Revitalizes religion in the U.S.



The Religious Setting

- de Tocqueville - “no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence.”
- Yet, traditional Christianity quite weakened by 1800 -
 - First Great Awakening had subsided
 - Enlightenment rationalism had weakened the “Puritan Orthodoxy” in New England
 - Anglican / Episcopal church weakened because of split from GBR

1GA and 2GA

- Boiling reactions to liberalism
- Both . . .
 - place emphasis on emotionalism,
 - personal choice to renounce sinfulness, and
 - personal conversion in order to be saved
- Both Great Awakenings see large revivals where people would emotionally experience a conversion
 - “camp meetings”
 - thousands in attendance
- Uniquely American



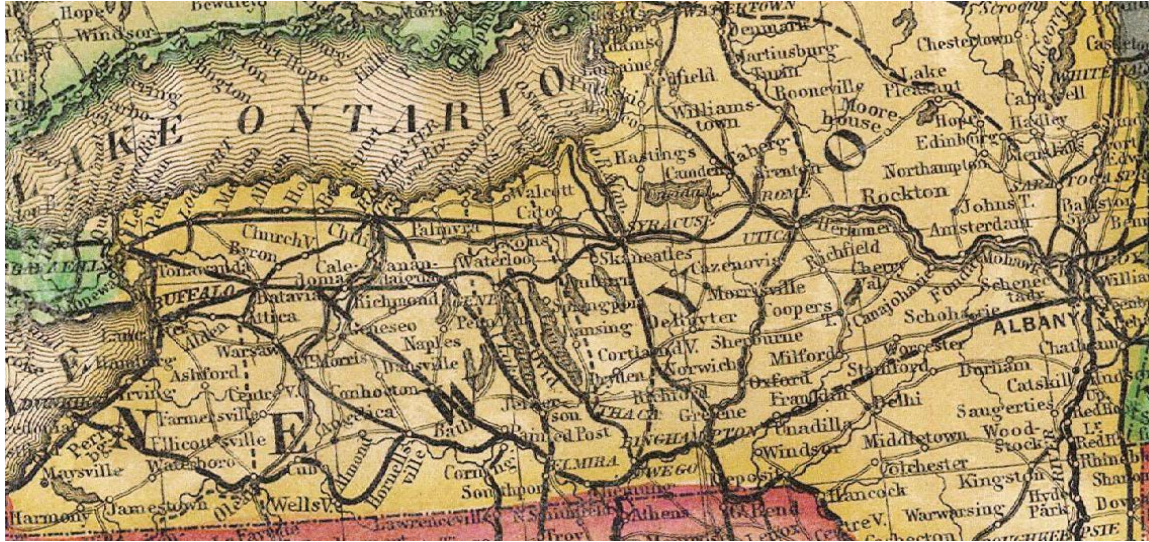


What makes 2GA distinct

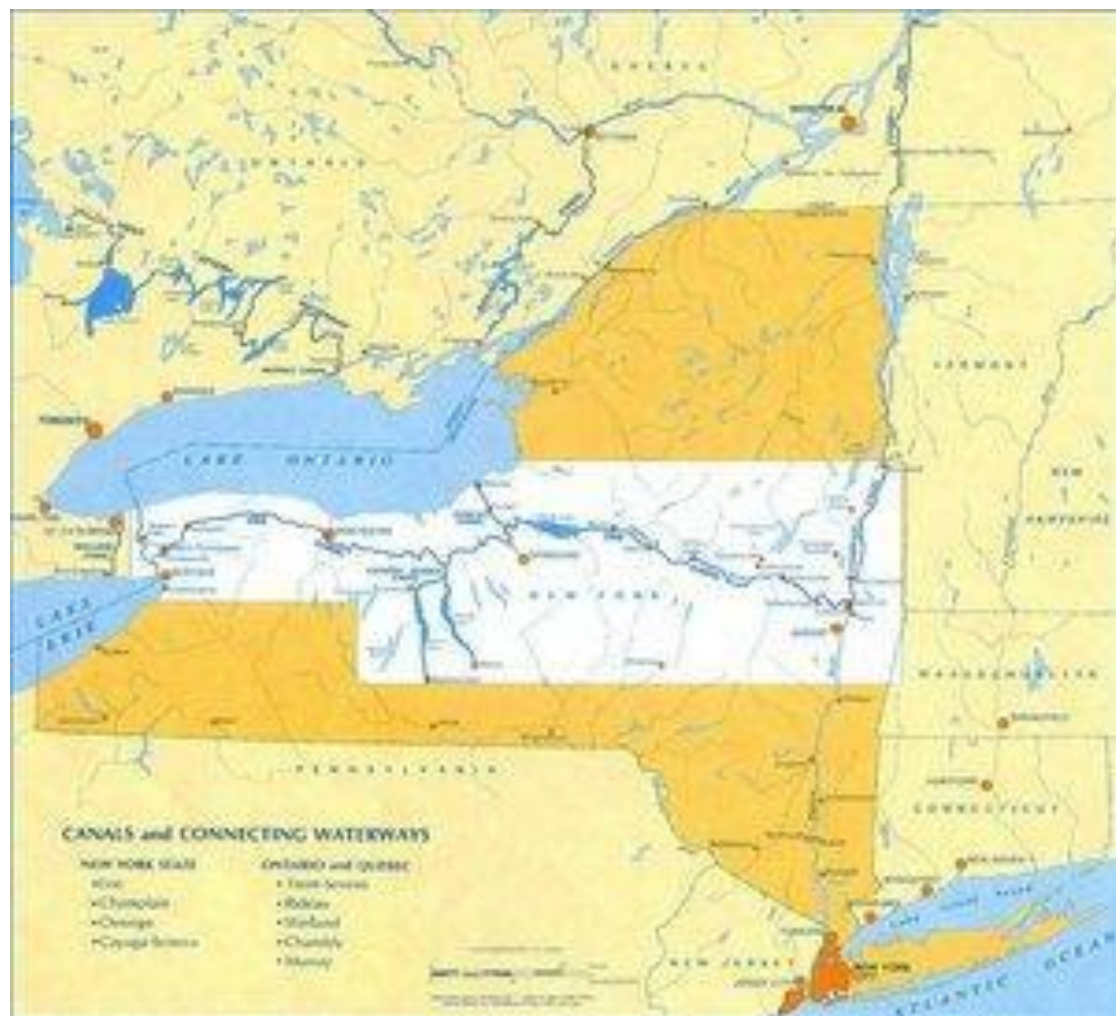
- Jacksonian Democracy
- Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality
- More of a role for ordinary people as clergy
 - Farmers for six days, preachers for one
 - “Circuit Preachers”
- More emphasis on personal choice and perfectibility
- Begins in southern backcountry
- Involves more people
 - Racial barrier
 - Ethnic barrier
- Broader political impact



Geographically Speaking: The Burnt-Out District



- Western New York, era of the Erie Canal
- Heuristic at work:
 - Significant social disruption, good or bad, often leads to religious revival that brings a moral component to help understand the change



Groups

- Some Christian denominations not as caught up
 - Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists
 - Often were wealthier sorts
- Methodists and Baptists - truly benefit
 - Baptists involved in 1st G.A. - believed predestination was folly, stressed personal role in conversion
 - Methodists - an off-shoot of Anglican Church (Charles Wesley) who believed that the church had overlooked needs of the poorer in Christianity

Splinter Sects

- Millerites -
 - Believed and prepared for the arrival of Christ on Oct. 22, 1844
 - Continued perfectionist ways in Michigan and set up an ideal community (Post and Kellogg)
- J.H. Noyes and the Oneida community - communal living and plural marriage
- Church of Latter Day Saints (1830)
 - Emerged in Western New York
 - Joseph Smith, Brigham Young
 - Followers forced to keep fleeing Westward
 - Established theocracy in p.d. Utah (Deseret)







Social Impact of 2GA: The North

- Interacted with Commercial Revolution
 - Lent meaning to Americans caught up in changes
 - Justified the sobriety and discipline needed for success
 - Justified the success that entrepreneurs encountered
- Powerful factor explaining the emergence of reform movements in North
 - Abolitionism
 - Temperance
 - The imprisoned, the insane
 - Prostitution (Moral reform)

More on 2GA Impact: North

- “Religion further strengthened the reform impulse. Almost all the leading reformers were devoutly religious men and women who wanted to deepen the nation’s commitment to Christian principles.”
- “The earliest reformers wanted to persuade Americans to adopt more godly personal habits. They set up associations to battle profanity and Sabbath breaking, to place a Bible in every American home, and to curb the widespread heavy use of hard liquor. By discouraging drinking and gambling and encouraging observance of the Sabbath, reformers hoped to ‘restore the government of God’ on earth.”
- “The theological belief in the potential mutability, indeed perfectibility, of people also encouraged a reforming attitude toward social institutions. Humanity and earthly society were not inherently sinful and, thus, could and should be reformed. The embrace of community-wide religious and moral recommitment during the Second Great Awakening enhanced Americans’ sense of perfectionism—that the world could be reformed. That drive towards public salvation and rectification of the community spilled over into a variety of social reform currents. Time and again, Christian men and women took on the mantle of religious duty, stepped into the public arena, and denounced what were seen as the sins of a changing society. “

Social Impact of 2GA: The South

- Not as acute or intense
- More powerful among yeomen farmers and poor whites than planters
- Strengthens Christianity in slave community
- New normal: Christian master overseeing Christian slaves
 - A duty for the planter's wife: bringing Christianity
 - Slaves' independent (but supervised) worship
 - Two Christianities: imported by master vs. created by slaves